

Hints from the Heart



Seniors with a Smile

There are many difficult changes that seniors face such as health issues, medication changes, anxiety of death or a recent bereavement of a spouse or family member. Though not a normal part of aging, these can lead to depression.

Seniors do not always fit the typical picture of depression. Many depressed seniors don't claim to feel sad at all. Instead they complain of low motivation, lack of energy, or physical problems. Seniors are also more likely to show symptoms of anxiety or irritability. They may constantly wring their hands, pace around the room, or fret obsessively about money, their health, or the state of the world.

Recognizing depression starts with knowing the signs such as:

- Sadness
- Fatigue
- Abandoning or losing interest in hobbies
- Social withdrawal and isolation
- Weight loss
- Loss of appetite
- Sleep disturbances
- Loss of self-worth
- Increased use of alcohol or other drugs
- Fixation on death; suicidal thoughts

There are many creative ways to combat and prevent depression:

- Get out and go to the park, the hairdresser, or have lunch with a friend.
- Limit alone time and connect with others. If you can't get out to socialize, invite loved ones to visit you, or keep in touch over the phone or email.
- Pursue hobbies or pastimes that bring you joy.
- Volunteer your time. Helping others is a great way to feel better.
- Get a pet to keep you company and take care of.
- Learn a new skill that you've always wanted to learn.
- Enjoy jokes and stories. Laughter provides a mood boost.
- Maintaining a healthy diet and take a daily multivitamin.
- Exercise. Even if you're ill, frail, or disabled, there are many safe exercises you can do to build your strength and boost your mood—even from a chair or wheelchair.



The best medicine for combating depression is to share a smile. Why not share one with a Senior today? For more information about senior depression, go to www.HelpGuide.org.

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