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WONDERING IF YOU ARE DEPRESSED?

Read the following and take the questionnaire at the end.

What's the Issue?

There may be times in your life when you wonder if you are depressed. It is the most common mood problem in our culture, and is a frequent topic in the popular press. Thankfully, depression has lost much of the stigma it used to carry, and screening for depression in schools and the workplace is becoming more common - like blood pressure screenings.

Feelings of depression range from mild to severe. They can come and go in short or long periods of time, lasting less than an hour or up to years at a time, occurring at certain times of the day, the month or the year, and can be triggered by a variety of experiences and thoughts.

Feeling sad or low at times in your life is normal and healthy. However, when feeling down begins to interfere with your ability to enjoy relationships, succeed at work or to manage the daily responsibilities of life it's time for a change.

Feeling sad or low at times in your life is normal and healthy. It is part of the full range of emotions that makes life so interesting and rich. However, when feeling down begins to interfere with your ability to enjoy relationships, succeed at work or to manage the daily responsibilities of life it's time for a change.

What are the Symptoms?

Low energy and feeling tired or fatigued are common symptoms of depression. This typically results in a loss of interest in activities that were previously enjoyed. Withdrawing from social situations and neglecting one's personal appearance are also common, and are related to a sense of worthlessness. A loss of appetite or over-eating occurs among many people experiencing depression. Sleep disturbances - not falling asleep, waking up and not going back, or sleeping excessive amounts of time - are also typical. Brain fog and trouble concentrating are reported by many people who are depressed. And if the depression is severe thoughts of death, suicidal ideation, and even suicide attempts can occur.

What can you do?

Because there are typically multiple and sometimes complex causes I encourage a comprehensive and holistic approach to any mood problem. A good place to start is with your physician who can rule out any physical causes (For instance, did you know that a low thyroid is one of the leading causes of depression?). Also consider seeing a health care professional who is trained to help you assess your dietary needs (For example, excess sugar or alcohol can contribute to depression) and can possibly suggest herbal or supplement options. If you are not getting an average of about eight hours of sleep on a regular basis this

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is most likely contributing to your low mood. Evaluate the amount and type of physical exercise you are getting (Exercise alone has been shown to improve mood) and consider changing your routine. Assess your stress level, and if it is high, consider ways to reduce it to a normal level. And if you are feeling stuck consider seeing a licensed mental health professional for assistance.

The CES Depression Scale

Following is one of the most commonly used questionnaires that can help you decide if you are experiencing depression. It is the Center for Epidemiological Studies Scale that was developed by the National Institute of Mental Health. Answer the questions and then read the material following.

Directions: Circle the number before each statement that best describes how you felt or behaved during the past week.

0=rarely or none (less than 1 day)

1=some or a little (1-2 days)

2=occasionally or moderate (3-4 days)

3=most or all of the time (5-7 days)

0 1 2 3 I was bothered by things that usually don't bother me.

0 1 2 3 I did not feel like eating; my appetite was poor.

0 1 2 3 I felt that I could not shake off the blues even with help from my family/friends.

0 1 2 3 I felt that I was just as good as other people.

0 1 2 3 I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing.

0 1 2 3 I felt depressed.

0 1 2 3 I felt that everything I did was an effort.

0 1 2 3 I felt hopeful about the future.

0 1 2 3 I thought my life had been a failure.

0 1 2 3 I feel fearful.

0 1 2 3 My sleep was restless.

0 1 2 3 I was happy.

0 1 2 3 I talked less than usual

0 1 2 3 I felt lonely.

0 1 2 3 People were unfriendly.

0 1 2 3 I enjoyed life.

0 1 2 3 I had crying spells.

0 1 2 3 I felt sad.

0 1 2 3 I felt that people disliked me.

0 1 2 3 I could not "get going."



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Scoring: add up all the circled numbers – NOTE – questions 4, 8, 12 and 16 are reverse scored, meaning that a 3 is scored as a 0 and a 0 is scored as a 3; a 1 is scored as a 2 and a 2 is scored as a 1.

What does my score mean?

How your score is interpreted depends on your age and your culture. However, in general, a total score between 10 and 15 suggests that you may be mildly depressed. A score between 16 and 25 suggests that you may be moderately depressed. A score above 25 suggests that you may be experiencing significant depression. However, this score is just one indicator of how you are feeling at this moment and can be used as a guide in terms of changes you may wish to make or help you may want to receive.

Whatever your score, this is an opportunity for some self-reflection. Review your responses to the questions for greater insight into how your life is going at this time. Certain responses may suggest changes that you wish to make in your life.

- ▶ And if you are not sure where to begin please refer back to the section on page 1 titled "*What can you do?*"

I hope this Wondering If You Are Depressed Tip Sheet has been helpful to you. Feel free to forward it to a friend. To obtain professional support for your concerns please contact me, David Weiskotten Ph.D., at 610-746-9588.