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September 2012

## Men and Depression

**I have been married to my husband for 10 wonderful years. For the last year I have noticed a change in him. He's been moody and irritable, always exhausted, and other than work, he just wants to sit at home. He once mentioned that he felt suicidal but regretted telling me and refuses to talk about it. I can't force him to go to the doctor but it is sad seeing him so depressed. What can I do to help him?**

Depression is a serious but treatable medical condition that can affect anyone. Whether you're a company executive, a construction worker, a waiter, a police officer, or a student; whether you are rich or poor; surrounded by loved ones or alone; you are not immune to depression.

If left untreated, depression can lead to personal, family and financial difficulties. However, with an appropriate diagnosis and treatment, most people recover; the darkness disappears; there's hope for the future; and energy and interest in life returns.

Some common symptoms of depression are:

- Persistent sadness, anxiety, irritability, or "empty" mood
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight changes
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts
- Restlessness, irritability
- Persistent physical symptoms

There are many reasons why men don't or won't get treated for depression. Most important among them is that men are less willing to admit they're depressed and need help. There is still stigma attached to having any psychiatric illness, but men are taught to just grin and bear it, get on with life, and provide for their families.

The problem with not seeking treatment is that depression tends to get worse, and affects all areas of a man's life. Many men will self-medicate with alcohol or drugs. And, men - especially older men - have higher rates of suicide than women.

Men should be encouraged to seek medical attention for their depression. Depression can be a life threatening situation that needs to be properly diagnosed, addressed, and monitored. Depression is an illness and men should not feel it results from weakness. It doesn't reflect on their character any more than a physical ailment, such as a broken leg.

If these signs and symptoms describe you or a man you care about, talk to your health care provider or contact a mental health professional. All information remains strictly confidential, so please consider getting help and start feeling better soon.