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Single Mothers At Greater Risk For Depression

By Dave Turo-Shields, ACSW, LCSW

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SINGLE MOTHERS AT GREATER RISK FOR DEPRESSION

In a recent study of 2,921 single and married mothers it was discovered that single mothers have a 40% higher incidence of major depression, with a depressive episode lasting an average of 12 months.

There are two primary areas that catapult single mothers into depression. These are:

1. Increased number of life stresses
2. Decreased amount of social support

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These findings correlate strongly with my experience in working with depressed, single mothers. What the research did not address was the Catch-22 that single mothers are in.

If you are a single parent you already know what I am about to say. If a non-married, childless adult observed all that a single parent does throughout a day, they would need two days sleep to recover from watching such an exhausting day in the life of a single mom.

A single mother often does the work of three people on any given day. Now, ask that single-mother to take time to reduce a stressor and increase her social support system

and boy are you in for a fight!

There does not appear to be a way out. It's love, duty, hard work and little sleep for single moms.

Is there a better way?

Yes! However, before presenting it to a single mother, you'd better make doubly sure you've done a glorious job of attempting to understand what her average day is like, **FIRST!**

When an individual is heard, and I mean really listened to from the heart, they have a tendency to open up ("Seek first to understand..."). Then you may have the opportunity to offer suggestions.

Now, let's flip the coin. Single mothers are often not just exhausted, but can also be jaded, indignant, prideful and stubborn. Life has not turned out the way they dreamed it would. Perhaps there were marital dreams, dreams of the perfect home, dreams of providing the best for their children, dreams of spending more time with their children and dreams of being the perfect family and more. All lost.

In place of those dreams they may have bitter feelings over the marital loss, less than optimal living situations, no "play" time with their children, visitation issues, child support issues, financial stress and the list could go on for many more pages, couldn't it?

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If you are a stressed-out single mom, please pay special and close attention to what I wrote above (maybe read it twice)... then read on.

Here are some ways to make your life easier. They are listed in no particular order, except if you are moderately-to-severely depressed. If that's the case then Major Depression (diagnosed by a professional) demands prompt attention first and foremost. Please, please take care of you! A few folks are counting on you to ;-)

1. Immediately seek help medically and professionally for depression.
2. Live forgiven towards yourself and others.
3. Compromise with that critical "Inner Judge" that only seems to want to persecute you unfairly.
4. Put down your pride and take ALL the help you can get -- if people offer, accept; if you need help, ask!

5. Implement "quickie" stress relievers such as deep breathing, going to a getaway in the mind, a quick 10 minute hot shower...
6. Get organized and/or ask for help in doing so. It's especially important to do so around daily routines such as morning rituals, after-school rituals, chores, mealtimes, baths, bedtimes and family fun time.
7. Keep the clutter-bug out of your life. Commit to only looking at mail once. Recycle household items continually -- if you're out of space, it's time to recycle. Get your kids involved.
8. Create a single parent co-op, where you can switch on and off with transporting kids, doing house or apartment projects, babysitting for each other...
9. Are you doing for your children what they can do for themselves? Feed their sense of mastery and independence. They often will feel great knowing they have helped their family out in some way.
10. Keep a sense of humor. Many a single mother has told me, "If I didn't laugh I don't know what I'd do."
11. Get your children involved in camps, church, Sunday Bible School, Big Brother/Big Sister Programs, mentoring programs. Let others offer what you don't have the time or energy to offer.
12. Seek financial advice. Having direction and a plan sure beats constant worrying!

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13. Keep a family calendar. It's nice to allow your kids to be in activities, but don't overdo it — one per season is a good rule.
14. Make a list of stressors. Decide what you have direct control over and focus there, first — in ways that you can. With the other items, learn to let go.
15. Take itty-bitty timeouts just for you! I once knew of a mom that bought a wild-looking red bath robe. The rule was when mom came out of her room with that robe on, no one was allowed to ask for anything unless the house was on fire.
16. Playing off the co-op idea above, create a single mothers support group. Single mothers are one of THE most creative and resourceful groups on the planet! Why not take full advantage of that! Rotate child care from meeting to meeting, receive support directly from others who've been there and pool your resources.

There's no doubt about it, you've been carved out for a very special job here on earth. Your job description is longer than Santa's gift list.

The ideas above do work and are working in single mothers'

lives right now. Pick just one area and begin there. When it's ALL overwhelming, simply start where you're at. If you need help, just let me know.

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 webs HOTTEST success tips, sign up for Dave's powerful "Feeling Great!" ezine at <http://www.Overcoming-Depression.com>

Postpartum Depression: What Women Aren't Telling Their Doctors

By Robyn B. Surdel

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What New Mothers May NOT be telling Their Doctors

By: Robyn B. Surdel
Robyn's Nest ~ The Parenting Network

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Postpartum mood disorders come in many shapes and sizes. Approximately 80% of all women in the United States will experience some form of mood disorder after the birth of their child. The emotional and physical discomfort they feel can be triggered by hormonal changes, lack of sleep, stress, socioeconomic factors and other changes. What is concerning, however, is that only 20% of women actually report their feelings to a qualified health professional, such as their physician, midwife, or pediatrician. Perhaps women are concerned about the stigma associated with mental health issues, or they fear that in reporting their mood swings and emotional pain they may jeopardize custody of their new baby. Whatever the reason, it's time to change the way we look at perinatal (after birth) mood disorders.

The majority of women experience what is referred to as "the new baby blues". This milder form of postpartum depression may be characterized by insomnia, fatigue, anxiety, tearfulness or sadness and may last anywhere from several hours to a week. The more serious forms of perinatal mood disorders include Postpartum Depression and the extremely severe Postpartum Psychosis.

Approximately 10–15% of new mothers will experience Postpartum Depression. Family members, partners and health professionals should watch for symptoms that could include sleeping and eating disturbances, anxiety and insecurity, mood swings, confusion, loss of self, guilt or shame, and thoughts of harming herself.

Dr. Cheryl Beck and Dr. Robert Gable at the University of Connecticut have developed a new screening tool to assist health care professionals with identifying new mothers who may be at risk or suffering from postpartum depression. Dr. Beck suggests that doctors, midwives, and nursing staff should continuously evaluate new mothers throughout the first year after giving birth as the more severe of these conditions may not surface until well after the 6–week obstetric check up.

While only 1% of new mothers may experience the more obvious symptoms of Postpartum Psychosis (hallucinations, delusions, an inability to sleep, poor appetite, and bizarre/irrational behavior) these are the women who are at risk of hurting themselves or their new baby. Early detection of perinatal mood disorders is imperative to prevent another senseless loss of life, however our perception of mental illness and its associated diseases must change. Women need to feel confident that their healthcare professionals will take appropriate steps to get them the help they need without fear of shame or consequence.

If you are concerned that someone you love is experiencing any of the above symptoms, please request help in your area by going on the web to www.postpartum.net. Professionals are standing by to

answer your questions.

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After having children, Robyn found that there was a need for reliable and current information on all

children's issues. Not finding the medical, behavior or psychological information available to parents or grandparents, she wondered what to do. Of course, being skilled on the computer, informed about children's issues and with a desire to help others, she started her web site and put aired information on TV.



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