

Do You Love Someone Who Suffers From Depression?

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Do You Love Someone Who Suffers From Depression?

By Dave Turo-Shields, ACSW, LCSW

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DO YOU LOVE SOMEONE WHO SUFFERS FROM DEPRESSION?

Relationships in which one individual is depressed are nine times more likely to divorce. Wow, the normal divorce rate is already over 60% nationally! But, it's not always a spouse who is depressed, sometimes it is a child or an extended family member.

In this article, however, we'll be focusing on depressed partners. Most people agree that marriage should be 50/50. We all know this is an ideal, and, with the ebb-and-flow of marriage, the percentages slide up and down but should do so in both directions. For instance, one week the wife

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gives 70% and the husband 30% and another week the husband give 80% and the wife 20%. This is the way "ideal" marriages work.

Unfortunately, this is not the case when chronic depression enters the marriage. Let's say that the husband has chronic depression. The wife may pick up many of the tasks that would customarily fall to the husband. Depending on how long this goes on, an avalanche of negative momentum begins.

The longer this process goes on, the more the wife begins to feel resentful, hence, there is less compassion for the

one struggling with depression. Yet, for the wife, it's like being a single mother while married. I've been told by many spouses that it would be easier to be a single parent than to live with a spouse struggling with depression, because it's like having a special-needs child in addition to all the other responsibilities.

I do not make any of these remarks to assign blame or heighten anyone's sense of being victimized. It's very important to understand that EVERYONE suffers when depression attacks a loved one. Blame only functions to create animosity and distance between two loved ones.

Sometimes the spouse of a depressed partner becomes depressed as a result of living within a "depressed lifestyle" for too long. Depression is said to be contagious and can become a shroud over the spouse or family. It's also vital to consider that depression may not only be genetic, but it can also be taught. You heard me right. For instance, our children's most powerful classroom is the home. Both "Nature and Nurture" contribute to depression.

Depression works its way into your moods, attitudes, behaviors, tone of voice, posture, life outlook, personal hygiene, work ethic, spiritual beliefs and so on. If you live in a "depression atmosphere" you are constantly modeling and teaching how to be depressed. I hope this serves as inspiration for change, not shame. Shame only feeds the power of depression.

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The first step in a plan of action is to know that it is actually depression that you're dealing with. I won't go into those details here. You can find those answers at the website listed in my biography below.

Naming and accepting the problem is half the battle, for BOTH spouses. Why? Well, when folks are depressed, there is no obvious scientific evidence to prove it. And yet people have an instinctive need to what is causing such pain. The depressed person may project their negative feelings onto those closest to them, i.e. a spouse, a boss, the children, the neighbors etc. If you're married to a depressed person, at times you may question your own sanity.

You might blame external sources for your spouse's suffering. Without understanding, you might attack your spouse, assuming they do not care or are lazy. What appears to be marital problems, may, in fact, be depression.

But certainly marital problems can develop over time when depression goes untreated.

Another important fact to point out is that men and women experience depression differently and each will respond differently when their spouse is depressed. This requires two separate articles just to begin to respectively cover gender issues involved in depression.

Here's what to do. First and foremost, realize that depression is the foe, not your spouse. Developing a "we" instead of an "I" approach to depression treatment is vital. A good recovery motto might be best summed up from the cartoon, Bob the Builder: "Can WE do it? Yes WE can!"

Do everything you can to learn about depression. Seek professional advice. If depression has been present for a long time, both the relationship and the depression will require attention.

Have individual and marital recovery plans. It's the surest way to give depression the one-two punch that can knock it out of your lives. Write your recovery plans down and spend time reviewing, modifying and noting progress made.

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Once depression is stabilized, create a list of "red flag" symptoms. This serves as your safety net. If these symptoms recur it would indicate that prompt attention is required. Then list solutions you each are willing to act on if you notice symptoms reappearing. Commit to this in writing and each of you sign it.

Create external support systems. Note that I did not say external griping sessions. There's a major difference between griping and purging. The former only feeds righteous resentment, and deepens the depression problem overall, and the latter helps clean you out.

Support pillars can be comprised of friends, colleagues, churches, support groups and any place you decide is safe to disclose to. Do not hide your dirty laundry in the closet, so-to-speak. Depression loves to isolate individuals, marriages and entire families. It's one of the primary ways it grows strong.

Do recovery activities together. Attend therapy or psychiatry sessions together. Participate in online counseling together. Read a depression recovery book

together. Exercise together, pray together or keep a mood log together. If your children are at the appropriate age, educate them about chronic depression. There are good children's books on chronic parent illness.

Most importantly, develop the "WE!" It's you and your spouse against this powerful depression foe. Together you can do this!

Best recovery wishes and always let me know if I can be of any help.

Dave Turo-Shields, ACSW, LCSW is an author, university faculty member, success coach and veteran psychotherapist whose passion is guiding others to their own success in life. For weekly doses of the web's HOTTEST success tips, sign up for Dave's powerful "Feeling Great!" ezine at <http://www.Overcoming-Depression.com>

5 Reasons To Not Let Depression Control You Anymore!

By Adrian Calvin

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Family - It can be very vexing to loved one's when you are depressed. On one hand they want nothing but the best for you, but on the other they sometimes get frustrated and wonder why you can't simply snap out of it. It can be particularly hard on children of someone with depression as it may affect their outlook on life for many years to come. Having experienced this myself, I can say definitely this the number one reason to fight your depression.

Work – Work life generally suffers when in the throws of depression. It is more difficult to concentrate and not as easy to create and maintain good professional working relationships and partnerships. Furthermore, it makes being a "Self-starter" more unlikely. Rather than moving forward, maintaining the status-quo becomes more acceptable, even if only unconsciously.

Love - The love life of a person with depression can suffer tremendously. Regardless of How much someone may profess their dedication to another person, if the other person can never see the bright side, it can wear on them. Life is short, right? Love conquers A WHOLE LOT, but it doesn't conquer everything. Sometimes we must add internal fortitude to love to truly be invincible. Besides isn't it better to fight, not just for you, but for this person that you love as well?

Health - University studies have proven that people who are depressed are more likely to get sick, and more likely to die of an illness than those who are content. It is in your benefit, health wise, to fight your depression as well. A recent New York Times article, citing a University study, indicated that persons who have been diagnosed as depressed have more hospital visits, and a shorter lifespan.

Prosperity - The depressed person sometimes lacks clarity of thought, and may miss golden opportunities to improve their lives if only they had been paying attention. This may be, perhaps, the most important point, since many people believe they would be happier if only this part of their life, or that part of their life, etc was different. Allowing good things to happen in your life might just give you the jump start needed to end the cycle of depression and self imposed-isolation(even if only figuratively).

Fighting depression can help your life in many ways. In some ways, the fight in itself is also a reward. You become stronger, do better at work, have better relationships, and can focus on what is really important in life so that you can improve it, for yourself, your family, friends, and loved ones.

Adrian Calvin is co-founder of kertera.com. A mental health forum for people to discuss depression, stress, anxiety and more. If you would like to visit, then type

in your web

browser.

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