The Burden of Depression

Contributed by Laurie B. Freeman

It’s a beautiful hot summer day, yet some people just can’t get out of bed. Depression is more than just a one day case of the blues. How can you distinguish depression from grief or a bad day and what do you do if you determine that you or someone you love is depressed? Depression vs. Grief Suffering any type of loss, be it a death, break up or even a move from one location to another is bound to bring up feelings of sadness. There may even be crying spells, loss of appetite and an inability to concentrate. While these symptoms can also signal major depression, the intensity and duration distinguish them from a depressive episode. A grief reaction may last several months to a year but one will notice that symptoms diminish with time. With major depression, symptoms stay the same or worsen and there is also a preoccupation with worthlessness, as well as suicidal ideation. There may be physical agitation and a loss or gain of weight. Those who are depressed feel that life is no longer worth living and find no joy in any activity. What to Do? True clinical depression requires treatment. Up to 15% of individuals with severe major Depressive Disorder die by Suicide (DSM IV). If you or someone you know feels depressed, the first step is to see your physician who can prescribe an anti-depressant or refer you to a psychiatrist. In addition, it has been shown that the combination of medication and psycho therapy can improve depressive symptoms in the long term. Depending on the issues, therapy can address family and personal concerns as well as provide ways to modify one’s thought process to lessen the potential for future episodes. What else helps? If you are the person who is depressed, it is important to take care of yourself physically. Sleep patterns are often altered so getting enough rest might not be a problem. Rather, it is important to get out of bed regularly and get some exercise. Even a simple walk outside will be helpful in lifting mood. Eating balanced meals is often a challenge since loss of appetite is a symtom yet dehydration and lack of nutrition can worsen depressive symptoms

Support for the Supporter Living with a Depressed Person It’s not easy because frankly, it& and there is little that another can do to make it go away. What can be done is to encourage the person to keep medical and therapy appointments which can be challeging since staying in bed is tempting. One can also encourage good nutrition and exercise. If you live with or are close to someone who is depressed, it is important to acknowledge the toll it can take on you. Support from friends and family is crucial so that you can recharge to provide support for the person who is depressed. In addition, be sure to attend to your physical health.. Suicide Threats These must be taken seriously. If a loved one says they want to kill themselves, see if they know how they would do it. If they have a plan and a means, take them immediately to the nearest emergency room.