

## DEPRESSION: a Common and Serious Condition

Just about everyone goes through times of feeling "down," but the sadness usually doesn't linger. When a person has clinical depression, however, it interferes with everyday activities and relationships.

Depression is a common illness, affecting millions of Americans each year. It is more prevalent in women, although men also get depression, and can happen at any age.

Depression often occurs because of a combination of factors including genes, brain chemistry and situations such as the death of a loved one, job loss or other traumatic event. People with depression often have other conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol/drug dependency, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or Parkinson's disease.

Depressive disorders range from major depression to postpartum depression to seasonal affective disorder. The most common type is major depression (also called *major depressive disorder*) and dysthymic disorder (also called *dysthymia*).

**Major depression** is characterized by a combination of symptoms that interfere with a person's ability to work, sleep, study, eat and enjoy activities. Major depression prevents a person from functioning normally. It may occur only once in a person's lifetime but, more often, it recurs throughout a person's life.

**Dysthymic disorder** is characterized by long-term (two years or longer) but less severe symptoms that can prevent someone from functioning normally and feeling well. People with dysthymic disorder may also experience one or more episodes of major depression during their lifetimes.

Common methods for treating depression include psychotherapy and medication. Cognitive behavioral therapy teaches people to change their negative thinking and behavior. Interpersonal therapy helps people work through troubling personal relationships that may cause or contribute to depression.

Antidepressant medications help balance chemicals in the brain called "neurotransmitters," which affect a person's mood. It can be a trial-and-error process, as some people take several medications until finding one that provides good results with fewer side effects. Children, teens and young adults taking antidepressants should be monitored closely for worsening depression or suicidal thoughts/behavior, especially during the first few weeks of treatment.

The good news is that treatment can help those with clinical depression get better, even in severe cases. People who are suffering from depression should talk to someone with knowledge of mental health resources – such as a doctor, social worker or church pastor.

Source: National Institute of Mental Health

### SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

Ongoing sad, anxious or empty feelings
Feeling helpless, hopeless or guilty
Restlessness and irritability
Loss of interest in activities or hobbies
Difficulty concentrating, remembering details or making decisions
Sleep trouble: insomnia or wanting to sleep all the time
Eating issues: overeating or the loss of appetite
Suicidal thoughts
Ongoing pains, headaches or digestive problems

## SUICIDE: RISKS, WARNING SIGNS AND PREVENTION



Each year, tens of thousands of Americans intentionally take their own lives

Dozens of local families are impacted by suicide, as the Stark County Health Department reported 37 people completed suicide in 2010.

Suicide attempts are much more common than completed suicides, as an estimated 11 attempts occur per every suicide death. Many of these suicide attempts are carried out in a somewhat nonviolent way – such as poisoning or overdose – that makes rescue possible. These attempts often represent a desperate cry for help, not a harmless stunt to get attention.

Almost four times as many males compared to females die by suicide. Firearms, suffocation and poison are the most common methods of suicide overall. However, men and women differ in the method used. Males, especially elderly men, are more likely to choose violent methods such as shooting themselves. As a result, suicide attempts by men are more likely to be completed.

### RISK FACTORS

Suicidal behavior is complex. Some risk factors vary with age, gender or ethnic group. Others may occur in combination or change over time. Risk factors for suicide include:

- Depression and other mental disorders
- Substance abuse problems, often in combination with other mental disorders
- Prior suicide attempt
- Family history of suicide, mental disorder or substance abuse
- Family violence, including physical or sexual abuse
- Firearms in the home
- Imprisonment
- Exposure to the suicidal behavior of others such as family members, peers or people in the national media spotlight

### IF YOU ARE IN A CRISIS AND NEED HELP RIGHT AWAY

CALL THE 24-HOUR NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE AT

**1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

THE FREE SERVICE IS AVAILABLE TO ANYONE, WHETHER YOU CALL FOR YOURSELF OR A LOVED ONE. ALL CALLS ARE CONFIDENTIAL.

### WARNING SIGNS

About 75 percent of people who die by suicide exhibit some warning signs. These may include:

- Having difficulty concentrating, thinking clearly and performing at school/work
- Giving away belongings and "getting affairs in order"
- Talking about suicide or "going away"
- Withdrawing from friends, family and activities
- Performing self-destructive behaviors such as abusing alcohol or drugs, driving dangerously or "cutting"
- Talking about death/suicide or feelings of guilt and hopelessness
- Changing normal routine, including sleeping and eating patterns
- Becoming preoccupied with death and violence

### WHAT TO DO

If a loved one has attempted suicide or you think he or she may be in immediate danger of doing so, get emergency help.

If you think your loved one is considering suicide, talk about your concerns. You may not be able to force someone to get professional help, but you can offer support and assist your loved one in making an appointment with a mental health provider.

### SUICIDE PREVENTION

If you struggle with suicidal thoughts, treatment such as cognitive therapy and medication can help. Here are some additional suggestions to help you consider other options when thoughts of self-harm arise:

- Rid your home of guns, knives or dangerous medications that can be used as tools for suicide. If you take medications that have a potential for overdose, have a family member or friend give you the medications as prescribed.
- Seek treatment for the underlying cause – such as depression or substance abuse – or your suicidal thoughts will likely return.
- Upon seeking mental health care, stick to your treatment plan of follow-up appointments and taking medications exactly as directed.
- Reach out for support from family, friends, church groups or community resources.
- Learn to spot your danger signs early. Draft a written plan with a loved one or mental health provider, so you can take the right steps even at times when you do not have the best judgment.
- Remember that suicidal feelings are temporary. Take one step at a time, and don't act impulsively.

## Working through the Emotions of Suicide Grief

While any death loss is painful, families touched by suicide experience a complex mix of intense emotions.

Many people are consumed with guilt, wondering if they missed signs or could have prevented their loved one's death. "Sudden death loss – whether by suicide, homicide, accidents, etc. – is often a more complicated and prolonged grieving process," said Aultman Grief Services Director Brenda Brown. "Guilt is huge among families and friends of persons who complete suicide. Working through this guilt is often a lifelong process."

Along with guilt, survivors frequently feel anger toward the person who completed suicide or snap at others for missing clues

about suicidal intentions. "So often, persons who complete suicide feel like their family and friends would be better off without them," Brown said. "But from the family's perspective, there is anger because survivors often feel like the suicide was preventable versus an illness that is not."

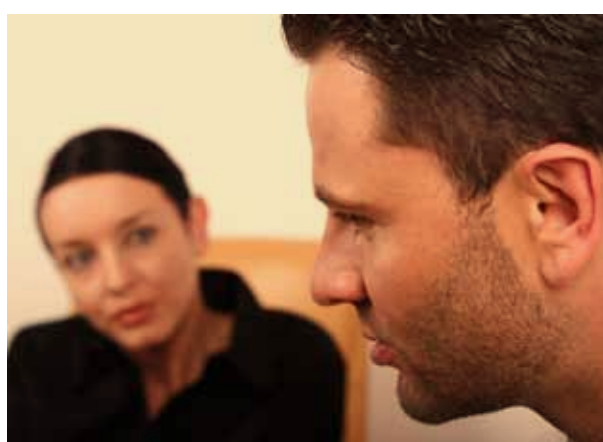
While working through grief after a loved one's suicide, it is essential for survivors to protect their own well-being. Tips include:

- Lean on a network of family, friends, co-workers and ministers who will listen, encourage and provide support.
- Grieve for your loved one in your own way and at your own pace.
- Understand that emotional ups and downs are natural, even years after the suicide. Holidays and

special events can be painful reminders of your loved one's death, and some days will be easier than others.

Get help from a grief counselor. Share your story and strength by joining a support group for families impacted by suicide.

"Every death situation is different, and every relationship with the victim is unique. For people who seek professional help, it's important for counselors to become familiar with their clients, the situation and their client's relationship with the person who completed suicide," Brown explained. "With support, counseling and work on the survivor's part, healing can eventually come."



### LOCAL SUICIDE GRIEF RESOURCES

#### AULTMAN GRIEF SERVICES

Support groups, school grief groups and individual grief resources  
**330-479-4835**

#### THE CRISIS CENTER

Support group for adults and teens (ages 15 and up) whose loved ones completed suicide  
**330-452-9812**



MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

AULTMAN: A CENTER OF EXCELLENCE FOR...



## Heart

Aultman Hospital has been named one of the nation's 50 Top Cardiovascular Hospitals by Thomson Reuters for 2011. At the Aultman Heart Center, prevention is a priority. Our education and risk factor identification programs can help you keep your heart healthy.



## Cancer

The Aultman Cancer Center is a fusion of ideas, technology, talent and compassion. The physicians associated with Aultman Cancer Center evaluate and design individual patient treatment plans based on the type, stage and aggressiveness of the patient's disease.



## Neurosurgery/ Stroke

Trauma or illness involving the brain, spinal cord or nervous system can be a frightening experience for a patient and loved ones. Take comfort in knowing you are in the hands of some of the region's most skilled neurological experts, neurosurgeons and stroke specialists.



## Women/Children

Together with our patients, the Aultman Birth Center is promoting and uniting families for life. We take a team approach to providing the best care for you and your baby — under one roof.



## Emergency/ Trauma

Aultman's Emergency/Trauma Center, staffed by board-certified physicians, is designed to allow the fastest access possible to the latest in emergency-care technology.



## Orthopaedics

Many orthopaedic problems need more than one medical service. You may require emergency room treatment, medical treatment, surgery, therapy, medical equipment for the home or intense on-site rehabilitation.



## Critical Care Medicine

Going to an intensive care unit (ICU) can be a very emotional experience. Aultman patients receive specialized care from our Intensivist Program and our dedicated group of critical care nurses, critical care pharmacists, respiratory therapists and intensivists.

**AULTMAN**  
Aultman is My Hospital™

# Aultman Inpatient Psychiatric Team Provides Care and Compassion



## Patients with mental health issues can turn to the Aultman Inpatient Psychiatric Unit for comprehensive care and support

The dedicated unit, located on the sixth floor of Aultman Hospital, provides 24/7 nursing care and security coverage. It features 31 semiprivate beds, along with conference rooms for group therapy and family counseling.

The inpatient psychiatric patient care team is led by Michael Rich, M.D., board-certified psychiatrist and medical director of Aultman's psychiatric program. Many of the

unit's nurses are certified in psychiatric and mental health, a designation earned by working thousands of hours in the psychiatric unit and passing the certification test.

Additional members of the inpatient team include social workers, occupational therapists and dietitians. Treatment options range from group and individual therapy to medication and education to other specialized methods. "Our goal is to not only

care for patients while they are in the hospital but to prepare them for discharge," said Mick DeWitt, director of the inpatient psychiatric unit. "We provide connections to community service organizations and are continuously looking for new ways to assist our patients in their recovery."

Today's economic conditions are bringing a new patient population to the Aultman Inpatient Psychiatric Unit. "We are seeing more and more people who feel they have nowhere to turn," DeWitt shared. "They have lost their jobs, home and self-esteem. This leads to depression and, many times, substance abuse."

Unlike other health conditions, some people do not feel comfortable seeking help for mental health concerns until the problem becomes severe. "Many people wait until they are at a critical phase in their illness before seeking treatment, as there is still a stigma attached to mental illness," DeWitt explained. "It's important for us to educate everyone on what mental illness is, so the family can provide much-needed support for the patient during and after hospitalization."

“ WE TREAT THE WHOLE PATIENT, NOT JUST THE MENTAL ILLNESS. – TERI LIESER, RN ”

### MENTAL ILLNESS FACTS

- One in four U.S. adults is impacted by a mental health disorder in any given year. That's approximately 57.7 million people.
- About one in 10 children lives with a serious mental or emotional disorder.
- About 2.4 million Americans live with schizophrenia.
- Bipolar disorder affects 5.7 million American adults — approximately 2.6 percent of the adult population — per year.
- The annual economic, indirect cost of mental illness in the United States is an estimated \$79 billion. Of that total, \$63 billion reflects lost productivity as a result of the illness.

Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness

## AULTMAN OFFERS ALTERNATIVES TO INPATIENT PSYCHIATRIC THERAPY

Aultman's Outpatient Psychiatric Services provide the therapy people need without an overnight stay at the hospital

The outpatient offerings, called Partial Hospitalization and Intensive Outpatient Therapy, provide short-term, daily programming. "We provide crisis stabilization to prevent psychiatric hospitalization or to help patients transition from inpatient care to community life," said Teri Lieser, RN, with the Partial Hospitalization Program. "Our programs promote individual responsibility and independence."

Intensive Outpatient Therapy is available weekdays from 8 a.m. to noon, while patients in the Partial Hospitalization Program continue until 2:30 p.m. Arrangements can be made for patients with daytime school or work commitments.

"Our psychiatric care team includes our medical director, registered nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, occupational therapists, a registered dietitian and clinical counselors who also provide art therapy," Lieser explained. "We work with each patient to develop a customized, confidential care plan."

The outpatient programs are held on the sixth floor of Aultman Hospital. Patients may enter the

### AULTMAN HOSPITAL'S OUTPATIENT PSYCHIATRIC PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

- Individual, marital/family and group therapy
- Nutrition services
- Education on:
  - Stress management
  - Anger management
  - Relaxation
  - Assertiveness
  - Mental illness
  - Addictive behaviors
  - Medication
  - Self-esteem
  - Community resources

programs as they transition from the inpatient psychiatric unit or by referral from a physician, counselor or other mental health professional. Self-referrals are also accepted.

"We help patients with everything from working through insurance issues to finding spiritual support to learning how diet and exercise play an important role in overall health," Lieser shared. "We treat the whole patient, not just the mental illness."

In addition to helping patients, the outpatient team provides education for health care professionals and the community. Chrissy Fratena, clinical nurse specialist and outpatient psychiatric services coordinator, organizes hospital education on mental health topics as well as community programs throughout the year. For example, the February 2011 Psychiatric Symposium featured presentations on seasonal affective disorder and new treatment approaches in chemical dependency.

No matter what the patient's condition, Lieser finds satisfaction in helping people on the road to recovery. "It's fulfilling to watch patients get better and become more independent," she said. "We get to know patients' family members as well, educating them on the importance of caring for themselves in addition to their loved ones."

### LEARN MORE

To leave a confidential voice-mail message or learn more about the Aultman psychiatric outpatient programs, call 330-363-5238.

# COMBATING STRESS

**Everyone experiences stress at times.** Stress can actually be a good thing, helping you develop coping skills and adapt to new situations throughout life. However, the benefits diminish quickly when stress begins to overwhelm you.

**Prolonged stress can take a serious physical and mental toll.** High stress levels have been linked to everything from depression to cardiovascular disease to cancer. Here are some tips to help you reduce stress and maintain good health:

### EXERCISE

Whether you're a serious athlete or a little less ambitious, physical activity is a great stress reliever. Exercise boosts feel-good endorphins in your body, improving your mood and refocusing your mind. Make time to exercise at least 3-4 days a week.

### UNITE

Instead of isolating yourself when you feel stressed, reach out to family, friends and people in need. Talk to your loved ones about your feelings and discuss solutions. Volunteer for a charitable organization, and you'll discover how good helping others makes you feel.

### LAUGH

Even if you have to force a fake laugh when you're grumpy, laughter can help you feel better. It increases and then reduces your stress response, in addition to boosting your heart rate and blood pressure, resulting in a happy and relaxed feeling.

### SIMPLIFY

Life's hectic pace can wear you down physically and mentally. Make to-do lists to help you get organized and manage your time more effectively. If your calendar is already full and you feel overwhelmed, learn to say no to new activities. "Unplug" from the constant stimulation of your TV, computer and smartphone by taking a walk outside, meditating, reading a book or enjoying other relaxing activities.

### FOCUS

It's easy to feel overwhelmed when you lump your problems together. Consider focusing on your issues one at a time. Don't needlessly dwell on the past or worry about future things you cannot control. Try to maintain a positive attitude, even when you're feeling discouraged.

### REST

Sleep gives your body time to recover from stressful events. Your mood, energy level, concentration and physical health are impacted by the quality and amount of sleep you get. If stress is affecting your sleep, make sure you have a quiet, relaxing bedtime routine — and stick to a consistent schedule.

### EAT

Some people lose their appetite during stressful times, while others cope by eating too much. It is important to eat healthy and well-balanced meals, including plenty of fruits and vegetables.

### ASK

If these self-care tips aren't helping you manage stress, you may need to ask for help from a mental health professional. Therapists and counselors can help you pinpoint your main sources of stress and learn new coping skills.

## May is National Mental Health Month

**National Mental Health Month** highlights efforts to promote mental health, encourage treatment for people with mental illness and support access to care.

**Mental Health America**, a leading nonprofit group that is dedicated to improving the mental health of all Americans, created Mental Health Month more than 50 years ago. This year's campaign emphasizes that one in four American adults lives with a diagnosable, treatable mental health condition — and the fact that they can go on to live full, productive lives.

If you are suffering from stress, depression or other mental health concerns, now is the perfect time to seek help. Talk to your primary care doctor or a mental health professional to learn how you can live a healthier life, physically and mentally.

