

## Getting it together

# Depression says we should take some time out to adjust

The blues, the blues. We know popular name for the most popular emotional disease called depression. Along with its close cousin anxiety, this down feeling has been an unwelcome guest for all of us.

That sad, flat feeling that accompanies your first day back at work after a long, enriching vacation, the day after the chores, also, your young child moves from your home to his or her first apartment. We are all familiar with the faces of depression.

For think of depression as positive terms, but in fact it is a natural, healthy mental process, a shock absorber of the mind.

During our emotional sears depression cushions us from the bumps of life. It takes some of the sting out of our major and minor disappointments. It keeps us

from being overwhelmed by our feelings. It helps us to bridle some of our more dangerous reactions to frustration, preventing us from acting impulsively when we first feel the sharp kick of disappointment.

WHEN YOU LOOK at depression like that, it should be one of our friend's best friends. Human lives are filled with disappointment. Even the most successful person has a long list of things that just haven't gone right. We are all subject to periods of frustration.

We design our present circumstances and our hopes but it is often unexpected. Important friendships end abruptly with death, job changes, divorces and relocations.

Fluctuating economic conditions jolt our security. Lovers fall out of love. Thirty-nine year olds turn forty. Our favorite illusions are destroyed by blunt reality. We make catastrophic errors and even disappoint ourselves.

We are forced to take a predictable course through an erratic changing environment. We are doomed to suffer frequent shock. Depending on circumstances to remain stable, we are jolted when they change radically.

Survival with a reasonable degree of contentment, human beings must learn to weather disappointments to realistically reassess circumstances after the world has kicked them in the face, and to plot a new course, making the most of new conditions and the where depression comes into the picture.

In the slowed-down feeling of depression there is an important message. You have just suffered a shock. The circumstances of your life have changed. You just can't go on as though nothing has changed. You must slow down for a moment and plan a new course. You need to look care-

fully at your new circumstances and plan your adjustments.

IN A WAY, depression is the mind's attempt to give you a sabbatical, a timeout. In most cases, this is exactly the right thing.

The problem is most people don't listen to the wisdom of their depression. Instead of taking time out to reflect and readjust their life, most try to fight their depression. They try to go on with their life as though nothing is wrong.

Seizing depression as their enemy, they try to evade it. They look for distractions. They try to "lose themselves" in their work. They fill their lives with busyness, avoiding unscheduled moments when their depression can surface.

Others go too far in the other direction. It is all too often that we see the depressed person who seems almost to bathe in his discouragement. He reacts to life's unfairness by totally giving up. In fact, he actually becomes more adamantly hopeless, actually attempting to drive his friends to cheer him up.

Wallowing in the merciful numbness of his depression he has become a "depression hole." He has come to abuse the pain-killers of depression in a way that is similar to the chronic anesthetizing himself with wine.

Both the depresso and depression-ridden feel they have been passive victims of circumstances beyond their control. Instead of seeing that they can do something to change their fate, they believe nothing can be done. They yearn for a return to their pre-disappointment life. They dream of vast, improbable changes in their present circumstances. But they don't do anything about them.

This is the most destructive aspect of depression: the wrong approach to depression. It fosters passive surrender and proclaims the

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misfortune which originally inspired the depression.

Next week: Getting It Together will discuss ways to make depression a constructive healing process instead of a "cancer."

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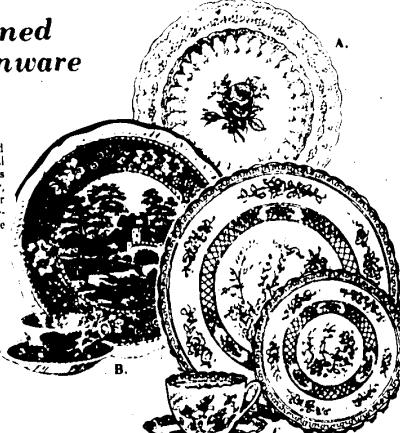
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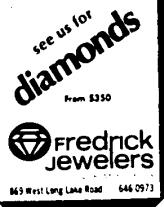
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