

DEPRESSION

Has a case of the winter blues hit you? Is the cold weather and rain getting you down? How about school? Midterms and papers creeping up? Is your lack of social life or unhealthy relationships causing you distress? All of these things along with numerous others are common causes for sadness and depression in a college student's life.

It's a part of life to have good days and bad days; to experience stress; to undergo a loss or disappointment, or to simply be down. This is especially true in the college years which immerse us with constant change within ourselves as well as in our environment. In fact, this can even be healthy and give us the chance to explore different coping mechanisms that work for us; to learn about ourselves and how to take care of ourselves. Overcoming unhappiness in our lives can be very empowering and increase our self efficacy in the long run. It is important to be able to distinguish the difference between normal sadness and depression in order to prevent other mental health disorders

that go along with depression such as addictions, eating disorders, social withdrawal, and suicide. Overcoming depression is the first step to prevention of these as well as creating a happier individual.

There are three factors that can be used as guidelines in identifying the difference between sadness and depression. The first one is the intensity. Feelings of gloom, discontent, and hopelessness are common to both sadness and depression. In sadness, these feelings have an identified cause and a solution that marks the end to these feelings. In depression these feelings are not only felt, but invade your mind, body and spirit. Life becomes an exhausting effort. Sadness is fairly short in duration and lasts no more than two weeks. Depression is more chronic and is beyond the level of employing individual coping skills. The last distinction is how these feelings are affecting your life as a whole. If these feelings take over your perceptions, actions, and behaviors in all aspects of your life, then it is depression.

The most effective way of

combating depression is to combine self-help methods along with professional help. Self-help methods that aid depression are basically things to take care of yourself. These include proper sleep, eating a balanced and adequate diet, setting time aside daily for relaxation, an exercise program, stress management strategies, social support and positive thinking. Professional help can provide you with guidance and skills to overcome your depression as well as an assessment of the underlying causes of depression. This is perhaps the most courageous and positive step a person can make in developing a happier lifestyle.

Depression is common among our college population due to the fact that we are constantly changing within ourselves as well as being exposed to a plethora of new ideas in the classroom and among our peers. We are adjusting in a real pressure situation and that causes confusion and distress which can in turn lead to depression. This can be a very exciting and pleasurable time. Take care of yourself—beat the blues.

by Ginny Ehrlich

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

- ◀ LACK OF PLEASURE IN ACTIVITIES THAT USED TO BE ENJOYED.
- ◀ GENERAL LACK OF ENERGY
- ◀ LACK OF MOTIVATION FOR TASK COMPLETION AND SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT.
- ◀ FREQUENT CRYING, OFTEN WITHOUT AN IDENTIFIABLE CAUSE.
- ◀ LOW SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-WORTH
- ◀ FEELINGS OF LONELINESS.
- ◀ IRRITABILITY
- ◀ TROUBLE SLEEPING OR CHRONIC FATIGUE.
- ◀ DIFFICULTY CONCENTRATING
- ◀ UNDERLYING ANXIETY
- ◀ PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS SUCH AS STOMACH ACHES OR CONSTIPATION.

IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS AND THEY HAVE PERSISTED FOR MORE THAN TWO WEEKS, PLEASE SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP.

TAKE THAT BREATH

Just taking a deep breath, holding it and then releasing it can help you relax. It sounds simple enough but pay attention to your breathing. Chances are it is shallow and irregular during times of anxiety and tension. Taking a deep breath or a "diaphragmatic" breath using the muscles at the base of the lungs is the core of all relaxation techniques. Deep breathing however is not the usual type of breathing one employs in day to day activities. Try deep breathing and note the difference.

- First place your left hand on your chest with your thumb on your collarbone and your little finger just between your breasts.
- Now place your right hand on your abdomen with your little finger on your navel and your thumb touching your little finger of your left hand which is still on your chest.
- The next step is to inhale, but for a deep breath your right hand must move first. Like an empty glass, you must fill from the bottom first, so you need to fill your lower lungs first.

By Veronica Joll



Alcoholic and Dysfunctional Families

Where does low self esteem originate? Why is it that close relationships fill some people with fear; an inability to trust and an inability to see oneself as worthy and worthwhile? Where does a lack of self efficacy come from: a feeling of capability and self confidence? Adult children of alcoholics and dysfunctional families possess these common characteristics and this topic has become the theme of numerous books, seminars and psychotherapeutic interventions. For countless young adults grappling with their sense of self and ability to grow close to others, the healing process begins in undoing the damages of childhood; of growing up in a dysfunctional environment.

Denial in the family system occurs when everyone attempts to hide the secret of the addiction.

Low self esteem (little self-worth) can be the result of years of messages which say "you're no good." Whether blatantly expressed or indirectly told through innuendoes that you don't, can't, won't, measure up to some ideal, the cumulative effects are a feeling of worthlessness.

In an alcoholic or drug addicted family system, the parent(s) display a wide range of moods and communicate mixed messages. Denial in the family system occurs when everyone attempts to hide the secret of the addiction. For a child, this means not developing close friendships for fear the secret will be discovered. A drunk parent isn't drunk-

-they're upset or sick. So the child learns early on that what they see isn't real. This may be translated into "I can't trust or believe anyone—even myself." At times the parent may make promises they later break. So the child who needs boundaries and consistencies in their world has none. They grow up in a topsy-turvy world, never knowing when it will be topsy or turvy.

The origin of a dysfunctional family instills in the child a lack of self efficacy. The achievements a child attains may be minimized or ignored or fall short continually. The mistakes a child makes may be highlighted. Translated into adulthood, the adult child has no sense of validation; an ability to trust one's accomplishments and acknowledge these as missing. The parent may also blame the child for their own shortcomings and frustrations. This only deepens the scars.

The adult child of an alcoholic or dysfunctional family may have been abused emotionally, physically, sexually or all three. The most difficult part is to acknowledge these early experiences and the havoc they wreak in adult life. These events are not the fault of the child and blaming oneself is a difficult barrier to overcome.

Acknowledging these experiences in oneself is the first step to healing. Seeking help is the next. The Counseling Center offers one-on-one counseling and recovery groups in areas related to adult children and sexual abuse. Several related books are also available at the Student Health Center Health Education Library. Also see the booklist and community referral list in this issue.

The Counseling Center offers support groups for:

- ** Adult Children of Alcoholics
- ** ACOA—Women Only
- ** Recovery: decision making and life without drugs or alcohol
- ** Sexual Abuse

as well as one-on-one therapy. Call 346-3217 for more information.

In Lane County: Adult Children of Alcoholics/683-6533 and 344-8556

Al-Anon for family and friends of addicts/741-2841

by Daneel Hennagin

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