



THE SUMMERTIME BLUES

Question: Every winter I hear about the “holiday blues.” But why do I feel down in the summertime?

Answer: In 1958, Eddie Cochran sang “There ain’t no cure for the summertime blues.” But he was wrong. The summertime blues are as real as the “holiday blues.” In fact, “the blues” is just an old-fashioned euphemism for signs of a depressed mood that can happen to anyone, any time of year. When it happens to older adults, however, it is often brushed aside as just another part of getting older.

According to the National Institutes of Health, “Depression in the elderly is a widespread problem, but it is not a normal part of aging. It is often not recognized or treated.”

Hopefully, that will change as baby boomers eschew the old stigma about depression. For now, everyone can learn to recognize depressive symptoms and intervene. Here is what you can do:

Recognize the signs of depression in yourself or someone else. There are obvious mood-related signs, such as crying, tearfulness and sad facial

expressions. And there are functional changes, such as sleeping too much or having insomnia, eating too much or experiencing a loss of appetite, social withdrawal and general lack of interest in activities of leisure or pleasure.

If it happens to someone else, gently intervene. Talk about what you’ve noticed, but in a gentle, probing way rather than a critical one. One way to beat the summertime blues is to let the sunlight hit the retinas to release serotonin in the brain. This is a chemical associated with depression. If you feel depressed, get moving to release the mood-boosting hormones. Laugh and find someone to laugh with. Go see a funny movie or listen to a comic radio show. Sing along with a favorite song.

If these home remedies don’t seem to help, please see a doctor, or encourage someone you love to do the same. Depression is a serious illness. It is treatable and beatable in all four seasons!

Sources: “Older Adults: Depression and Suicide Facts” available from the National Institutes of Mental Health at www.nimh.nih.gov. Also available by mail by calling (866) 615-6464. “The Depression In Seniors,” the National Alliance on Mental Illness has fact sheets and articles on depression at http://www.nami.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Mental_Illnesses/Depression/Depression_in_Seniors.htm.

JOKE OF THE MONTH

“Gas prices are so high that when I pulled into a station this morning and asked for a dollar’s worth, the attendant dabbed some behind my ears.”

—The Best of the Good Clean Jokes, Bob Phillips

Laughter is known to boost the immune system, lower blood pressure, burn calories and release pleasure-inducing chemicals in the brain.

Go Green!

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Do you or does someone you know need our assistance? Call toll-free (888) 994-3863 or visit www.wrpioneers.org to find out more about our assistance programs.



SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATION WITH MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS



We have written here previously about the importance of talking to one's doctor. This month we are offering some very basic advice on how to gain initial access to the physician, how to talk to the doctor once you get him or her on the phone or face-to-face, and how to make the best use

of that precious communication time.

First, if you want to talk to your own doctor, the patient's bill of rights entitles you to do that. You have a right to speak to the doctor who is treating or testing you, and to ask questions.

If your representative wants to speak to the doctor, that representative should have the documents available that grant authority of a legally recognized decision-maker (*Social Services Corner*, "Q&A," June 2013). If you don't have these documents, ask the hospital or doctor's office about their policy on who can be involved in patient care. Give written instructions as to who can be given medical information.

Next, find out how the doctor prefers to be contacted.

Source: "The Talking Cure For Health Care," Laura Landro, *The Wall Street Journal*, April 8, 2013.

Some doctors are difficult to reach by phone but are willing to communicate by email. Some doctors shun email but speak to you in their office. Find out if there are certain times of day or days of the week that the doctor can be reached. Does the office close for lunch? What time of day does the doctor return phone calls? These details can help you avoid many missed opportunities, but you have to ask.

Finally, once you have the doctor's ear, be honest. Doctors are listening to your report for clues and constantly assessing the situation. Provide as many details about your symptoms as you can, even though they may be embarrassing. Remember that doctors are not easily embarrassed or shocked, and they are human, too. Be open-minded about what the doctor suggests. But if you feel the doctor is not taking your concern as seriously as you would like, say so! You can ask for a second opinion or about any research the doctor can share with you. Ask about alternatives. Ask about medication side effects. And always thank the doctor for his or her time and expertise. Communication is, after all, a two-way street.

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE MPPAF'S NATIONAL RESOURCE DIRECTORY

Home Health Compare, www.medicare.gov/homehealthcompare

This website was created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It provides information about the quality of care provided by "Medicare-certified" home health agencies. Medicare-certified home health agencies are approved by Medicare and meet certain federal health and safety requirements.

The Joint Commission, www.jointcommission.org, (630) 792-5000

The Joint Commission accredits and certifies health care companies, including hospitals, home health agencies, nursing and rehabilitation centers, and more. The Joint Commission's accreditation and certification is recognized nationwide as a symbol of quality. View the performance of accredited and certified health care companies at this website.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“What the youth need is narrower pant legs and broader ideas.”

—Will Rogers



To view our entire National Resource Directory, please visit www.wrpioneers.org.