

Dealing with Depression

Depression is a disease, and chances are that someone you know is struggling with it. They may or may not have been diagnosed, but if they have, they definitely are experiencing more than ordinary sadness. Laura Epstein Rosen, PH.D. and Xavier Francisco Amador, PH.D. offer insight and advice in ***When Someone You Love is Depressed: How to Help Your Loved One Without Losing Yourself***, PH.D. (Simon & Schuster, 1996). They state that close supportive relationships are key to recovery from depression, but the various ways loved ones may react to depressive behavior may trigger a "downward depressive spiral," worsening the depression, rather than helping it. The authors describe what they call four "stages of adaptation to the depression:"

- 1) Trouble (a new problem surfaces or a continuing one intensifies);
- 2) Reaction (conscious or unconscious);
- 3) Information Gathering (formal or informal conversations and research);
- 4) Problem Solving (a new plan of action, leading to a less reactive and more conscious response to the problem).

These stages are more intense for couples than in other relationships because of their intimate connection and the intertwining of various aspects of their relationship. To move through these stages effectively, the authors make eight suggestions: 1) Learn all that you can; 2) Have realistic expectations; 3) Give unqualified support; 4) Keep your routines; 5) Express your feelings; 6) Don't take it personally; 7) Ask for help; 8) Work as a team.

The authors encourage couples to see the depression itself as the cause of their difficulties, rather than trying to determine which of them to blame. Blaming one person is a huge oversimplification of what is happening and puts one or both of them on the defensive, resulting in greater distancing and less collaboration. They offer clear guidelines for effective communication, along with five specific ways to communicate with a depressed woman. They also address the problems persons may experience when trying to relate to a depressed spouse: feeling that you cannot ask for what you want or need, coping with the depressed person's rejection of your offers of support, and trying to understand why the depressed person seems to invite and then turn away from support.

This book would be an excellent addition to your church or personal library, to have available for those struggling with a family member or friend who is depressed.

For more information on ministering with those dealing with relationship challenges, visit www.marriagelovepower.net, Click on Best Practices Articles and Recommended Resources, and scroll down to Ministering with Those in Crisis and Transition – or search by topic or title at www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/intergenerational-family-ministries.

Jane P. Ives, United Methodist Marriage and Family Ministries Consultant (8/30/2015)

10 Quaker Lane, Portland, ME 04103, 207-797-8930, Janepives@gmail.com

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