Coping With The Blues

Everyone experiences the blues from time to time. Feelings of sadness, hurt, loneliness, stress, or anger can strike along with difficult life experiences. You feel upset. Feelings linger longer than you'd like, but you can still function and you know you will bounce back. Can you learn skills to help you bounce back faster and achieve new personal heights in response to life's difficulties? Yes, you can!

Are the Blues a Clue?

Certain life events or medical problems can cause overwhelming sadness. These conditions include symptoms of depression that require medical treatment or support from mental health professionals. This is not the blues. These are serious health concerns. Conditions such as postpartum depression, seasonal affective disorder (winter depression), grief reactions, medical or drug-induced depressive disorders, and the sudden onset of depressive symptoms in elderly persons may require medical care.

Shooing Away the Blues

The rule with the blues is being patient with yourself, but persistent with intervention. If you have ruled out depression, get back to your old self by changing how you think and practicing behaviors that produce positive outcomes in your life.

Think Differently. Much has been said about the power of positive thinking. Don't dismiss it as too simplistic. It is easier to believe that external events control the way you feel and that the environment must change, not you. Sometimes the environment (or other people) should change, but what if change is not forthcoming? The only thing left is altering your reaction. This is the pathway to empowerment and the way ordinary people have accomplished extraordinary things.

Don't deny it. When you feel yourself slipping into the blues, don't deny it. Instead, take charge of your thoughts, and decide, "I am not going to let this happen. I am not going to let this drag me down." Then take action. Do things that will cause you to think in more positive ways. Do things you enjoy, talk to people who will lift you up, seek out humor, dress cheerfully, alter your routine, and get proactive with important goals, exciting plans, and magnificent ideas you have for your life.

Focus on health. See your doctor regularly and get the proper nutrition and exercise. It will improve your stamina, make you feel better, and positively influence your mood. Eating properly, especially in the morning, limiting caffeine, reducing the intake of sugar, and taking a multiple vitamin daily can help your body and its ability to cope

My Life Seems Mundane

If you drift along, only responding to cause and effects around you, you can expect "Monday morning blues" more often. Life does not have to be mundane. Being proactive, thinking and acting "upstream" to prevent life crises, acting on goals, and fighting procrastination will invigorate your life. The payoff is feeling the blues less

What the EAP Can Do

The EAP can evaluate and refer you to medical treatment for depression. If you are not depressed, the EAP can help you examine issues that are making you blue. Ambivalence about your job, unresolved conflicts in relationships, new challenges in your life, adjusting to losses, and financial difficulties are just a few issues that can give you the blues. The EAP will help you find the answers.

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

Major depression is a treatable psychiatric illness. It is not what we mean when talking about the blues. Depression often runs in families. If you experience depression, it can be life threatening because in its severe form, it can produce suicidal thoughts. Spotting symptoms of depression and seeking a professional evaluation is your first step. If alcohol or drug use is associated with any of the following symptoms, an evaluation for addictive disease is also important.

SYMPTOMS of DEPRESSION:

- feelings of hopelessness and despair, low self-esteem;
- feelings of sadness, crying jags;
- sleep disturbances (too much sleep, or the inability to sleep);
- noticeable increases or decreases in appetite with significant changes in weight, either up or down;
- loss of concentration, memory difficulties;
- low energy;
- inability to feel pleasure, reduced interest in fun activities;
- loss of sexual interest or interest in being with others;
- feeling physically worn down and sick;
- thoughts of "wanting to be out of your misery";
- suicidal thoughts or planning suicide (Note: This is a medical emergency . Get help immediately.)

This information is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or healthcare provider. Please consult your health care provider or EAP for advice about a personal concern or medical condition.

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