

## DEPRESSION & ANXIETY RESOURCE PACKET

The Week of May 6-12 is National Anxiety and Depression Awareness Week. Anxiety and depression are medical illnesses affecting more than 35 million Americans each year. The symptoms are impairing and disrupting individuals' lives. Don't let anxiety and depression disrupt your life any longer. Treatment works. Call Claremont EAP at 800-834-3773 for free and confidential counseling services.

### DEPRESSION IS MORE THAN FEELING BLUE

Depression is not "all in your head." It is a real illness that saps your energy. It can leave you feeling sad, hopeless, lonely and guilty. It is related to a chemical imbalance in the brain and to certain traits such as low self-esteem and pessimism. Some kinds of depression may be inherited.

#### Doesn't Everyone Get Depressed?

When someone close to you dies, you lose a job, your marriage ends, or you just have a bad day, it's normal to feel blue. The difference between depression and feeling down is that normal feelings of sadness gradually lift. They do not interfere with your life for long.

The amount of time you feel sad depends on the situation. Even with a major loss, some people might start feeling better within a few weeks. Their sadness doesn't usually affect every part of their lives. When your feelings persist or when they affect you in ways that don't seem consistent with the loss, it could be a sign that you're suffering from clinical depression.

#### What's It Like to Be Depressed?

The difference between depression and feeling down is how severe the symptoms are and how long they last. To help you determine if you are depressed, answer these questions.

- Do you often or usually feel sad, anxious or "empty"?
- Do you sleep too little or too much?
- Has your appetite shrunk, and have you lost weight? Or do you have a bigger appetite, and have you gained weight?
- Have you lost interest in activities you once enjoyed?
- Are you restless or irritable?
- Do you have persistent physical symptoms, such as headaches, chronic pain or constipation, that don't respond to treatment?
- Do you have difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions?
- Do you often feel tired or lack energy?
- Do you feel guilty, hopeless or worthless?
- Do you have recurring thoughts of death or suicide?

If you answered yes to three or more of these questions and have felt this way for longer than two weeks, or if the symptoms interfere with your daily routine – then call Claremont EAP to talk to a licensed clinician. There is no cost for EAP counseling sessions and your participation is confidential.

One of the most painful parts of depression is feeling that it is somehow your fault or something that you should be able to control. But depression is an illness. It is no more your fault than allergies or arthritis. It's important to talk with a mental health professional about your feelings, especially if you have thoughts about dying or suicide. A mental health professional can determine whether you are depressed and decide what kind of treatment may work best for you.

Claremont EAP can help you overcome this illness. Getting treated can make a huge difference in your life. Eight out of 10 depressed people who get professional help feel better, and the effects of treatment on some people can be dramatic.

## RELIEVING DEPRESSION

Depression might be the temporary sadness that follows a loss, or it might be a more disruptive illness that interferes with the ability to enjoy school and family life. Often the depressed person is overwhelmed by feelings of hopelessness and inaction that make it difficult for the person to reach out to others. But depression can be treated with a combination of support.

### Get Support

Talk to a trusted loved one or friend. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Talking out the feelings of hopelessness and loneliness is the first step to recovery.

### Call Claremont EAP

You and your family members in the immediate household have access to free and confidential counseling sessions with a licensed clinician through Claremont EAP. Talking out problems with a mental health professional can be helpful in treating depression. No matter how trivial you consider your problems to be, or how hopeless you feel in doing anything about them, a mental health professional will take your problems seriously and give you undivided attention and direction. It will take time for the depression to lift, but the experience of safety and understanding from a mental health professional can be a positive step on the road to recovery.

### Evaluation for Medication

Some types of depression respond well to medication. Talk to your Claremont clinician or doctor about whether an evaluation for medication is right for you. Only a doctor can prescribe medication.

### Begin Self-Help

Sometimes depression, especially one caused by a life situation, can be helped by following a healthy diet and getting regular exercise, especially aerobic exercise such as walking, bicycling or swimming. Scientists theorize that such exercise releases "feel-good" hormones in the brain that can help lift your spirits and make you feel more optimistic and in control. This approach can be useful, especially when taken with another form of therapy.

### Toward Recovery

Almost everyone who experiences depression recovers and feels good again. It's a step-by-step process, but the first small step leads to the next one and, with help, you'll be able to cope with life again. Seeing a mental health professional helps determine the cause of depression.

Claremont distributes this information to provide employees with general behavioral health information. If you have concerns about these or other behavioral health issues, you can call Claremont to arrange for assistance. You will be directed to an appropriate, experienced professional who can offer guidance in a variety of work and personal matters.

**For confidential help, call: 800-834-3773 or visit [www.claremonteap.com](http://www.claremonteap.com)**

## ANXIETY

Anxiety is a state of the mind and body associated with worry, tension, and nervousness. Everyone experiences life stress and anxious moments. In fact, anxiety can help us cope with external dangers by increasing our awareness and getting our body ready to react. When anxiety becomes overwhelming and interferes with daily life, a person may be suffering from an anxiety disorder.

Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental health problems in the United States. Up to 25 percent of people in the United States will suffer from anxiety disorders sometime in their lives. Anxiety disorders usually begin in a person's late teens or early 20s. Anxiety disorders may occur with depression. Anxiety disorders include panic disorder, social phobia, specific phobias, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and generalized anxiety disorder.

Anxiety disorders are chronic illnesses that can grow progressively worse if not treated. Effective treatments are available.

### Causes

The causes of anxiety and panic are not fully understood. Life experience may trigger anxiety. Chemical imbalances in the brain can also play a role. These imbalances may run in the family.

### Symptoms

Anxiety can express itself in different ways. It may be ongoing or come in bursts, lasting only a few minutes. Panic attacks are short, intense bursts of anxiety accompanied by a sense of dread and physical reactions such as heart pounding and sweating. Generalized anxiety is an ongoing condition that is not usually a direct result of a well-defined irrational fear (phobia).

The two major symptoms of generalized anxiety are uncontrollable anxiety and worry. Other symptoms may include:

- Muscle tension
- Fatigue
- Irritability or edginess
- Insomnia or sleep disturbance
- Difficulty concentrating

The symptoms of a panic attack may occur suddenly and repeatedly, including:

- Fear of losing control or "going crazy"
- Fear of dying or that something terrible is about to happen
- Fear of embarrassment or humiliation
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Rapid heartbeat
- Shortness of breath, smothering, sweating
- Chills or hot flashes
- Trembling or shaking
- Feeling of choking
- Nausea or abdominal discomfort
- Numbness or tingling

## TREATING ANXIETY

Anxiety—feeling frightened, tense, uneasy—is a normal response to a threat. Anxiety can disrupt your life. Don't be ashamed, and don't suffer in silence. Call Claremont EAP to discuss your feelings of anxiety with a mental health professional. There is no cost for EAP counseling sessions and your participation is confidential.

### Helping Yourself

If anxiety is wearing you down, here are some things you can do to cope:

- Don't fight your feelings. Anxiety feeds itself—the more you worry about it, the worse it gets. Instead, try to identify what might have triggered your anxiety. Then try to put this threat in perspective.
- Keep in mind that you can't control everything about a situation. Change what you can and let the rest take its course.
- Learn relaxation techniques such as deep breathing.
- Take time away from stress.
- Exercise—it's a great way to relieve tension and help your body feel relaxed.
- Examine your life for stress, and try to find ways to reduce it.
- Avoid caffeine and nicotine, which can make anxiety symptoms worse.
- Avoid alcohol and don't use illegal drugs. They only make things worse in the long run.
- Limit your intake of caffeine. It can make the symptoms of anxiety worse.
- Practice confronting your fears.
- Call Claremont EAP to discuss your situation.

### Counseling

Counseling can help you change the behaviors and thoughts that contribute to your anxiety. With counseling, you can better understand what makes you feel anxious, develop skills that help you cope with stress, and learn ways to relax. Counseling can also help you face and overcome your fears instead of trying to escape them. You have free and confidential counseling sessions through Claremont EAP. Call Claremont at 800-834-3773 to access your benefit.

### Your Evaluation

When you meet with a licensed clinician, he or she can evaluate your anxiety by asking about your symptoms and feelings. Answer these questions honestly and openly. You may need a physical exam to be sure that no underlying medical illness is causing your symptoms. You may also be evaluated for depression, which can develop along with anxiety. After you've been evaluated, the best treatment can be decided on. Treatment often involves counseling and, occasionally, medications. Only a doctor can prescribe medication.

**For confidential help with depression, anxiety and other issues,  
call Claremont EAP at 800-834-3773  
or visit [www.claremonteap.com](http://www.claremonteap.com)**