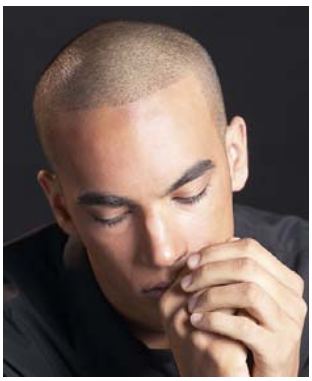
Stories of Depression
Part 1 – The Basics

Does this sound like you?
Are you feeling really sad, tired, and worried most of the time? Are these feelings lasting more than a few days? If yes, you may have **depression.**

Brenda's story:
"It was really hard to get out of bed in the morning. I just wanted to hide under the covers and not talk to anyone. I didn't feel much like eating and I lost a lot of weight. Nothing seemed fun anymore. I was tired all the time, yet I wasn't sleeping well at night. But I knew that I had to keep going because I've got kids and a job. It just felt so impossible, like nothing was going to change or get better. I started missing days from work, and a friend noticed that something wasn't right. She talked to me about the time that she had been really depressed and had gotten help from her doctor. I called my doctor and talked about how I was feeling. She had me come in for a checkup and gave me the name of a psychiatrist, who is an expert in treating depression. Now, I'm seeing the psychiatrist once a month and taking medicine for depression. I'm also seeing someone else for "talk" therapy, which helps me learn ways to deal with this illness in my everyday life. Everything didn't get better overnight, but I find myself more able to enjoy life and my children."



Rob's story:
"Things in my life were going all right. I had just gotten my GED and was starting a new job in a week. My family was really proud of me. But inside, I was feeling terrible. At first I was feeling sad all the time, even though I had no reason to be. Then the sadness turned into anger, and I started having fights with my family and friends. I felt really bad about myself, like I wasn't good enough for anyone. It got so bad that I wished I would go to bed and never wake up. My older brother, who I always looked up to, saw that I wasn't acting like my usual self. He told me straight out that I seemed depressed and that I should talk to a doctor about it. I hate going to the doctor. I thought, "No way am I going in for this. But after a few weeks, I started having problems at work too. Sometimes I wouldn't show up because I wasn't able to sleep the night before. When I got fired, I knew I had to listen to my brother and get help. I saw a doctor at the health clinic. He told me I had a common illness called depression and that treatment could help. So I started to see someone at the clinic each week for "talk" therapy. This treatment helps me learn to control depression in my everyday life. It has taken some time, but I'm finally feeling like myself again."

Many people who have depression know something is wrong but don't know what to do about it. This program can help. It tells you steps you can take to understand and get help for depression.

Steps to understand and get help for depression:
- Look for signs of depression.
- Understand that depression is a real illness.

Look for signs of depression. Look at the following information. Do any of them sound like you?

- I am really sad most of the time.
- I don't enjoy doing the things I've always enjoyed doing.
- I don't sleep well at night and am very restless.
- I am always tired. I find it hard to get out of bed.
- I don't feel like eating much.
- I feel like eating all the time.
- I have lots of aches and pains that don't go away.
- I have little to no sexual energy.
- I find it hard to focus and am very forgetful.
- I am mad at everybody and everything.
- I feel upset and fearful, but can't figure out why.
- I don't feel like talking to people.
- I feel like there isn't much point to living, nothing good is going to happen to me.
- I don't like myself very much.
- I feel bad most of the time.
- I think about death a lot.
- I even think about how I might kill myself.

If you thought that some of these signs fit you, call your doctor. You may need to get a checkup and find out if you have depression.

Suicide
Sometimes depression can cause people to feel like killing themselves. Call 911. Go to the emergency room of the nearest hospital. Call and talk to your doctor now. Ask a friend or family member to take you to the hospital or call your doctor. **If you are thinking about killing yourself or know someone who is talking about it, get help.**

Understand that depression is a real illness. Depression is a serious medical illness that involves the brain. Depression is not something that you have "made up in your head." It's more than just feeling "down in the dumps" or "blue" for a few days. It's feeling "down" and "low" and "hopeless" for weeks at a time. About 19 million Americans have depression. It can happen to anyone, no matter what age you are or where you come from. Depression can make it very hard for you to care for yourself, your family, or even hold down a job. But, there is hope. Depression can be treated and you can feel better.

What causes depression?
You may want to know why you feel "depressed." There may be several causes. Depression may happen because of changes in your brain. Depression runs in some families. This means that someone in your family such as a grandparent, parent, aunt, uncle, cousin, sister or brother may have depression. Sometimes painful events or losses such as deaths can lead to depression. Sometimes the cause of depression is not clear.

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