Depression in Older Adults

There are many things that can trigger sad feelings in older adults. The loss of a friend, loved one or spouse, or increasing medical problems can emotionally drain anyone without a strong support system. This can cause sadness or depression.

While sadness is a common response in these situations, depression is not. Grieving over a loss, whether it be a loved one, a pet, a job, or an aspect of health, is normal and should not be confused with depression.

Depression occurs when one loses all hope for life, or sees no purpose to their life any longer. Other signs of depression include:

- Increased fatigue
- Loss of interest in hobbies
- Lack of interest in personal care
- Loss of appetite
- Sleep disturbances
- Loss of self-worth
- Increase in anxiety or irritability

If you notice any of these symptoms, contact your physician. Professional help, counseling, therapy or medication may be needed to control the symptoms. Other things you can do include participating in an art class or lunch outing with friends, eating/cooking healthy meals, taking medication as prescribed, or interacting with a pet. Watching a funny show or telling a joke may also be helpful.

Depression is something that can hinder your quality of life as you go into your golden years! Don't let it get you down. Watch for signs of depression and address them immediately.

(Source: HelpGuide.org)

Laughter is the Best Medicine

Laughter has been proven to have health benefits for persons who are sick and depressed, as well as for those who are healthy. People who smile and laugh are happier than those who may feel the same way but are less expressive. Watching a funny movie, telling a good joke, or just laughing about old memories can help you feel happier.

Surrounding yourself with people who enjoy laughter and good humor can “rub off” on you. So remember to always SMILE!

(Source: Infinite possibility clowning with elderly people. Selena McMahan)
Fun Ways to Boost Your Mood and Live Longer!

There are a number of things we can do to promote our longevity and boost our mood. Here are just a few:

1. **Drink Red Wine.** Red wine contains antioxidants that help protect the body against the effects of aging. One or two glasses a day can help keep our bodies youthful!

2. **Eat Dark Chocolate.** Like red wine, dark chocolate also contains antioxidants. It can help lower blood pressure and cholesterol, as well as, trigger endorphins which instantly boosts our mood.

3. **SMILE!** Even when having a rough day, smiling can help improve our attitude and bring positive energy to those around us.

4. **Relax.** Relaxation helps our body rest, heal and function better. Try practicing various relaxation techniques to see which one works best for you.

5. **Make Exercise Play.** Physical activities, playing with a Wii exercise game, and participating in a sports are great ways to get exercise. They can help maintain balance, posture, endurance and strength. Find a game or sport you like and play it often!

6. **Sleep.** Sleep is essential to our bodies and helps our body function correctly. For more energy, increased immune function, and an overall feeling of wellbeing, strive for 7 to 9 hours sleep a night.

(Source: Longevity.about.com)

Coping with Loss

The older we get the more likely we will experience loss in our lives. We will lose family members and friends and face many other kinds of loss.

Coping with loss and grief is one of the most stressful and emotional situations in life we will ever deal with. Understanding loss, as well as, common emotions and physical symptoms associated with grieving, will help us prepare for and work through our grief.

While not everyone grieves in the same way, there are some common emotions associated with grief and they include:

- Denial
- Disbelief
- Confusion
- Sadness
- Yearning
- Anger
- Despair
- Guilt

These emotions can impact us briefly or for a long period and our feelings can change swiftly and without notice.

In addition to the emotional impact of grief, we are often impacted physically. We may experience stomach pains, loss of appetite, intestinal upsets, sleep disturbances and loss of energy as a result of our grief.

During times like these, seek out caring people. If family and friends are not available, talk to a grief counselor or pastor. Express your feelings, take care of your health, be patient with yourself and don't rush the grieving process.

(Source: MentalHealthAmerica.net)

Vitamin D: Lower Heart Disease Risk

Vitamin D, which traditionally, comes from sunlight or daily supplements, is necessary for our good health. It increases our energy and overall wellness.

In addition, researchers have discovered that Vitamin D may help prevent heart disease and stroke. Researchers at the Intermountain Medical Center Institute in Murray, Utah found that those who increased their Vitamin D intake benefited by becoming:

- 33% less likely to have a heart attack
- 20% less likely to develop heart failure
- 30% less likely to die within a year of the follow-up.

Unfortunately, a large portion of U.S. citizens are Vitamin D deficient. To protect your health, strive to go outside in the sunlight or take a Vitamin B supplement. The daily recommended amount of Vitamin D is between 200 and 400 IUs. If you feel you are not getting enough Vitamin D through your diet or a supplement, talk with your doctor.

(Source: WebMD.com)
**Pet Therapy**

As we get older, we tend to become more isolated. Our children get older and move on, our friends get older as well and aging in general can trigger feelings of loneliness.

Pet therapy can help combat loneliness by providing us with a sense of companionship and worth. Owning an animal can also help keep us cognitively sharp, especially if we train our pet.

Current, as well as past research from the *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics*, have proven that the presence of animals in our lives decreases depressive symptoms, obsessive compulsive symptoms, anxiety, and paranoia. In addition, those who owned a pet saw themselves as more socially healthy and saw overall improvement in their quality of life.

So go out and get a pet. Be it a dog, cat, fish or hermit, enjoy the companionship and the life enhancing benefits. *(Source: Colombo, Giovanni, Marirosa Dello Buono, Katya Smania, Roberta Raviola, and Diego De Leo. "Pet therapy and institutionalized elderly: A study on 144 cognitively unimpaired subjects." *Archives of Gerontology and Geriatrics* 42.2 (2006): 207-216.)*

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**Caregiver Tips**

- Take time to learn about your family member’s condition and any special requirements from reliable sources such as your family physician, health care providers, and health professionals.
- Know the needs of your loved one, your direct family and yourself. This way you can work together to make good choices for the whole family so no one will be negatively effected.
- Be an advocate for your family member. You may be more successful at getting better service if you are active in the community that deals with that particular ailment.
- Help other caregivers and get help from them as well through caregiver support groups or online. *(Source: CDC.gov)*

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**Food to Help You Feel Better!**

What we put into our bodies as fuel can actually affect our mood and how we feel. “Eating a healthy diet -- high in fiber and low in saturated fat-- is a great place to start to boost your mood” says Diane M. Becker MPH, ScD, the Director of the Center for Health Promotion at the John Hopkins School of Medicine. Becker also states that, “a high-fat, high-glycemic load meal can make you physically feel dysfunction in your body”. To enhance our mood and promote efficient body functioning it is recommended that we:

1. **Seek out foods rich in vitamin B12 and folic acid.** Foods rich in vitamin B12 and folic acid help prevent disorders of the central nervous system, mood disorders and dementia. Foods high in B12 and folic acid include liver, broccoli, almonds, potatoes, oranges and peaches.

2. **Enjoy fruits and veggies.** These are packed with essential nutrients and antioxidants, which directly contribute to good health and quality of life.

3. **Eat selenium-rich foods everyday.** Selenium is an important antioxidant that help fight depression and stress. The recommended daily amount is 55 micrograms a day for both men and women. Shrimp, tuna, turkey breast, and salmon are excellent sources of selenium.

4. **Eat fish several times a week.** Most fish contain Omega-3 fatty acids which helps with immune functioning, hair and skin appearance, and heart disorders. A few good sources of Omega-3 include herring, salmon, rainbow trout and tuna.

5. **Get a daily dose if vitamin D.** Vitamin D helps with mood disorders and helps prevent heart disease and stroke. Very few foods naturally contain vitamin D so sunlight and supplements are recommended along with foods containing vitamin D.

6. **Treat yourself to 1 oz. of chocolate.** “Dark chocolate has an effect on the levels of brain endorphins,” says Becker. Endorphins are the “feel good” chemicals that stimulate feelings of happiness. *(Source: WebMD.com)*

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2010 Consortium on Aging

- AARP Virginia
- Acupuncture Wellness Center, LLC.
- Adult Care Center of Central Virginia
- Alzheimer’s Association of Central & Western Virginia
- Avante’ of Lynchburg
- Beard Center on Aging at Lynchburg College
- Bedford Community Health Foundation
- Bedford Department of Social Services—A.P.S.
- Bedford Hospice Care
- Bedford Memorial Hospital/Oakwood Manor LTC
- Bedford Parish Nurse Ministry
- Bentley Commons of Lynchburg
- Campbell County Department of Social Services
- Care OPTIONS Plus, LLC
- Center for Restorative Care and Rehab
- Caring Transitions
- Centra Home Health
- Centra Hospice
- Centra Mental Health Services
- Centra PACE
- Centra Rehabilitation Services
- Central Virginia Area Agency on Aging, Inc.
- Central Virginia Golden 50 Guide
- CogniCheck, Inc.
- Commonwealth Council on Aging—Don Thorne, 6th District Representative
- Danville—Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism
- Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services Center
- Elks National Home
- Fairmont Crossing Health and Rehabilitation Center
- First Care Home Health
- First Dominion Home Health
- Generation Solutions, Inc.
- Gentle Shepherd Hospice
- Genworth Financial—Dave Fleming
- Guggenheimer Health & Rehabilitation Center
- Heritage Green Assisted Living
- Home Instead Senior Care
- Hospice of Virginia
- Independent Lifestyles
- Lewy Body Dementia Support Group
- Lynchburg City Department of Social Services—A.P.S.
- Lynchburg Family Practice
- Lynchburg Parks and Recreation
- Lynchburg College
- McGurk House
- Medical Care Center
- Meals on Wheels
- Mental Health America of Central Virginia
- Oaks of Lynchburg
- Older Adults Ministries—Lynchburg District United Methodist Church
- Personal Home Care, Inc.
- Retired Senior Volunteer Program
- Runk and Pratt
- Senior Independence of Westminster Canterbury, Inc.
- SeniorNavigator.com
- Senior News
- Seven Hills Home Health/Star City Home Health
- Seven Hill Hospice
- The Orthopedic Center of Central Virginia
- The Summit Assisted Living
- The Summit Independent Living
- The Summit Health and Rehabilitation Center
- Timberlake Christian Church
- United Way of Central Virginia
- Universal American
- Valley Compounding Pharmacy
- Valley View Retirement Community
- Wells Fargo Reverse Mortgage Division
- Westminster Canterbury of Lynchburg
- Woodhaven Nursing Home

Individual Members
- Sandy Becton
- Yvonne Behrens
- Joyce Morrison
- Martha Norman, RN
- Famiko Radile
- Phillip Rosser
- Kenneth Steryous
Upcoming Community Events

RESERVE YOUR SPACE NOW

2010 Annual Conference on Aging
“Aging Well in Mind, Body, and Spirit”
Tuesday, June 8, 2010
Lynchburg College
8:30 a.m.—5:00 p.m.

Keynote speakers:

- **Paul Hogan**, co-author of “Stages of Senior Care: Your Step-by-Step Guide to Making the Best Decisions”
- **Dr. Peter Betz**, Geriatric Psychiatrist, Centra Piedmont Psychiatric Center
- **Brett Leake**, Motivational Speaker & Sit-down/Stand-Up Comedian & Caregiver

*For more information call (434)544-8456 or go to www.lynchburg.edu/beard.xml.

National Resources

- United States Department of Health and Human Services: National Mental Health Information Network
  (800) 789-2647
  (866) 889-2647
  http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/

- National Institute of Mental Health
  1-866-615-6464
  nimhinfo@nih.gov
  http://www.nimh.nih.gov

- Geriatric Mental Health Foundation
  301-654-7850
  web@GMHFonline.org
  http://www.gmhfonline.org/

- Mental Health America
  (800)-969-6642
  http://www.nmha.org/

Have a great summer!

Aging and Caregiving Resource Center
501 12th Street, Lynchburg, VA
434-385-9070

The Resource Center connects older adults, caregivers, family members, business managers, pastors, and anyone interested in successful aging and caregiving with resources and services.

Lynchburg College students, volunteers and Center staff answer questions, make referrals to local services, and research topics as requested. This free service is available in person by appointment or through a telephone consultation.

A collaborative effort by: Beard Center on Aging at Lynchburg College, Genworth Foundation and Central Virginia Area Agency on Aging (CVAAA)