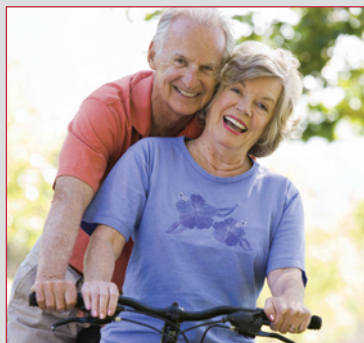


11th in a continuing series supporting chronic disease management



### Did you know?

Over 20 per cent of Canadians experience mental health issues and one in five seniors have symptoms of depression.

## Helping you. Live your life.

It is a critical time for the Canadian healthcare system as the number of individuals impacted by conditions such as Alzheimer's disease and diabetes continues to grow at an alarming rate. Furthermore, the number of elderly in our communities needing support is at an all-time high and increasing every day. Home care has an important role to play and We Care continues to be the premier home care provider to Canadian families in need.

We Care took a moment to consider our place in this system and we realized that our image did not reflect this attitude of caring. Therefore, we have adopted a new logo and tag line that is much more representative of the compassionate and professional services we provide. We have also launched a new website that provides a much

easier, more engaging online experience. The new site makes it easier to find health information, locate an office or use our online resources. You may be interested in the video testimonials where our clients and staff share their We Care experiences. I hope you enjoy this latest edition of *We Care News* on mental illness. To see previous issues, simply go to [www.wecare.ca/resources/newsletters](http://www.wecare.ca/resources/newsletters).

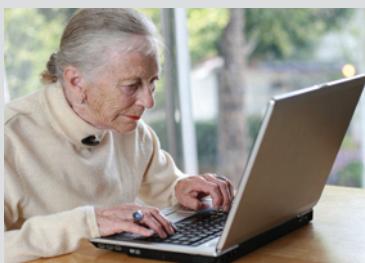
This is an exciting time in our company's evolution. I hope you will continue to visit our website, [www.wecare.ca](http://www.wecare.ca), often to watch it develop and grow.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,  
John Schram,

President of We Care Health Services LP

### Information at your fingertips!



The launch of Canada's first consumer eHealth platform, Telus health space ([www.telushealthspace.com](http://www.telushealthspace.com)), was recently announced by the Canadian Mental Health Association. Among other things, it will provide Canadians with important mental health information and tools that will help screen for and manage mental illness.

Source: [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

## You can trust We Care

At We Care, our compassionate caregivers understand the importance of family and of living at home for as long as possible. Our staff are specially trained to help with Alzheimer's and dementia, diabetes, acquired brain injury and end-of-life care. Services include:

- Personal Care
- Home Making
- Companion Services
- Nursing
- Foot Care
- Live-in Care
- Caregiver Relief
- Accompanied Visits

**All this 24 hours a day,  
7 days a week, 365 days a year**

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*Helping you. Live your life.™*

[www.wecare.ca](http://www.wecare.ca)

# Coping with mental illness

Everyone experiences “highs” and “lows” in life, but people with mood disorders experience them with greater intensity and for longer periods of time. Mood disorders affect about 10 per cent of the population and the most common mood disorder is depression.

Research shows that loneliness and depression are major risk factors increased blood pressure in older adults, and can heighten the risk of death from stroke or heart disease. In addition, family caregivers have significant responsibilities that sometimes require outside support.

It is important to understand that depression is different to just feeling sad. If you or your loved one is feeling down a lot, have a look at the Feelings Checklist below. This tool is to help you identify whether you could be suffering from depression. If you

experience two or more of these emotions for two weeks or longer then you may be depressed. Consider taking this checklist to a doctor’s appointment so you can have a clear and candid discussion.

## Work/life balance

Of all people with sickness and disabilities, those with a serious mental illness face the highest degree of stigmatization in the workplace and the greatest barriers to employment. Many, varied employment obstacles come into play, such as gaps in work history and fear, anxiety and lack of confidence. The unemployment rate for people with serious mental illness—commonly reported to range from 70 to 90 per cent, depending on the severity of the condition—reflects these obstacles.



- Losing interest in taking part in activities
- Decreased sex drive
- Avoiding other people
- Overwhelming sadness or grief
- Feeling unreasonably guilty
- Losing energy and tiredness
- Thoughts of death or suicide

## Consider the causes

There is no one cause of depression, and this illness is not fully understood. The following factors may make some people more prone to react to a loss or failure with a clinical depression:

- Specific distressing life events
- A biochemical imbalance in the brain
- Psychological factors, such as a negative or pessimistic view of life

There may also be a genetic link, since people with a family history of depression are more likely to experience it.

Clinical depression may last for short or long periods, though it rarely becomes permanent. How long the depressive feelings last depends on the person, the severity of the loss and the support available to help the person to cope with it. Without professional treatment, depression may end naturally after several weeks or months—but with the right help it can end much quicker.

## What are some treatment options?

Depression is the most treatable mental illness. Most people who suffer from depression are helped by the care they get, which usually

## Feelings checklist

Check ✓ which of the following you have been feeling for two or more weeks:

- Sadness or the blues
- Losing interest in life
- Tired for no reason
- Feeling unwell; aches and pains
- Losing weight or appetite
- Restless, agitated or sluggish
- Worrying more than usual
- Wanting to avoid people
- Snappy or irritable
- Sleeping badly
- Losing self-confidence
- Feeling useless or a burden to others
- Concentration or thinking problems
- Feeling in a panic
- Feeling bad or guilty out of proportion to the circumstances
- Considering suicide

*About 11 per cent of men and 16 per cent of women in Canada will experience major depression in the course of their lives.*

## The many faces of depression

Feelings such as worthlessness and self-blame, sadness, disappointment and emptiness are normal and typically pass after only a short time. However, when these emotions become severe, last for several weeks and interfere with your work or social life things are much more serious.

Depressive illnesses can change the way a person thinks and behaves, and how his/her body functions. Some of the signs to look for are:

- Feeling helpless or hopeless
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Eating more or less than usual
- Having difficulty concentrating or making decisions

# A story about Hope

After caring for Hope for over three years, 40 hours a week, Rosa, a We Care nurse, felt she knew her very well. So even though the young woman had made comments about discontinuing care many times, she had changed her mind again. But something about this time struck Rosa as being very final.

Hope had told Rosa that she was moving to the country. She had spent weeks selling her furniture and personal belongings. Rosa had also helped Hope to pack up what was left on the last weekend of August, with the added knowledge that it was her last day of service. Something told Rosa that this time was different and that Hope was not going to be calling on Monday morning looking for her—but something didn't feel right.

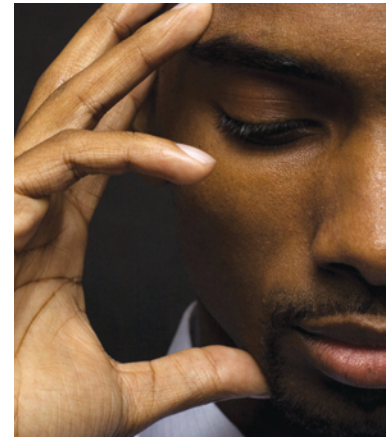
On Monday morning, Rosa spoke with the nursing care manager and director about Hope. They talked about the warning signs that Hope was suicidal. They decided to call We Care's home office and consult with the clinical

practice team. Using the Suicide policy assesment guidelines in the We Care clinical policy manual, it became apparent that more needed to be done immediately. A call was made to the suicide hotline and the contact people they had for Hope. The suicide hotline asked for additional information and confirmed that Hope was most likely planning her suicide.

At 5pm on Monday, someone from the suicide hotline and a member of the police force went to Hope's home and discovered her unconscious. She had tried to commit suicide by injecting herself with a massive dose of insulin. Within an hour, the young woman was in hospital and rapidly recovering. Her family was relieved that she had been discovered and appreciative for all that had been done for their daughter. The We Care team followed their clinical instincts by contacting the right people.

Our story ends on a positive note.

## Tips for coping with stress



For many of us, stress is a daily fact of life. But if not handled properly it can cause serious health concerns, including mental illness. Here are some ways to cope with stressful situations:

- Identify your problems
- Work on solutions
- Talk about your problems
- Learn about stress management
- Don't be too hard on yourself

*continued from page 2*

includes medication and/or psychological counselling. Support from family, friends, caregivers and self-help groups can make a big difference. Here are some things that you can do to start feeling better:

- Talk to your doctor and ask for help
- Discuss your feelings with another person
- Have contact with people
- Get active—engage in activities or hobbies
- Eat properly
- Avoid alcohol

And importantly, don't alter any of your medications without talking to your doctor first. If you are suffering from depression, try to be patient with your-

self and non-judgmental. Most of all, don't take the road alone—seek help and support from friends, family, caregivers and organizations such as We Care that can provide the necessary support.

### What can friends and family do?

It can be difficult to be with and to help someone who is seriously depressed. Some people who are depressed keep to themselves, while others may not want to be alone. Also, they may react strongly to the things you say or do. It is important that you let them know that it is okay to talk about their feelings and thoughts. Listen and offer support rather than trying to contradict them or talk them into feeling better. Let them know you care.

Ask them how you can help and offer to contact their family doctor or a mental health professional. Find out about local self-help groups and attend a meeting with them. For some people, arranging a reminder to take medication every morning, meal time assistance or help getting to counselling or doctor's appointments may make a difference.

If you take on a caregiving role, don't forget about your own needs. Timely assistance or respite care will help a caregiver avoid burnout and potential illness. Staying socially connected—by volunteering, taking a course, attending cultural events and regularly visiting family and friends—is important.



### Employment support

The Routes to Work project has been helping put people with a mental illness on the path to mainstream employment since 2000. The project creates and implements employment support strategies. It provides individuals with psychiatric disabilities with assistance in areas such as skills development, education upgrading, career decision-making, résumé writing, job searches and employment maintenance. Find more information under “National Projects” at [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)

Source: [www.copdcanda.ca](http://www.copdcanda.ca)

**Visit these websites for more information on mental illness and depression:**

- [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)
- [www.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca)
- [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)
- [www.wecare.ca](http://www.wecare.ca)

# Ask our experts

*Forward your questions or comments, and we'll ask our experienced nursing team to provide you with the latest advice and information.*

*Mum is alone a lot and seems to be uncomfortable going out and meeting new people since dad died. She has also been sleeping a lot and has lost weight. Could she be depressed? What should I do?*

The first thing you should do is have your mother assessed by her physician to determine if she does have depression. Your mother's physician should do a complete physical exam to see if the changes are the result of physical problems. When did your father pass away? How long were they married? It must be very difficult to get used to being alone after being with someone for a long time. The best things you can do are be there for her, listen to her, offer support and get a healthcare professional involved.

*Recently, my sister has become confused and she got lost twice while she was out running errands. She is also more forgetful than usual. Her husband thinks I'm overreacting when I express my concern. Is this a sign that we should be worried?*

Your sister's husband may have not noticed any real changes because he is with your sister every day. There can be many causes of confusion and a change in one's level of concentration. Perhaps you can explore with your sister and her husband any possible reasons for this. Maybe she is worried or stressed about something, is not sleeping or is on new medications. There could be a physical or psychological change. Suggest that your sister and her husband visit

their physician to identify the underlying cause of these changes.

*My father is in the Alzheimer's section of a long-term care facility because he needs round-the-clock care. He doesn't recognize me anymore and is angry a lot of the time. Should I still visit?*

Yes, you should go and see him. He may not recognize exactly who you are, but he will likely recognize that you are someone he can trust. Just being with your father will be of some comfort to him. Ask him questions about what he sees and who is around him. Take him for walks around the facility or outside if the weather permits. Even if your father does not recognize you, he still needs to have contact with someone who cares about him and who loves him.

For a copy of the We Care Independent Living Guide, call 1-877-853-1195 or visit [www.wecare.ca](http://www.wecare.ca) to find the We Care office nearest you.

## Attention caregivers

Ask for your complimentary copy of Solutions<sup>®</sup> magazine, courtesy of your local We Care Home Health Services location. Visit [www.wecare.ca](http://www.wecare.ca) or call 1-877-853-1195.



Send your questions to Julia Sommers at [julia\\_sommers@wecare.ca](mailto:julia_sommers@wecare.ca)



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[www.wecare.ca](http://www.wecare.ca)