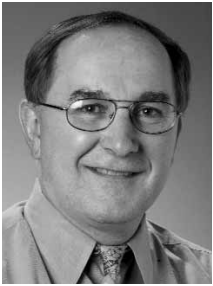


EmployeeCare News

Keeping you informed from EmployeeCare, your employee assistance program, a benefit extended by your organization to all employees and their household members.



Joe Hammann

Depression: A Tricky Illness

By Joe Hammann, Editor, *EmployeeCare News*

Some readers may question the word “illness” in the title of this article. Many who have not experienced depression in their lives may think of it more as a “condition” and not an illness. Many readers may believe that if a person simply turns their attention to other things, finds people to talk to and increases their physical activity – the depression feelings will ease.

There is “some” truth to this. Some depression symptoms do respond to counseling, thinking differently and increased activity. But, some depressions do not improve from only these approaches. This is where the “tricky” part enters. Depression, like cancer and diabetes, exists with many levels of seriousness. EmployeeCare counselors are trained to assess which treatment might effectively address how serious the depression is.

Like diabetes, a potential for developing depression can often be inherited. Statistics show persons who experience severe depression often have parents and grandparents who experienced severe depression or severe patterns of substance abuse.

When depression is severe (feeling exhausted, hopeless, enraged sometimes, suicidal and totally uninterested in life), talking and trying to increase a person’s motivation alone will not lead to calming



the depressive illness. This is important to know for those of us who have a friend or family member who is extremely depressed. It is easy for any of us to take the view that a deeply depressed person is just feeling overly sorry for themselves. We may believe a person is not improving because that person wishes to sulk and blame the outside world for their misery.

What may not occur to us is that a depressed person’s nervous system is functioning differently than our nervous system. Just like the pancreas of a diabetic does not function like the pancreas of someone who does not have diabetes, severely depressed persons are suffering from a malfunction of their physiology/neurology.

Individuals who are depressed will experience some of these symptoms in combination:

- Quickly changing moods
- Grouchy feelings
- Anxiety/nervousness
- Poor sleep patterns
- Fatigue
- Suicidal thoughts
- Weight gain or loss/appetite changes
- Difficulty concentrating
- Low motivation
- Body distress such as headaches/muscle aches, etc.

Again, the tricky part of depression is that we see many people's symptoms improve. Those who are not improving we might think are not working as diligently to rid themselves of the symptoms as those who have found ways to feel better.

The people who statistically get over depression faster are those whose symptoms have been brought about by an "outside stress" such as:

- The end of a relationship
- A death
- A job loss
- Financial stress
- An accident
- Feeling we caused someone else harm

These circumstances can occur at their own levels of severity too, but in many instances a person can recover with counseling. The above stresses can also be lessened by engaging in new behaviors (e.g. attending a support group).

Severe depression, on the other hand, will involve the symptoms mentioned above and will grow in scope when the circumstances listed above are experienced. This is because the severely depressed person is trying to fight the ravages of life with an impaired nervous system. Sometimes individuals with major depression do not realize their nervous system is not hitting on all cylinders and feel even worse because their attempts at feeling better are failing.

In these cases EmployeeCare will refer the person to a family doctor or psychiatrist to see if a medical approach will work better than just counseling.

If any reader is unsure how severe their own or loved one's depression is, EmployeeCare can be a starting point for sorting this out. Please call us at (937) 208-6626 to get yourself or your household member on the road to improved management of the trickiness of depression illness. For depression, even in severe cases, does improve if the person receives the types of treatment (sometimes in combination) that work best.

Stewart Street Bridge Detour

The Stewart Street bridge over the Great Miami River is closed while a replacement bridge is built. The new bridge is scheduled to open in December 2009.

The principal detour for the bridge construction is Edwin C. Moses Blvd. to Washington Street to

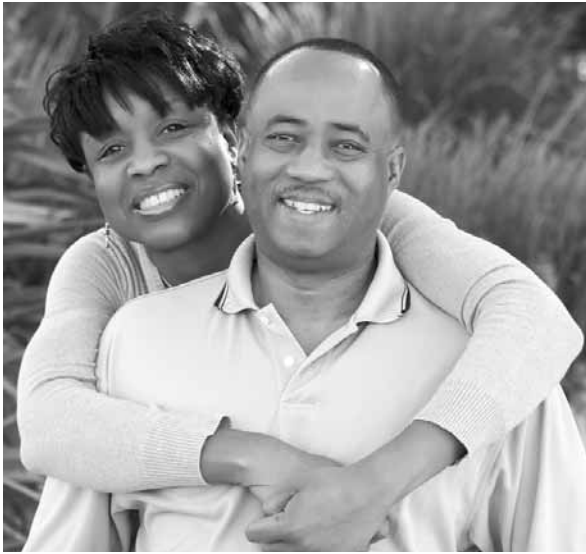
Ludlow Street to Patterson Blvd. Drivers on I-75 will be directed to the Main-Jefferson Street exit off eastbound route 35 to reach the hospital. Signs pointing the way to MVH and the University of Dayton are posted along the detour route.

Check Us Out on the Web!

Do you want to know more details about your Employee Assistance Program? Do you want more information about each counselor?

Here's how to access our web site. Type in:

1. mvh.org
2. Select: Services
3. Select: (A-Z)
4. Select: E
5. Select: EmployeeCare



Healthy Relationships Yield Healthier Hearts

By Andréa Lambert, Counselor Intern,
Wright State University

Your heart is a barometer measuring the true health of your romantic relationship. Even if you minimize how unhappy you currently are in your relationship, your heart and blood pressure reveal the truth. The quality of your relationship affects your heart health. In troubled relationships, most of us are likely to hold back our feelings out of fear of starting an argument or making things worse. This feeling of walking on eggshells is stressful and “stuffing” our feelings, instead of expressing them, leads to higher blood pressure and increases our risk for heart disease. Alternately, if you are in a committed relationship where your feelings are heard and valued, your blood pressure and stress levels are likely to be lower. Likewise, having a loved one in your life to count on and share your authentic self increases your likelihood of living a longer and happier life.

According to the American Heart Association, heart disease is the number one killer of Americans. The AHA also estimates one in four of us has at least some low grade symptoms of heart disease, the most common being high blood pressure. Heart disease is the number one cause of death for women and men in the United States, refuting the myth that heart disease affects mostly men. Since we know communicating our feelings helps reduce our blood pressure, what prevents us from taking that step toward becoming healthier?

- **Sharing Our Feelings Is Scary:** Most of us fear disappointment or rejection by those we love if we share that we are unhappy. However, often the other partner is equally unhappy and does not know how to broach the sensitive subject of getting help. It takes most couples an average of six years to seek counseling, preferring to delay seeking help until relationships are on the verge of collapse. As counselors, we know how hard it is to ask for help. Clients routinely tell us, “Wow, that wasn’t as bad as I expected!” In fact, many feel lighter after leaving our sessions, enjoying the freedom of not being weighed down by their emotional baggage.
- **Not Telling Ourselves the Truth:** Many of us have been raised in families where unhappiness is felt, but not expressed. Acknowledging we need to express our feelings can be scary, since it reveals a relationship is imperfect. While it may be easier to not confront our partners when they disappoint us, the person we are truly failing is ourselves. Refusing to tell our partners how unhappy we are takes a toll on us physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. This kind of denial is toxic to our health and to our spirits, rearing its ugly head in the form of high blood pressure, heart attacks, migraine headaches, stomach aches, fatigue, anxiety, depression and more.
- **Prioritizing Our Needs Last:** Many of us already know our partner is struggling to juggle multiple life demands. Perhaps we know our partner’s parent is ill or that they are consumed with worry about possibly losing their job in this economic downturn. We often feel guilty about prioritizing our need to express our feelings, ranking it somewhere below doing laundry or walking the dog on our priority list. Our own guilt generates the sense that telling our partners how to better meet our needs is somehow burdening them. In reality, our partners can sense our unhappiness and may feel relief knowing there is something they can do to improve the relationship. Giving your partner specific ideas for improvement in a non-judgmental way can go a long way toward making them feel less trapped in assisting us to feel better.
- **Will Telling Them Change Anything?** It is a common fear that if we do muster the courage to share our true feelings our partners will not listen and worse yet, may not change. Expressing your feelings in a respectful way increases your chances of being heard. Simply saying, “It would mean so much to me if you did...” is a powerful

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way of asking for what you need in your relationship. Keep in mind though that you can only control the way you express yourself and your reactions, not your partner's. In fact, simply expressing your true feeling is an investment in your health.

Web MD recommends the following ways of expressing your feelings to maximize the health benefits of your relationship:

- **Talk to each other every day:** Make a habit to hug and kiss your partner when they get home. Ask them about their day while giving direct eye contact and your undivided attention for at least 5-10 minutes.
- **Say nice things to one another; give one another compliments:** For every one criticism, balance it out with at least 5-10 positives. Try to find ways to praise your partner and demonstrate love with small acts of kindness, like making them coffee, leaving them a love note or treating them to a favorite meal.

- **Try not to reject each other:** "Be aware of the little moments when your partner is reaching out to you and try to respond to them, rather than turn your back to them, even if you are busy," says Dr. David Woodsfellow, director of the Center for Relationship Therapy in Atlanta.
- **Develop your own little habits, rituals, secret words, or secret signals:** "Little, special things become special bonds, special moments of intimacy," Dr. Woodsfellow says.

According to Dr. Arthur Agatson, a cardiologist for *Prevention Magazine*, "When you bolster your marriage [or relationship], you invest in your heart health." Keep in mind not all of us know how to express our feelings without some supportive help. Counseling can not only improve your relationship, but also prevent heart disease. To schedule an appointment with an Employee Assistance Counselor, either for you or for couples' counseling, please call (937) 208-6626. Consider it an investment in your healthier future!

EmployeeCare

Located: 409 E. Monument St.
Suite 201
Dayton, Ohio 45402

We have satellite offices in Eaton, Springboro, Troy, Greenville and on the Good Samaritan Hospital campus

Hours: 8 a.m. – 8 p.m.
Monday – Thursday
8 a.m. – 6 p.m. Friday

All counselors provide evening appointment times

Phone: (937) 208-6626 or (800) 628-9343
(24-hour, toll free)

Services Include:

- Voluntary, confidential assessments. Short-term counseling and referral services for employees and household members covering a wide range of issues. Services are free and number of accesses unlimited.
- Substance Abuse and Wellness Education Groups
- In-service for sexual harassment, diversity, violence in the workplace
- Workplace wellness
- 24-Hour Crisis phone service
- Substance Abuse trainings that meet state and Bureau of Worker Compensation requirements for drug free workplaces

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