YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH: DEPRESSION

The recent high-profile suicides of celebrities Anthony Bourdain and Kate Spade have focused a spotlight on depression and other emotional health issues. Money and success did not shield them against depression.

Read a reprinted, abridged version of information on epilepsy.com about depression below. Click here to access in full.

Depression is the most common mood disorder worldwide. One in five people in the United States will experience depression in their lifetime. Depression affects how a person thinks, feels, and acts. It can also interfere with healthy functioning.

Depression can

- Cause people to feel sad or angry
- Change their sleep and eating habits
- Interfere with their relationships
- Affect productivity at home, school, and work

Depression usually lasts at least two weeks and challenges all aspects of daily life. This is different than sad feelings, which are brief and can happen to anyone who is having a bad day, hears distressing news, or is dealing with a difficult situation.

Depression can be mild, moderate, or severe. It can be a single episode, a chronic or recurrent issue, or a lifelong illness.

REGISTER TODAY FOR THE ATHLETES VS EPILEPSY STEP CHALLENGE

Did you know that you do not need to run marathons or triathlons to see improvements in your health? Regular brisk walking can help you:

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Prevent or manage various conditions, including heart disease, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes
- Strengthen your bones and muscles
- Improve your mood
- Improve your balance and coordination

Presented by NeuroPace, the 26-day challenge begins July 23rd!

Register here.
DID YOU KNOW?
Fat has gotten a bad rap. Just because it’s fat, doesn’t mean it’s bad for you. Fats are critical for our health; they are essential for the very structure of our cells. Vitamins A, D, E, and K are fat-soluble vitamins. If we don’t get enough healthy fat in our diets, these vitamins won’t be absorbed as well.

Unsaturated fats, such as those found in plant-based foods, nuts and fish, also help regulate our body temperature, keep skin and hair healthy, and may even help heart health.

Here are some examples of good types of fat:
- **Mono-unsaturated**: cold-pressed olive oil, avocados, most nuts
- **Polyunsaturated fats**: omega 3 and 6 fatty acids, fish, sardines, flaxseed, walnuts
- **Saturated fats**: butter from grass-fed cows, coconut oil.

Avoid hydrogenated oils, which can be found in baked goods, deep-fried foods, and a lot of packaged products. Many of these foods also come packed with sugar or carbohydrates.

Depression can happen to anyone regardless of their ethnicity, race, gender, age, or socioeconomic status. Fortunately, depression is very treatable, even in serious cases.

**What is the relationship between depression and epilepsy?**
In a study of adults aged 18 years and older, researchers found that adults with epilepsy were twice as likely to report feelings of depression in the previous year compared to adults without epilepsy. Also, adults with active epilepsy were three times more likely to report depression in the prior year as adults without epilepsy.

**What causes depression?**
There are many reasons why someone develops depression. A full assessment with a mental health professional will help identify the causes. Here are a few possible reasons.
- Heredity
- Having epilepsy
- Antiseizure medications
- Social factors
- Medical conditions
- Medications for other chronic conditions
- Life circumstances

Other life circumstances can increase the risk of developing depression. Depression can be present even if you feel like there is no clear cause or trigger. Start by learning all you can about depression. Know the signs and symptoms of depression and your risk factors. Then find help to manage depression.

**What are the signs and symptoms of depression?**
The symptoms of depression are different for each person. Some are obvious; others are not easily recognized. How often or how severe the symptoms are can vary. If you think you are depressed, write down what you are feeling. Share these notes with your doctor or treating health care professional.

Depression is a serious condition, and there are proven ways to treat it. Here are some signs and symptoms that may indicate a need to seek help.

**Thoughts and Feelings**
- Feelings of sadness, emptiness, or hopelessness
- Irritability or anger
Share your tips.

- Do you have a strategy or success story that you’d like to share?
- Have you made a change that has improved your health—physical or emotional?
- Want to share a photo of you and your healthy habit?

We’d love to share your success stories in an upcoming issue of our newsletter. Email us at wellness@efa.org. Photos would be great, too.

Want to know more about emotional health?

Attend our Facebook Live

On Wednesday, July 17, at 8 p.m., we’ll be hosting a Facebook Live on Understanding Epilepsy and Mood Changes.

Visit the Epilepsy Foundation’s Facebook page to attend this online event.

While you’re there, catch videos of previous Facebook Live events including Wellness Institute Program Manager Jenny LaBaw’s May event where she discussed healthy living with epilepsy. (Please note that due to technical difficulty the sound starts at the 6 minute, 30 second mark.)

Share your wellness tips.

- Crying or tearfulness
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Mood swings
- Difficulty with concentration
- Indecisiveness (trouble making a decision)
- Too many thoughts of death, dying, and loss
- Thoughts of suicide

Physical

- Eating too much or too little
- Changes in weight
- Difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep, or sleeping too much
- Moving too quickly or too slowly
- Feeling mentally restless or slow
- Tired or loss of energy
- Headaches, stomachaches, or muscle pains

Behavior

- Loss of interest in many activities
- Withdrawing, being socially isolated
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs
- Self-neglect and not taking care of self
- Making plans to commit suicide or attempting suicide

Remember that depression changes a person’s ability to function in their daily activities at work, school, or home. It affects all their relationships and how they feel, think, and act. Often others notice a person’s depressed mood or behavior first. Because depression can create an “emotional fog,” it may be difficult for the person who is depressed to fully understand how much their behavior affects those around them.

Sometimes age is a factor in how common symptoms appear. For children, sadness and irritability are most common. For older adults, physical symptoms, loss of energy, and loss of interest are typical concerns.

What about depression and suicide?

Serious or prolonged depression can lead to suicide. The World Health Organization reports that every 40 seconds, someone dies by suicide and over 800,000 people die by suicide every year.

Reports of suicidal thoughts and suicide are also higher in adults with epilepsy than in adults without epilepsy. For example, 25% or 1 out of 4 adults with epilepsy report suicidal ideation, while only 13% without epilepsy report this.

Suicide is a major health concern and one that should be evaluated for anyone who has symptoms of depression. Fortunately, depression is treatable and suicide is preventable.

For more information on emotional health and depression:

Emotional Health
Overview of Depression
Diagnosing Depression
Managing Depression
HOW MUCH SLEEP DO YOU NEED?

Do you know how much sleep you need each night? Sleep is essential for health and brain function, and how much you need depends on your age. Here are sleep amounts recommended by the National Sleep Foundation.

Newborns (0–3 mos.)
14–17 hours

Infants (4–11 mos.)
12–15 hours

Toddlers (1–2)
11–14 hours

Preschoolers (3–5)
10–13 hours

School-aged children (6–13)
9–11 hours

Teenagers (14–17)
8–10 hours

Young Adults (18–25)
7–9 hours

Adults (26–64)
7–9 hours

Older adults (65+)
7–8 hours

Learn more about sleep and wellness.

ON CAREGIVING

Taking care of a child or an elderly relative can be a full-time job. When epilepsy is in the mix, it can be particularly stressful and exhausting. Serving as a caregiver for someone has been shown to be a source of chronic stress. Research has shown that this chronic stress can cause psychological distress and may lead to unhealthy habits, psychiatric and physical illness, and even death.”

Caregivers can suffer from emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion. They may also feel reluctant to take time for themselves, feeling guilty that they are not taking care of their charges. Caregivers also have been found to neglect their own health and have poor health habits and behaviors. However, to avoid burnout, caregivers need to take care of themselves.

In future issues of this newsletter, we will feature articles on caregiver health and wellbeing. In the meantime, here are some suggestions:

- Be sure to eat healthy and drink enough water
- Get enough sleep
- Take breaks for yourself to mentally and emotionally recharge
- Take advantage of respite services available
- Reach out to friends and relatives for support, if only to have someone to talk to
- Exercise regularly
- Seek a therapist if you need one
- Don't skip your own medical checkups and tests
- Seek support from other caregivers and recognize that you’re not alone
- Focus on your wellness

Caregiving is one of the hardest jobs but can also be rewarding and fulfilling. Give yourself credit for facing the challenges and problem solving for your loved one.

Here are some additional resources:
https://www.caregiver.org/
https://www.epilepsy.com/learn/special-populations/seniors-and-epilepsy/caregivers