

The Family Room

By: Dr. Roy Don Whitehead

Real Men Face Real Depression (Part 4)

If 6,000,000 American men are depressed, where are they? (Statistics and quotes for this column are from National Institute of Mental Health website.) Take a look. They are all around you. They are fathers, husbands, brothers and uncles. They are boyfriends, coworkers, bosses and friends. They are deacons, el-

ders, pastors and schoolteachers. They are bus drivers, plumbers, attorneys and doctors. You will not have to look far to find them.

How can you identify them? They are tired and grumpy. They have little motivations and even less energy. Nothing seems fun to them. They may not sleep well or eat well. They may feel empty and hopeless. They may complain of headaches and

stomach problems.

Two groups of men merit special attention: the elderly and adolescents. Elderly white males have the highest rate of suicide of any age group. Most of these have a depressive illness that has been overlooked by family and healthcare workers.

It is easy to attribute symptoms of depression to aging rather than diagnose the depression correctly. If Grandpa is unhappy, sad and hopeless, that may be depression and not just getting older. If he has trouble remembering and concentrating, that too might signal depression.

Signs of depressive disorders in

adolescent males are often viewed as the normal mood swings of a teenager. Anger, trouble at school, negativity, withdrawal and grouching may be more than adolescent mood swings. They may be symptoms of depression.

Sometimes the depression is accompanied by a substance abuse problem. The adolescent uses the drugs or alcohol to mask the depression and help him fit in with a group. Suicide is a risk when adolescents are depressed. NIMH-supported researchers found that among adolescents who develop major depressive disorder, as many as seven percent

may die by suicide in the young adult years. Depression at any age can be fatal.

Thankfully depression can usually be successfully treated. Medication has become the first line of treatment for major depression and bipolar disorder in males and females.

There are several new antidepressant medications that can provide help with few potential side effects. Such medications are not habit-forming. These medications may take several weeks to work. Only your doctor or a psychiatrist can determine which of the many medications available would be best for you.

The first step for anyone who is depressed is the doctor's office.

The second step for depression treatment is the counselor's office. Therapy can help the depressed person find new ways to deal with life's problems, thus relieving some of the stress. The counselor can also help the depressed person deal with traumatic memories from the past, such as abuse.

Herbs, light therapy and electroconvulsive therapy are other potential treatments that should be discussed with the physician.

Help for depression is available. Take it.

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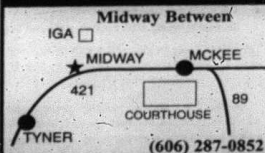
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