

Health Politics with Dr. Mike Magee

Helping Men Take Control Of Depression ㊟

(NAPSA)—You probably already know that depression is a common and potentially deadly illness that affects millions of people all over the world. But what you might not know is how depression affects men and women differently. In fact, it's not completely understood why, physiologically, this is the case, but the reality is that males and females often present symptoms of depression in different ways, and, sadly, males more frequently go undiagnosed and untreated.



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Let's take a look at some numbers: In the United States, twice as many women (12 million) suffer from depression than men (6 million). Yet men represent 80 percent of the suicides in this country. (Ninety percent of all suicides are associated with mental illness, mostly depression, and 70 percent of all successful suicides occur during a bout of depression.) Thus, depressed men are more likely to commit suicide, and, according to recent studies, men spend only 12 months considering suicide before committing it, while women consider it for an average of 42 months before acting.

With tragic consequences such as this, it's important to recognize the symptoms of depression as early as possible. And considering that men may hide or disguise the wide range of symptoms usually associated with depression—including sadness, hopelessness, worthlessness, and sometimes substance abuse—this can be a difficult task. Experts say depressed men are more likely to express

fatigue, irritability, loss of interest in work or hobbies, increased susceptibility to stress, and sleep disturbances, rather than more traditional symptoms. Furthermore, depressed men often define their condition in terms of control, dignity, respect and job security, and their conditions are often exacerbated by situations including excessive time away from home and wages that don't reflect their level of responsibility.

That said, perhaps the workplace is a good place to start when it comes to diagnosing and dealing with male depression.

Employee health programs and human resource departments need to critically examine their approach to male depression. First, they should learn to recognize the unique symptoms. Next, they should reach out to male employees as with other preventive programming, such as substance abuse. Managers should communicate openly, especially during times of change, and expand contact in informal settings to accurately assess mood. And lastly, they should keep in mind that a corporate value system that is holistic, stressing life balance and security, can increase productivity while decreasing mental disability.

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For more information on topics such as male depression or to receive a free weekly health report from Dr. Magee, visit the Web site at www.HealthPolitics.com.