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Depression Increases Marital Dissatisfaction and Divorce

In relationships where one of the partners suffers from depression, the divorce rate is nine times higher

According to a study of married couples in the U.S., each marital partner's level of depression predicted their own marital satisfaction and that of their spouse as well. Depressed individuals expressed higher levels of dissatisfaction with their marriage and their spouses were more dissatisfied with the marriage, also. Untreated depression poses a very real threat to a marriage. Statistics show that in marriages where one of the partners suffers from depression, the divorce rate is nine times higher.



What to do when depression threatens your marriage or relationship

Living with a depressed spouse can leave you feeling unloved, confused, demoralized, angry and resentful. If depression is taking a heavy toll on you and the quality of your marriage, the suggestions below can help:

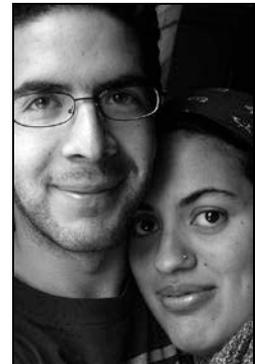
1. Learn about all aspects of depression. It is vital that both you and your partner learn all that you can about depression – its symptoms, what it is, what it isn't, what to expect and what treatment options are available. The more you know about depression, the better you can help your spouse, your marriage and yourself. It is very important to:

- Understand that depression is an illness. Your spouse did not “choose” to become depressed.
- Realize and accept that no one is to “blame” for the situation. People do not deserve to be depressed. And, despite what your spouse may say, you are not to blame either.
- Put yourself in your spouse’s shoes. You will help your spouse recover faster and help lower your own frustration by learning as much as you can about what depression feels like from your spouse’s point of view.

2. The depressed spouse must seek professional help for depression. It is important to recognize that before marital problems can be effectively dealt with, the depression needs to be treated first. Encourage your spouse to seek professional treatment as soon as possible. The first step is for him/her to see a doctor and ask to be examined for depression. Once a treatment program is prescribed, helping may involve monitoring whether your spouse is taking their prescribed medication, or encouraging him/her to stay with treatment until symptoms begin to abate (several weeks). Helpful: Develop a “we” approach instead of an “I” approach with your spouse toward depression treatment.

3. If your spouse balks about getting help. It is important that you get your partner to the doctor or mental health professional, even if you have to schedule the appointment or take off from work and accompany your partner to the appointment. If your spouse refuses to seek treatment, sometimes the parents or siblings of the depressed spouse, or a close friend or minister can help convince a depressed spouse to consult with his/her doctor or therapist.

4. Offer your spouse support and encouragement. Be there for your spouse. Give him/her a shoulder to cry on, or just listen while they vent their feelings. Be patient with them. Let them know you care. Share the things you’ve learned while researching depression. Remind your partner that their depression is not their fault and that they are not weak or worthless. Keep reassuring your spouse that with time and help, he or she will feel better.



5. Take care of yourself. Living with a depressed person can leave you feeling unloved, demoralized, resentful and exhausted. These feelings are a valid response to a very trying situation. Talk to a trusted friend, join a support group or seek individual counseling to vent your frustrations rather than allowing them to build. Don’t allow your spouse’s depression to completely overtake your life. Make time for yourself and continue to participate in things you enjoy doing. Periodically take some time to step back from the situation and recharge your batteries. If your partner refuses to seek help, consult with a therapist to get individualized recommendations and the help you need.

Your EAP Is Here To Help

If you suspect that you, your spouse or another family member may be suffering from depression, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can help you. EAP counselors are specially trained to help people get the right kind of help for depression. If you need help, why not call an EAP counselor today? We’re here to help you.



Helpful Resources

- **DEPRESSION FALLOUT: The Impact of Depression on Couples and What You Can Do to Preserve the Bond**, by Anne Sheffield. Discusses what typically happens to love relationships when depression enters the picture and offers sound advice on what non-depressed partners can do to weather the crisis and keep the relationship intact.
- www.WebMD.com - This website includes comprehensive and in-depth information about depression symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and related issues.



Symptom Checklist: How Do you know if you're Depressed?

There are many symptoms related to depression. Some of these include:

- Feelings of fatigue: no matter how much sleep you get, you still feel exhausted.
- Persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” mood.
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism.
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness
- Sleep problems: awakening during the night with an inability to go back to sleep or difficulty falling asleep at night. Some depressed people also sleep a great deal more than usual.
- A change in eating patterns: for most depressed people this means a loss of appetite and subsequent weight loss. Some people, however, react to depression by compulsive overeating and rapid weight gain.
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, backaches, digestive problems, or chronic pain.
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that you once enjoyed, including sex.
- Restlessness, irritability.
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions.
- Intensified self-criticism and diminished self-esteem.
- Thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts

NOTE: Professional help should definitely be sought if a person is experiencing suicidal thoughts.

Happiness Improves Health and Lengthens Life

According to a study in the journal *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being*, a review of more than 160 studies of human and animal subjects has found “clear and compelling evidence” that – all things being equal – happy people tend to live longer and experience better health than do their unhappy peers.

“Your subjective well-being – that is, feeling positive about your life, not stressed out, not depressed – contributes to both longevity and better health among healthy populations,” said lead study author, Ed Diener, Ph.d.

Tips to increase happiness

The good news? Recent research reports that you can change your thoughts and actions to increase your happiness. To increase your happiness, consider the following:



Live with purpose. People who strive for something personally significant – whether it’s learning a new skill, raising a good family, or changing careers – are happier than those who don’t have strong dreams or aspirations. Pick one or more significant goals and devote time and effort in pursuit of those goals.

Nurture your relationships. A Japanese study found that contented people’s happy experiences most often involved connecting with someone. Happy people have a strong bond with at least two out of three of these essential relationships: a partner, a friend, or a parent. Experts say the best way to improve a relationship is to invest time and energy in it.

Count your blessings. One way to feel happier is to recognize good things when they happen. Express gratitude for what you have privately and also by conveying appreciation to others. If you have trouble counting your blessings, try keeping a gratitude journal. Write down three to five things you’re grateful for once a week. Several studies show that people who record what they appreciate experience greater happiness and less anxiety.

Practice kindness. Do good things for others. Acting kind or helping others makes you feel capable, compassionate and full of purpose. In one recent study, researchers could literally see the benefits of kindness. Subjects were hooked up to a brain-imaging mechanism and asked to click yes or no to charity-giving opportunities. When they donated, the machine registered a boost in blood flow to a part of the brain associated with happiness.

Cultivate optimism. Keep a journal where you write your best possible future. Practice seeing the bright side of every situation. Studies show that optimistic thoughts can be self-fulfilling and that optimists are healthier, happier and live longer than pessimists.



Improving Communication with Your Teen

Do you feel like your teen just doesn't want to talk to you? Do you sometimes feel so estranged from your teen that you don't know how to talk to them anymore or what to talk to them about? Below are suggestions to help improve your communication (and your relationship) with your teen:



1. Listen to your teen. Listening is an act of love. Listening to your teen with your undivided attention and concentration demonstrates to your teen that you love and care for him/her.

2. Listen for understanding. The teen years are a time of turmoil and change. This is a time when your child needs you more than ever to be there for them. By listening, you can better understand the issues of importance to your child and the problems and challenges they may be facing. The more you understand your teen's challenges and feelings, the better you will be able to help them.

3. Improve your listening skills. Most people need to learn how to listen with their undivided attention. Follow the guidelines below to improve your listening skills:

- Give your child your full attention
- Maintain eye contact with your child
- Concentrate on what your child is saying
- Nod your head occasionally to show your involvement without interrupting
- Don't change the subject. Let your child lead the conversation
- Do more listening than talking.

4. Be patient. Being uncommunicative is very common for teens. Understand that meaningful talks with your teen will occur when they are ready to talk to you, not when you approach them. If your child does not want to talk, you need to respect that. You can keep the lines of communication open by saying, "Okay, but I'm here when you need me to listen." Remember, when they do open up, focus on being a good listener.

5. Avoid nagging and lecturing. Nobody likes to be nagged or lectured to, especially on a regular basis. A steady stream of nagging, lecturing and negative criticism will stifle communication with your teen. Instead focus on being encouraging, supportive and positive.

Your EAP is here to help

If you are concerned about a particularly difficult family or parenting issue, your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can help you. Remember, your EAP can assist you with any type of personal, family or work-related concern. Why not call a professional EAP counselor today?

For Your Information

Myths and Facts

Myth: Alcoholics drink every day.

Fact: Some alcoholics drink only on weekends; some abstain for months. Alcoholism is not determined by how often people drink, but whether or not they can control their drinking once they start.

Better Sleep

For better sleep, moderate your consumption of caffeine. Avoid caffeine later in the day, especially after 4 or 5 p.m. Drinking a can of cola or cup of coffee in the late afternoon may keep you awake at midnight. Also, beware...sensitivity to caffeine can increase with age.

Signs of Overwhelming Stress

The following are indicators that you should seek professional help for managing stress:

- You feel trapped, like there's nowhere to turn
- You worry excessively and can't concentrate
- The way you feel affects your sleep, your eating habits, your job, your relationships, your everyday life.

If you or a family member are feeling overwhelmed by stress, contact your EAP for confidential counseling, referrals or information.

Employee Assistance Program Services

PROVIDED BY YOUR EMPLOYER FOR YOU AND YOUR DEPENDENTS

Your Employee Assistance Program is a prepaid and confidential program designed to help employees and their dependents resolve problems which may be interfering with their personal, work or home life. EAP Consultants offers help for marital and family issues, substance abuse, job concerns, emotional problems, life adjustments, legal issues, financial matters, and elder care and child care referrals.

If you're experiencing problems which are causing concern, you and your EAP Counselor can work as a team to find solutions.

For assistance, call EAP Consultants at: **800-869-0276** or request services by secure e-mail on the Member Access page of our website at <http://www.eapconsultants.com/>.