

Are You a Depressed Christian? Read This!

It's no wonder nearly one in 10 Americans suffers from depression.

"Top risk factors include being unable to work or unemployed; having no health insurance; suffering from obesity," notes psychologist Gregory L. Jantz, citing a Centers for Disease Control study.

"Unfortunately, those topics have dominated headlines for the past five years. What's worse, by 2020, the World Health Organization estimates depression will be second most debilitating disease worldwide."

The author of "Overcoming Anxiety, Worry and Fear," says these negative emotions along with sustained, excessive stress can lead to depression, which now overshadows other problems for which patients seek help at his clinic.

"Depression can be rooted in a number of problems, and those need to be addressed – simply taking a pill is not usually effective treatment. Anger, fear and guilt can all be underlying causes, even when the person isn't aware he's experiencing those feelings."

A holistic treatment approach, which may or may not include medication, helps people overcome a bout of the debilitating illness, and learn techniques to manage it themselves, he says.

People at risk of depression can work at maintaining their emotional equilibrium by counterbalancing negative feelings with optimism, hope and joy. This is most effective if they do this holistically, addressing the four main categories of human need.

“By purposefully feeding the intellectual, relational, physical, and spiritual aspects of your life positive emotions, you can achieve balance,” Jantz says.

He offers these suggestions:

- **Intellectual:** Be aware of what you're feeding to your mind. Try reading a positive, uplifting book, and setting aside time in your day to fill yourself up intellectually with constructive, encouraging messages. Be aware of what you are reading and listening to, and seek to counter the negative input we all get with positive influences.
- **Relational:** Think of a person you really enjoy talking to, someone who makes you feel good about yourself or someone who's just fun to be around. Plan a day to spend time with that person this week, even if it's just for a moment or two. Make the effort to verbalize your appreciation for his or her positive presence in your day.
- **Physical:** Physical activity is a wonderful way of promoting emotional health. Engage in some mild exercise this week. Take a walk around the neighborhood. Stroll through a city park. The goals are to get your body moving and to allow you to focus on something other than yourself and your surroundings. Greet your neighbors, stop at the park and watch someone playing with his dog, or cheer at a Little League game. Intentionally open up your focus to include the broader world around you.
- **Spiritual Support:** Take some time to nourish your spirit. Make sure to attend church services this week. Also listen to worship music. Spend time in quiet reflection and prayer. Intentionally engage in an activity that replenishes and reconnects your spirit.

If you are not depressed but feel anxious and stressed, have trouble sleeping or find you're not content much of the time,

Jantz says it's time to start taking care of yourself.

"Depression is painful and as debilitating as any other disease," he says. "Take steps to de-stress your life and to work on emotional balance before it gets worse."

Gregory L. Jantz has more than 25 years experience in mental health counseling and is the founder of The Center for Counseling and Health Resources, near Seattle, Wash. The Center, "a place for hope," provides comprehensive, coordinated care from a treatment team that addresses medical, physical, psychological, emotional, nutritional, fitness and spiritual factors involved in recovery. He is the best-selling author of more than 20 books, including "When Your Teenager Becomes...The Stranger in the House." If you're concerned you or a loved one may be depressed, and click the "Are You?" tab for a self-evaluation.