Depression Facts

- More than 13 million Americans will experience a depressive disorder each year.
- 2 out of 3 students who suffer from depression never get help.
- Treatments for depression are successful more than 80% of the time.
- Depression is known to weaken the immune system, increasing susceptibility to physical illness.
- Women are twice as likely to be diagnosed with depression as men.
- In men, irritability, anger or discouragement may be indicators of depression.
- Suicide is the second leading cause of death among college students.

All of us have felt “down” or discouraged at times when things were not going well. There are normal variations in moods over time and even day-to-day. However, depression is a disturbance in mood where you may feel particularly unhappy, discouraged, lonely, or negative toward yourself.

Depression may range from mild to severe depending upon the associated symptoms and the extent the condition interferes with everyday functioning. In milder forms, depressed moods are usually brief and may have little effect on everyday activities. Moderate to severe depression includes symptoms that are more intense, last longer, and tend to interfere more with school, work and social functioning.

Symptoms of Depression

- Feelings of sadness or emptiness
- Inability to experience pleasure — even from activities that you used to enjoy
- Feeling worthless, guilty, or hopeless
- Isolating from others
- Physical ailments
- Fatigue
- Lack of motivation
- Irritability
- Indecisiveness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Changes in sleeping and/or eating habits
- Suicidal thoughts, feelings, or behaviors

Why does someone become depressed?

Depression can be caused by biological, genetic or psychological factors. Common triggers for depression (especially for college students) include transitioning to a new environment, academic difficulties, family conflict, the loss of a significant relationship, or concerns about the future.

Depressive episodes can occur without identifiable causes. Depression is not the result of personal failure or lack of will power.

What should I do if I feel depressed?
Take time to assess why you are feeling down. In many cases, feeling sad is an expected and appropriate reaction to a situation; however, when these feelings last for an extended period of time or significantly interfere with your ability to function, it might be wise to change your situation.

**Increase Social Support**

- Talk to friends or family.
- Confide in others.

**Explore Thoughts, Feelings and Problem Solving**

- Write about your situation in a journal.
- Allow yourself to experience your feelings.
- If you are angry, find a safe way to express it. Cry if you need to do so.
- Replace negative thinking with realistic thinking.
- Break large tasks into small ones; set manageable goals.

**Maintain Health/Exercise**

- Maintain healthy nutrition — junk food, caffeine & alcohol can cause mood swings.
- Workout in the Activity Center.
- Join an intramural team.
- Attend yoga classes.
- Get enough sleep.
- Don't abuse alcohol/drugs.

**Practice Spirituality**

- Participate in religious services.
- Talk to clergy.
- Read inspirational material.
- Meditate, pray.

**Engage in Fun and Rewarding Activities**

- Do things you enjoy.
- Resume old hobbies or learn new ones.
- Volunteer in community service activities.

**Treatment of Depression**

It is important to remember that depression is treatable. If symptoms of depression are interfering in your ability to perform daily functions or are causing significant distress, you should consider seeing a professional.

There are a variety of very successful interventions in the treatment of depression. Psychotherapy or medication are effective interventions for treating the majority of depressive illnesses. Research studies have found a combination of the two to be the most effective treatment available.

The type of treatment that is appropriate for you will depend on your specific symptoms, history, situational factors, and personal preference. A professional can answer any questions or concerns you may have about treatment.
Helping Someone who is Depressed

The most important thing to remember as you help someone with depression is to remain supportive. Blaming the depression on the person, trying to "make them snap out of it" and other confrontational techniques can backfire and make the situation worse.

It is important first to let the person know that you are concerned about her or him, want to help and are willing to be a resource. The way that you help may range from just listening to recommending that the person contact a mental health care provider for assistance.

Danger Signals of Suicide risk

- **Depression**: Most depressed people are not suicidal, but most suicidal people are depressed.
- **Talking about death or suicide**: People who commit suicide often talk about it directly or indirectly. Be alert to statements like, "My family would be better off without me." Sometimes suicidal people talk as if they are saying goodbye.
- **Planning for suicide**: Suicidal individuals often arrange to put their affairs in order. They give away articles they value and pay off debts.

Helping a Suicidal Friend

- **Take it seriously and don't ignore it** — Approach your friend and, without judgment, let him or her know your concern. "I'm worried about the changes I've seen in you lately. I hope you won't blow me off or think I'm putting you down. I want us to be able to talk."
- **Listen actively** — Sit facing your friend in a relaxed, open position. Keep eye contact and nod your head to show that you're paying attention. Paraphrase what you hear from your friend's perspective; "You felt hurt?" or "It sounds like you were really disappointed."
- **Describe your observations** — "You've been missing class ... isolating yourself ... not eating ... don't seem happy ... drinking more ..."
- **Offer your recommendations** — "I'm not sure, but I wonder if you're depressed. There's help available on campus. The Student Counseling Center offers confidential services."
- **Don't minimize your concern** — If your friend says "Do you think I need help?" say "Yes, I do. That's a great idea. Can I stay with you while you call/walk to the Student Counseling Center to make an appointment?"