

## Mental Health/Depression Workshop – Nov.17/07

Depression often begins with negative thoughts about ourselves, our circumstances and our future. In order to prevent depression from setting in we need to become aware of these thoughts and transform ourselves by the renewing of the mind. We must take every thought captive unto the obedience of Jesus Christ (2Cor 10:5).

**How do we do that?** The first step in changing negative thinking is to become aware of the negative thoughts underlying the depression. The most damaging thoughts that we entertain are lies about ourselves and about God. You don't get rid of negative thoughts by not trying to think them, you overcome them by choosing the truth until the truth drowns out and completely replaces the negative thoughts. Then choose to think only those thoughts that perfectly align with the Word of God.

### **Some Practical Ideas to Help Change Negative Thought Patterns:**

Sometimes you may have trouble controlling recurring thoughts associated with depressed feelings. When this happens, a thought-stopping procedure such as those listed below may be of some help.

1. When you find yourself entertaining recurrent negative thoughts then shout, "Stop!" The "stop" shout will usually disrupt your recurrent negative thinking, if only momentarily. After some practice, you can say "stop" quietly, whenever such thoughts occur.
2. Some people find it helpful to wear an elastic band around their wrist and to snap themselves with the band while telling themselves to "stop" recurring negative thoughts. Thought-stopping does not always work, but it may stop such recurrent negative thoughts momentarily and help you to switch to more realistic, biblical, and accurate thinking.
3. Keep a stopwatch with you and start it when you are aware of a negative thought. Stop it when a positive thought comes to replace it. Record the amount of time it took to change the thought. Record your results for an extended period of time. Check to see what improvements you are making.
4. Print the word STOP in large letters on one side of a 3" x 5" card. On the other side of the card print the verse Phillipians 4:8. Whenever you struggle with negative thinking, take out the card, hold it with the word STOP facing you, and say the word out loud. Turn the card over and read the verse out loud. Do this regularly and you will defeat the negative thought pattern and replace it with the positive thoughts of the Scriptures.

5. Keep a daily “ABC” diary. Here’s how it works. The diary is divided into three columns, A, B, and C. You should record any **activating event or situation** that triggers emotional upset or depressed feelings under column A, and the **consequences of emotional upset or depressed feelings** under column C. Most important, you should write down your thoughts or **beliefs (self-talk)** associated with the depressed feelings under column B. The feelings recorded under column C should also be rated in terms of their intensity, using a 0 to 100 scale (0 meaning not intense at all; 100 meaning the most intense feeling imaginable).

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
Activating event or situation	Belief or Self-talk	Consequences – feelings and behavior
“I got a C on a test.”	“I’m saying to myself that I’m really stupid and dumb. I don’t think I’ll be able to make it through graduate school. I am a dismal failure and a real disappointment to my family.”	“I feel lousy and depressed about this.” (depression intensity of 80)

6. Once you gain skill at becoming aware of the ABC’s of your emotional life, two more columns can be added to the diary. Column D stands for “**disputations**” of the distorted thoughts already recorded in column B. Column E is for the **eventual “effects”** of the disputations on your feelings and behavior.

<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>
Disputations	Eventual effects on feelings and behavior
“I don’t like getting a C, but it’s not the end of the world. I can study harder for the next test and do better. I still have a good chance of making it through graduate school. I’m not really dumb. This C does not make me a failure. And there is no evidence that my family is disappointed in me; but even if they were, that wouldn’t make me a failure.”	“I’m still feeling a bit disappointed with my grade, but I’m no longer depressed or paralyzed over it. In fact, I feel good that I’m able to dispute my thoughts and not be such a victim of my initial feelings.” (depression intensity of 20)

## **COMMON CONTRIBUTORS OF DEPRESSION**

- Loss (relationships, circumstances and situations, expectations and dreams)
- Significant life transitions
- Chronic medical conditions
- Physical changes in the body – stroke, heart attack, cancer, hormonal disorders
- Personality traits such as perfectionism, pessimism and being overly dependent
- Stressful changes in life patterns
- Loneliness
- Unresolved anger
- Unrepentant sin and disobedience
- Occult involvement
- Negative thinking patterns
- Multiple stressors or feeling overwhelmed by stress
- Side effects of medications (high blood pressure, steroids and others)
- Alcohol and drug intoxication and withdrawal
- Diet – specifically, low levels of folic acid and vitamin B12
- Degenerative neurological conditions such as Alzheimer’s and Huntington’s disease
- Viral infections such as hepatitis and mononucleosis

## **SIGNS OF DEPRESSION**

- Feeling sad and anxious, in a depressed mood for an extended time
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- Social withdrawal
- Weight changes with changes in appetite
- Sleep changes (more or less than usual)
- Agitation
- A tendency to cry a lot
- Fatigue and loss of energy
- Feeling worthless, with inappropriate guilt
- Problems concentrating; indecisiveness
- Suicidal thoughts and/or plans

## **WAYS A CHILD MANIFESTS DEPRESSION**

- Sadness
- Withdrawal – the child will not converse or play with friends
- No interest in regular activities or games
- A profound loss of energy
- Complaints about being tired all the time
- Little capacity for pleasure
- Many physical complaints, ranging from stomachache to headache to vague pains all over the body
- Complaints about feeling unloved or rejected
- Refusal to receive comfort or love, despite protests of not being loved
- Many thoughts about death and dying
- An increase in aggressive behavior, bickering and negativity
- Many sleep disturbances, including insomnia
- A change in appetite, either over-eating or refusing to eat favorite foods

## **HIDDEN SYMPTOMS OF CHILDHOOD DEPRESSION**

- Extreme forms of anxiety
- Nail biting
- Hair pulling or twirling
- Muscle tics
- Irritability
- Temper tantrums
- Sulkiness or moodiness
- Excessive negativity
- Self-mutilation
- Deliberate destructive behavior

The above information has been gleaned from some of the books listed in the bibliography on the following page.

## Bibliography

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Bethany House Publishers, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55438
6. Dr. Norman H. Wright - The New Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling: A  
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inspirational guide for parents of hurting teens  
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9. Dr. Mitch Galant, Susan K. Galant – What to do when Someone you love is  
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10. Dr. H. Norman Wright – Real solutions for Overcoming Discouragement, Rejection  
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