

Emotional Well-Being

Target Audience: People with diabetes and people caring for persons with diabetes.

Objectives: Participants will be able to:

1. define depression.
2. list some common symptoms of depression.
3. identify and evaluate symptoms in themselves or family members
4. discuss suggestions for dealing with depression

Time Required: 15-30 minutes

Equipment: laptop, or overhead projector and screen or overhead projector and dry-erase pen

Prop: House plant

Supplemental Handouts:

“Fountain of Youth Construction Plan”

“Lift Your Spirits”

“Lift My Spirits Contract”

“Recommended Readings for Coping with Diabetes and Depression”

“Stressful Situation Activity 1”

“Stressful Situation Activity 2”

“What’s Your Score on the Stress Test?”

“Take Action against Stress 1”

“Take Action against Stress 2”

“Matters of the Heart: Support a Loved One with Diabetes”

“How You Can Help Your Loves One with Diabetes”

Lesson Plan

A year ago Joe sprained his ankle and hobbled around with crutches for a couple of weeks. Last week he had a cold, but that lasted only a few days. Now Joe has learned that he has diabetes that will never be cured with crutches or a pill. Reality begins to sink in for Joe when he learns that this disease will be with him the rest of his life and won’t magically go away. Plus, he realizes that from now on he will have to prick his finger several times a day, watch the amount of food he eats, control portion sizes, and possibly have to start giving himself insulin injections. After all this, Joe begins to think to himself, “What do I have to look forward to—possibly going blind or being hooked up to a dialysis machine, having a toe amputated, or a having a heart attack?” Life looks pretty bleak to Joe.

Ask people to think about how they felt after they were first diagnosed or had a family member diagnosed.

Dealing With Your Feelings

Just like Joe, when you first learned about your diabetes or a family member's diabetes, you might have had many feelings. Maybe you refused to accept the diagnosis and tried to pretend that you and your family didn't really have this problem. Perhaps you or your family member felt flawed in some way. You may have been angry and wanted to blame someone or something. Or, maybe you even felt sad and had no motivation to do anything. Whatever emotions you felt, they likely got better in a few days or weeks and may have actually helped you and your family member adjust. However, some people experience feelings of sadness, fatigue, or despair for a long time. They withdraw from life and may not feel like talking or being around other people. If these feelings last for more than a couple weeks, a person may have clinical depression.

Recognizing Depression

Show slide "The Facts about Depression"

Depression is common and can seriously affect one's life. Approximately 20 percent of women and 10 percent of men will experience depression at some point in their lives. Some experts believe that up to 30 percent or more of people with diabetes are depressed. There are many symptoms of depression, and they often build upon one another making the situation worse.

Show slides (3) "Symptoms of Depression"

If left untreated, severe depression may cause you or your family member to take poor care of the diabetes, indulge in various forms of reckless behavior including alcohol or drug abuse, or even attempt suicide.

Is Depression More Common in People with Chronic Diseases?

Having a chronic disease can be challenging. Many studies have shown that depression is more common in people suffering from a medical condition. This may be due to many factors including the need to constantly manage the disease or the fear of current or future complications. Also, poor control of blood glucose can create symptoms similar to depression.

Ask audience members to think about how they felt the last time their or their family member's blood glucose was out of range. Out-of-control blood glucose levels or a change in medical treatment can leave one feeling sad or having little or no energy left to get involved in rewarding activities.

Getting Your Health and Life Back on Track

Plants have certain things that they need to stay healthy. Ask participants to list a few of the necessary things plants need to grow and thrive. Focus on the fact that if

plants don't receive these things, they will not be healthy and thrive. Next, use this analogy with having diabetes. People who don't do the things necessary to manage diabetes will not be healthy and thrive. Just like a wilted plant, people with sadness or depression need help. If you think you might be depressed, it is important to take action. The following suggestions can help you or your family member cope:

1. See your primary doctor first. Tell the provider about symptoms and ask for a checkup to rule out any physical reason for problems.

Show slide "Getting Your Health and Life Back on Track." #1

Possible physical causes include:

- Out-of-control blood glucose levels—high or low blood glucose
- Drinking too much alcohol
- Side effects of medication
- Thyroid disorder
- Blood values not in normal range, such as potassium, sodium, etc.
- Anemia (caused by iron, folate, or vitamin B12 deficiency).

2. Plan an activity every day to lift your spirits. If the cause of depression is not due to a physical problem, plan something every day to bring zest back into your life.

Show slide "Getting Your Health and Life Back on Track." #2

Suggestions for dealing with depression:

Join a diabetic support group. Sharing thoughts and feelings with others who experience the same things can help with getting fresh insights. You may also learn new skills for taking care of yourself or your family member that may help you or your family member feel more in control.

Exercise. Physical activity (taking a walk or walking the dog, swimming, joining an aerobic class) often improves how one feels. It can lower blood glucose, increase energy, and release substances called endorphins into the blood that will improve one's mood.

Talk to family or friend(s). Sharing feelings can help release pent-up emotions. You and your family can work together to achieve the self-management goals that have been set.

Keep a journal of the good things in life and other positive thoughts. Write down a poem or prayer that is meaningful. At the end of the day, list the good things that happened to you or your family member. Go back and re-read these things whenever you or your family member is feeling blue.

Plan to do one thing every day that you might enjoy. Go shopping, work in the

garden, go for a walk at the park, or have lunch with friends. If you don't plan a fun activity, it won't happen.

Volunteer/help others. Helping others makes one feel good about themselves. You or your family member will feel valuable because you will make a difference in someone else's life.

3. See a specialist. If you or your family member has symptoms that do not go away after repeated attempts to overcome depression, ask the provider for a referral to a behavioral health specialist. Depending on resources in your community, this person may be a psychologist, psychiatric nurse, social worker, psychiatrist, or a certified or licensed professional counselor.

Show slide "Getting Your Health and Life Back on Track." #3

4. Consider an antidepressant. For serious or long-term depression, seeing a professional may not be enough. The right antidepressant, used alone or in combination with therapy, can be a great help in improving depression. Antidepressants combat chemical imbalances and restore normal brain chemistry.

Show slide "Getting Your Health and Life Back on Track." #4

On the Road to Recovery

Seeking help is a big step toward feeling better. Life with a chronic disease doesn't have to be a life of depression. Keep in mind that managing diabetes is not about perfection. It's about learning to balance physical and emotional needs to stay healthy. You need to give yourself or your family member credit for all the hard work it takes to manage diabetes. Depression may feel like being trapped in a deep, dark hole, but there's hope knowing that with help, you or your family member can live a happy life with diabetes.

Additional Materials

- Patient Health Questionnaire Depression Screener (PHQ-9)
link to www.pfizer.com/phq-9
- Worksite Depression Calculator
link to <http://www.depression-primarycare.org/organizations/employers/calculator/>
- Recommended Reading List:
 - Diabetes Burn-Out-What to Do When You Can't Take it Anymore, William H. Polonsky
 - Motivational Interviewing, William Miller