

DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Being clinically depressed is very different from the down type of feeling that all people experience from time to time. Occasional feelings of sadness are a normal part of life, and it is unfortunate that such feelings are often referred to as "depression." In clinical depression, such feelings are out of proportion to any external causes. There are things in everyone's life that are possible causes of sadness, but people who are not depressed manage to cope with these things without becoming incapacitated.

WHAT ARE THE TYPICAL SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION?

A depressive disorder is a "whole body" illness, involving your body, mood and thoughts. It affects the way you eat and sleep and the way you feel about yourself, and the way you think about things. A depressive disorder is not a passing blue mood. It is not a sign of personal weakness or a condition that can be willed or wished away. People with depressive illness cannot merely "pull themselves together" and get better. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks, months and years.

Appropriate treatment and diagnosis can help over 80% of those who suffer from depression. Not everyone who is depressed experiences every symptom. Some people experience a few symptoms, some many. Also, severity of symptoms varies with individuals.

Symptoms of Depression:

- Persistent sad, anxious or "empty" mood.
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism.
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness.
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that you once enjoyed, including sex.
- Insomnia, early morning awakening or oversleeping.
- Appetite and or weight loss or overeating and weight gain.
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being slowed down.
- Thoughts of death, suicide, suicide attempts.
- Restlessness, irritability.
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions.
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders and chronic pain.

** Remember that you are not a counselor and should NEVER attempt to treat or diagnose a student who may or may not be suffering from depression. Refer any students who are experiencing difficulties to your Hall Director/AHD and the CENTER FOR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT.