

What are the types of mental health professionals?

There are many types of mental health professionals and finding the right one for you may require some research.

- **A clinical social worker** is a counselor with a master's degree in social work and six or more years of supervised work experience. They are trained to provide individual, group and family therapy. Their qualifications include state licensure.
- **A psychologist** is a counselor with a doctoral degree in psychology and three or more years of supervised work experience. They are trained to conduct psychological testing and provide individual and group therapy. Their qualifications include state licensure.
- **A psychiatrist** is a medical doctor with special training in the diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional illnesses. Like other doctors, psychiatrists are qualified to prescribe medication. Their qualifications include state licensure as a Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) or Doctor of Osteopathy (D.O.). Additionally, they are either certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology or eligible for board certification.
- **An advanced practice registered nurse** is an RN with specialized training and is able to prescribe medications under the supervision of a psychiatrist. They are trained to provide individual, group and family therapy.

For more information...

Please contact any of the following:

- ValueOptions' NYS Empire Clinical Referral Line at 877-7NYSHIP (877-769-7447), option 3.
- Your local mental health association.
- National Mental Health Association at www.nmha.org or call toll-free: 800-969-NMHA (800-969-6642).



ValueOptions Quality Management
433 River Street, Suite 200
Troy, NY 12180



What to Expect from Mental Health Treatment

ValueOptions' Clinical Referral Line (877-7NYSHIP) is available 24 hours a day to assist you.

Which type of professional is right for me and how do I find one?

ValueOptions' Clinical Referral Line (877-7NYSHIP or 877-749-7447) is available 24 hours a day to assist you in finding a ValueOptions network practitioner. The toll-free line is answered by trained staff who can assist you in choosing the right professional. Describe your symptoms to the ValueOptions staff member and he or she can provide referrals to appropriate mental health professionals.

What should I expect at my first appointment?

A well-trained mental health professional will treat you in a respectful and courteous manner. The first few sessions will be used to get to know you and your history and the problems you are facing. You may be asked to fill out, review and sign forms that describe the problems you are dealing with. Be sure to identify what you see as the main reason for seeking treatment and what you hope to gain. Write down all of your questions, so you can ask them during your appointment. Your doctor and/or counselor should be someone with whom you are comfortable. Different people are comfortable with different styles. It is important to choose a provider with a style that is in line with your own.



What can I expect after the first visit?

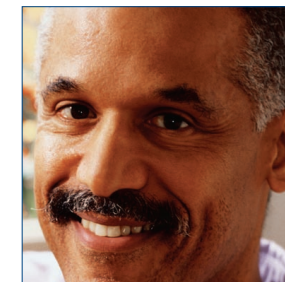
If you decide to pursue the treatment recommended, your provider will work with you to set goals for treatment. Be sure to be involved in the goal setting process. Your provider may ask for your permission to call or write to your primary care physician or another mental health professional. When you or your family member needs to see more than one provider, your treatment needs may be more complex. It is particularly important for your providers to communicate, especially at these times:

- **When you start therapy**
- **Have a change in your health status,**
- **Start or change medications or**
- **Have laboratory tests**

Your provider(s) may request that family and loved ones join you for some appointments, but only with your consent. Involving others may provide support and help to work on issues. Keep in mind that treatment is not always comfortable. You may improve and/or feel worse at different times in your treatment. Communicate these feelings clearly and honestly with your provider(s), particularly if there is a sudden change in symptoms or a severe worsening. Sometimes you and your provider may not make a “connection.” You can always discuss this with your provider and/or seek a referral to a different provider.

What is a treatment plan?

A treatment plan is like a road map that you build with your treatment team. It will help you to help yourself feel better. Ask for services that you think you need. The treatment team may include a doctor, case manager, therapist, and/or counselors. It may involve family members and other community supports. Your treatment plan will include learning about your illness and how to cope with your illness.



It may talk about having your family or friends help you. Your treatment plan has specific goals for you to regain and maintain your emotional health and well-being.

RECOVERY IS A JOURNEY



Brought to you by ValueOptions

Help Yourself Stay Sober by Getting Help

Treatment can:

- Help you understand and accept the disease of addiction
- Help you develop new life skills in a safe, structured environment
- Help you become aware of relapse triggers
- Provide support when you don't feel motivated

Benefits of Sobriety

- Regain the freedom to make choices
- Improved relationships
- Rediscover peace of mind – or, discover it for the first time
- Better physical and mental health
- Improved overall functioning

Addiction does not make you a bad person, but it does make you feel bad about yourself, makes you feel depressed and lowers your self-esteem. Acting on these feelings often results in negative consequences and increases the risk of personal tragedy. Asking for help is a sign of strength.

What You Can Do

There are a number of ways to get treatment for alcohol or drug addiction. Many people benefit greatly from outpatient treatment. Outpatient treatment programs usually include individual, group and family educational sessions and vary in frequency of attendance. Self-help groups used in conjunction with a formal treatment program is widely accepted as a means of getting on the road to recovery.

The support of other people through Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous or other mutual self-help programs is a good choice

that has helped thousands of people achieve and maintain sobriety.

For some recovering people, there is a need for more intense treatment such as an inpatient, residential, or therapeutic community setting. These settings offer 24 hour a day structured supports for people who lack sober supports, have serious medical problems, mental health issues, or numerous failed attempts at sobriety at a less intensive level of care.

Get help as soon as possible to reduce the severity of withdrawal symptoms and avoid a delay in recovery time.

Take good care of you: good nutrition and exercise are important. Follow medical advice for the treatment of any medical problems. Develop good sleep habits as proper rest promotes healing and recovery. Find hobbies and activities that do not include alcohol.

Recovery is hard work. It can be both exciting and frightening. *The most important thing to remember is when you begin treatment, stay in treatment.* Recovery is possible.

ValueOptions, the administrator of your Empire Plan Mental Health and Substance Abuse benefits, is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide support and referrals for treatment. Call our Clinical Referral Line at 877-7NYSHIP (877-769-7447), option 3.

Resources:

1. www.valueoptions.com/members “Click on “Education Center” and then “Tips & Resources”
2. www.SAMHSA.gov Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Crisis – 1-800-273-8255
3. www.Alcoholics-anonymous.org Alcoholics Anonymous. Web site contains educational information and telephone numbers for assistance in areas throughout the United States.

Visit ValueOptions.com or call for assistance today: **(877) 7NYSHIP**

www.valueoptions.com/members



 **VALUEOPTIONS**

Important Information About Your Adolescent's Care



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- Continuing outpatient treatment after your child's hospitalization is a very important part of his/her care. Please make sure your child attends all scheduled appointments.
 - ValueOptions believes that your involvement in your child's ongoing treatment is also essential as parents play an important role in the success of their child's treatment and recovery.
 - At the time of your child's hospital discharge, you should have received an outpatient therapy appointment. If for any reason you did not receive an appointment, please call the ValueOptions Clinical Referral Line 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-877-7NYSHIP (1-877-769-7447), option 3, for assistance in obtaining outpatient therapy referrals.

Helpful Hints to Stay Involved After Discharge

- ❖ Communicate with your child's providers. Be sure to write down any questions you have so you can ask them at your child's appointments.
- ❖ Write down your child's appointment date(s) and time(s) and the names of the doctor and/or therapist he/she is seeing.
- ❖ Keep a record of any prescribed medications. Talk to your child's physician about any side effects or concerns.
- ❖ Discuss with your child's outpatient therapist whether you should participate in family therapy sessions with your child. At least monthly family therapy sessions are often found to be beneficial.
- ❖ Be a presence in your child's school by: attending conferences, communicating with your child's teacher, getting progress reports on your child's behavior and asking about your child's strengths as well as problems.

Everything may not get better overnight, but following these steps will improve your adolescent's chances of a successful recovery.

Note: Feel free to use the back of this form to keep track of appointment and medication information, as well as any questions you have.



Your Child's Aftercare Appointment Information (Please complete and keep for your records)

Therapist:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Appointment Date and Time: _____

Doctor:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

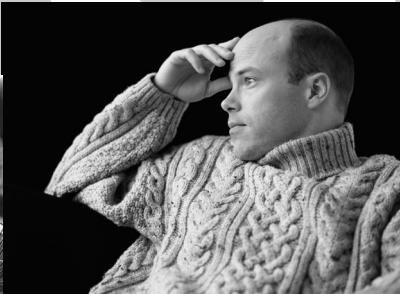
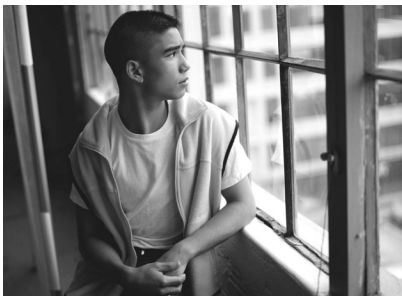
Appointment Date and Time: _____

Medications:

| Medication Name | Dosage |
|-----------------|--------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Questions to Review with Therapist or Doctor:

Keys to Recovering from Depression





INTRODUCTION


Depression is a common and serious disorder. Every year, depression affects nearly 10% of adult Americans over age 18. Depression takes a big toll in suffering, costs industry billions of dollars, and can lead to suicide in some severe cases. Family, friends, health, work, or school can all be seriously impacted by the disease. However, depression is a very treatable disease. There is hope.

We have designed this workbook to do two main things:

1. For those who have already been diagnosed with a form of depression and are in treatment, we want to help you learn as much as you can about depression.

 We want to give you up-to-date information about what depression is (and what it isn't). There are some common myths about depression that aren't correct.

 We believe that the more you understand about depression and issues like medication side effects, the more likely you are to get the full benefit of treatment.

 Wrong information about depression causes some people to stop treatment too soon or they may not follow the treatment plan agreed upon with their doctor or therapist.

2. Although treatment for depression is helpful for most people, there are things that you can do in addition to treatment that may help you to feel better more quickly. Your doctor or therapist has probably told you some of these. You may find additional suggestions in this workbook. And since depression is an illness that tends to come back again, learning some different ways to think and to build support systems may even make it less likely that you will get depressed again after you finish treatment.

If you are reading this book and you feel depressed, but have not been diagnosed with depression or started in treatment, read this book anyway. The information here may help you to decide to see a doctor or mental health therapist for evaluation and/or treatment.

We hope that you will take the time to work through this workbook and answer the short questions. If you don't have much energy, you don't have to do it all at once. Just do a little bit at a time until it is done.

We have given some Internet "links" that might help you get additional information if you have access to a computer and the Internet. These links were current at the time of printing but some information may no longer be available by the time you read this.

Key 1

Accurate Information About Depression that will Help You

Depression is a disease.

Scientific research shows that depression is a disorder of the brain. In depression, nerve centers in the brain that affect moods, thinking, sleep, appetite, and behavior fail to function properly. Chemicals used by nerve cells are out of balance.

You are not alone: depression is a common disorder

- 🔑 Depression affects nearly 10 percent of adult Americans ages 18 and over.
- 🔑 In 1998, it is estimated that more than 19 million people suffered from depression.
- 🔑 Depression affects twice as many women, (12 percent) as men (7 percent).
- 🔑 Depression may come back later in your life, though many people only have one episode.

Symptoms of depression

Check off from this list those signs (symptoms) that you have been having lately:

- Sad mood, frequent crying
- Feeling hopeless
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities that were once enjoyed
- Change in appetite or weight
- Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping
- Physical slowing or agitation (“jumpy,” “edgy”)
- Loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Guilty feelings
- Difficulty thinking or concentrating
- Thoughts of death or suicide



It might be helpful to think about the symptoms you checked above and about how they have affected your life. Then make a list of things that have changed for the worse in your life recently. For example, you might feel that you have less energy, have lost interest in things you used to enjoy, or have problems at work.

Symptoms of depression have changed my life in the following ways:

Making this list is a way of thinking about the *cost* of depression in your life.

Keeping yourself safe

Because there is effective treatment for depression, it is very important to keep yourself safe until your depression symptoms subside. If you have been thinking about death frequently or even about harming yourself or someone else, call your doctor or mental health professional immediately or call 911 in an emergency.

Other ideas for maintaining your safety -

- 🔑 Distract yourself from thoughts about harming yourself - instead try to get involved in an activity that has been enjoyable
- 🔑 Do not stay alone - go out among other people
- 🔑 Call a supportive friend



What are the “types” of depression?

The two most common types of depression are:

- 🔑 *Major Depressive Disorder (MDD)* – This is the most serious form of depression. An “episode” of major depression involves many of the signs and symptoms noted above, especially depressed mood and lost of interest or pleasure in “usual” activities. These happen most of the day, nearly every day for at least two weeks. Once someone has an episode of major depression, he or she may experience more episodes at some time in their lifetime.
- 🔑 *Dysthymia* – This is a less severe form of depression but it has gone on longer, for at least two years. The most common features of dysthymia are loss of appetite or overeating, sleeping too much or too little, lack of energy or feeling tired all the time, low self-esteem, trouble concentrating, and feelings of hopelessness. Some people may have both dysthymia and an episode of major depression at the same time, which is called double depression.

Depression can also happen along with other disorders such as substance abuse or anxiety and this is often called a dual diagnosis. In those cases, both disorders must be dealt with in treatment.



Depression can also happen as part of another serious disorder called “bipolar disorder.” In this illness, people go back and forth between a period of very depressed mood and one of drastically increased energy and agitation called a “manic episode.” Bipolar disorder (also frequently called “manic depressive disorder”) runs in families and seems to be a disorder of the body’s chemical regulation system. Certain special medications, such as lithium carbonate, are used to treat bipolar disorder.

Depression can also go along with many physical disorders. These are sometimes referred to as “co-occurring disorders.” Heart patients, for example, have high rates of depression. It is important to recognize the depression in these cases and to get help, as depression may make recovery from the physical problems more difficult.

What causes depression

In depression, chemistry is out of balance in the brain’s centers that control positive and negative feelings. Most experts believe that this has a number of “causes” including:

- 🔑 Depression seems to run in families. Some people seem to be born with the tendency to become depressed, especially when they are under stress.
- 🔑 Depression may happen to people who abuse drugs or alcohol.
- 🔑 Major life stress, upsetting life events, or many stresses that “pile up.” The person may feel that he or she can’t cope with all the stresses and become sad and depressed.

These can include:

- 🔑 Family or marriage problems
 - 🔑 Job problems
 - 🔑 Medical illnesses
 - 🔑 Disability
 - 🔑 Natural disasters (fires, floods, storms)
 - 🔑 Crime victims
 - 🔑 Financial problems
 - 🔑 Losses such as the death of a loved one
 - 🔑 Coping with old age
- 🔑 Some people become depressed in the winter. This seems to be because of less sunlight. This is called “Seasonal Affective Disorder” or SAD.
 - 🔑 Some people just seem to get depressed for no apparent reason.

Depression is not a weakness of character

- 🔑 Getting depressed does not mean you are weak. Depression is a disease and usually needs treatment.
- 🔑 No one is to blame for your being depressed. You are not to blame.
- 🔑 Many people are ashamed to admit they are depressed, but depression is a disease. It is not your fault that you have it.
- 🔑 Sometimes people tell you to “snap out of it” because they don’t understand it is not your fault.

Depression can be treated effectively

- 🔑 There are proven effective treatments for depression.
- 🔑 Medications, “talk” therapy, or a combination of the two have been found to be helpful in reducing depression for most people.
- 🔑 Many people who have been in treatment for depression are able to go back to working and living their lives very much as before they became depressed.
- 🔑 People who get depressed only in winter, who have Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) may be helped using a special “light box.”
- 🔑 Sometimes depressed people are not able to care for themselves and their depression does not respond to therapy and medications. In these cases, their doctor may recommend ECT. Modern ECT is an alternative treatment that is comfortable, safe and effective and has helped many people return to enjoyable lives. More information is in the references at the end of the workbook or can be obtained through your doctor.
- 🔑 People who have had depression may get depressed again. But you may be able to reduce the risk of another depression by learning some ways to take care of yourself. You may be able to learn how to recognize another depression early and get help.

Key 2

Antidepressant Medications Can Help You Recover From Depression

Types Of Antidepressant Medications:

Most people with depression are helped by medications. Antidepressant medications are not habit-forming and are considered safe when taken as directed. Most people have few, if any problems.

Medications affect the nerve impulses that travel between nerve cells in the positive and negative emotion centers of the brain. This helps restore normal nerve function and stabilize mood.

There are several types of antidepressant medications used to treat depression. Some people are helped more by one type of medication than another. Medications differ in their side effects and cost. However, all classes of medications tend to work equally well in reducing depression. Sometimes your practitioner will suggest trying several different medications to find the one or combination most helpful to you. Frequently, the initial dosage needs to be adjusted to find the most effective dose for you. It is important to work together with your doctor to find the best antidepressant medication and dose for you.



Taking medications:

You may begin to feel better in the first few weeks but sometimes it can take as long as 8 weeks for these medications to be fully effective.

- 🔑 Patients often stop medication too soon. They may feel better and think they don't need it. Or they may think it's not working. But it is important to keep taking medication until it has a chance to work.
- 🔑 Always talk to your doctor (or other prescribing professional) before stopping any medication.
- 🔑 Even when you are feeling better, you may need to take the medication for 4 to 9 months to prevent the depression from coming right back.
- 🔑 Some medications must be stopped gradually. Some may cause "withdrawal" symptoms if stopped suddenly.

Mixing with other medications and foods:

Some medications cannot be mixed with certain other drugs or foods.

- Without talking to your doctor, never mix different types of medications, even those you can buy “over the counter,” with antidepressants. Some antidepressants, while safe when taken alone, may cause problems when mixed with other drugs.
- Alcohol and “street” drugs keep antidepressants from working properly. Avoid alcohol and “street” drugs. These substances interfere with the nerve impulses when the impulses travel between nerve cells in the positive and negative emotion centers of the brain.
- Most antidepressants do not require you to modify the foods you can eat. People who take one class of medications, called MAOI’s, must avoid certain foods that contain a chemical called “tyramine.” These medications and the tyramine, when mixed together, can cause high blood pressure and strokes. If you are taking MAOI’s, your doctor will have given you a list of foods to avoid and it is very important that you follow these warnings carefully.

If you have side effects:

Antidepressants may cause mild, usually temporary, side effects in some people. These are not usually serious but should be reported to your doctor as soon as possible. The most common side effects and some suggestions for dealing with them include:

- Dry mouth* - Take sips of water or chew sugarless gum.
- Constipation* – Bran cereals or prunes in your diet help.
- Bladder problems* – You may experience some mild problems emptying your bladder fully. Any significant difficulty or pain should be reported to your doctor right away.
- Blurred vision* – This is usually temporary and doesn’t usually require any special glasses or treatment.
- Dizziness* – You may notice this when getting up from bed or a chair. Do so slowly if this affects you.
- Drowsiness during waking hours* – This is usually temporary. But if you feel dizzy or drowsy, do not drive or use machines.
- Headache* – This is usually a temporary problem. Usually responds to common “over-the-counter” remedies. Discuss with your doctor if severe or persistent.
- Nausea* – Usually noticed right after taking the medication and temporary.
- Nervousness, trouble going to sleep* – Usually early in treatment and temporary. In some cases dosages much be changed if this continues.



🔑 *Agitation (jittery feelings)* – If this does not go away after a short time, consult your doctor.

🔑 *Sexual problems* – These are usually mild. If these worry you, your doctor will be receptive to discussing your concerns.

Herbal medications:

In recent years there has been much interest in the press about use of certain herbs in the treatment of depression and anxiety. These can be purchased “over the counter” without a prescription. One herbal remedy, called St. John’s Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), has been used for years in Europe to treat mild to moderate depression. In Germany, St. John’s Wort is the most commonly used antidepressant remedy.

However, scientific studies of the effectiveness of St. John’s Wort in treating depression and how its effects compare to prescription antidepressants have not yet provided us with a clear picture. The National Institute of Health is sponsoring a major study of St. John’s Wort that may help to answer questions about the medication’s safety and effectiveness in the treatment of depression. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has also issued a warning that St. John’s Wort may cause problems when taken with certain drugs used to treat physical health conditions such as heart disease, seizures, certain cancers, and rejection of transplants. We urge you to consult your doctor prior to using any herbal medications, especially in place of, or in addition to, other medications.



EXERCISE

Taking antidepressant medications is very similar to taking prescribed medications for any medical condition. It is helpful if you are aware of the choices you tend to make about taking prescribed medications.

Honestly answer the following five questions to help you become aware of how you tend to take prescribed medications:

1. Have you ever had any effects from medications that caused you to cut back or stop taking the medication without talking to your doctor first?

Yes _____ No _____

2. Have you ever stopped taking a medication when you started feeling better but before the prescription was completed?

Yes _____ No _____

3. Have you ever saved medications that you haven't used up and shared them with anyone else or used them up yourself later?

Yes _____ No _____

4. For any reason, have you ever stopped taking medication exactly as prescribed and increased the amount, skipped doses frequently, cut back, or stopped taking medications entirely without talking to your doctor?

Yes _____ No _____

5. Have you ever taken any additional medications, either by prescription or bought "over the counter", that your doctor didn't know about?

Yes _____ No _____

If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, you may have patterns of medication use that could interfere with your getting the full benefit of treatment. They could, in some cases, be dangerous! We urge you to discuss these issues with your practitioner.

NOTE: Information about medications in this handbook is reprinted from National Institute of Health Publication NIH No. 00-3561

Key 3

Practicing Positive Thinking Can Help You Feel Better

- Have you ever heard the saying that “a glass can be half empty or half full?” This shows how it is possible to think different ways about the same thing. When you see a glass as “half full,” this is a “positive” thought. You are looking for good things about the situation. When you see the same glass as “half empty,” this is a negative thought. You are looking at the bad parts of the same situation.
- The same thing can be true of your life. If you look at your life and see only the bad parts, you are more likely to stay depressed. But if you can teach yourself to look for the good things in life, this often reduces depression.
- Even very bad things don’t happen all the time. There are always parts of the day, or parts of your life that are going well. But when you are depressed, it is hard to see them, unless you look very hard.
- Seeing only the bad parts of your life and worrying about them can easily become a habit. This can help keep you depressed. But looking for the good parts can become a habit too, if you practice. This may help you get over depression.
- The same is true of thinking of the future. When you are depressed, the future looks bleak. But if you can practice thinking of good things you would like to happen in the future, you may feel less depressed.

EXERCISE

On the left, list five things that are bad or wrong with your life. On the right, list five things that are going well right now. It may take you longer to do the “good” side list. That’s OK, keep at it. Once you have made both lists, read over your “bad” list. How do you feel? Now read over your “good” list. Read them over and over. Are you surprised to notice that reading the “good” list feels better?

“Bad List” _____

“Good List” _____

Now try the same exercise but think about where you would like to be 1 year from now, or 5 years from now. List the bad things that could happen on the left, the good on the right. Which list helps you to feel better? Thought so!!

“Bad List” _____

“Good List” _____

Build a supportive professional relationship with your provider



🔑 Therapy can help you learn about your thoughts, attitudes, and actions. You can learn how these affect how you feel, and what you can do to feel better.

🔑 Change may be very hard, especially when you are depressed. A mental health therapist can help you recognize thoughts and actions that can lead to depression. He or she can help you to learn ways of thinking and acting that help you feel better.

Changing thoughts that can make you feel bad

Some thoughts and expectations lead to bad feelings and depression. Look for “good” aspects of each situation. They are always there if you look hard enough. They seem to “hide in plain sight.”

- 🔑 Learn to spot when you have thoughts that lead to bad feelings. You may have them all the time and not realize it. They have become a habit. Replace them with thoughts that lead to good feelings. This takes practice!
- 🔑 It takes the same amount of energy to say to yourself, “I will do well at this” as to say “I will fail at this.” But it feels so much better to think about doing well!
- 🔑 Don’t only remember those things that not turned out as you would have liked. You have succeeded at many things, realize it and congratulate yourself!
- 🔑 Recognize “bad self-talk.” You may have “talks” with yourself that repeat “bad” thoughts over and over. Once you catch yourself doing this, practice “talking back” with positive “good” messages.

- 🔑 Realize that just because today was a bad day doesn't mean that tomorrow will be. Just because something bad happened today, it doesn't have to happen tomorrow. Think of ways to make tomorrow a better day.
 - 🔑 Don't blame yourself when things go wrong. There are always many reasons for happenings.
 - 🔑 Don't blame others when things go wrong, especially loved ones and co-workers. Most things happen for a combination reasons. Practice recognizing all of the reasons for a situation and figure out what you can do about it.
 - 🔑 Avoid "black and white" thinking (that is, things seem all good or all bad). Nothing is ever all bad. There are always good things to think about.
 - 🔑 Don't go on and on complaining about hard times or difficulties, even going as far as making things seem worse than they really are. Focus on how things really are. Then it is much easier to think of ways to make the situation better for yourself.
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A Story

A well known therapist and workshop leader tells workshop audiences a wonderful story about her grandmother who went to live on the shore overlooking a harbor. When she was a little girl, she would visit her grandmother's new house. The first time she visited, she looked out the back window. "Grandma," she said, "the harbor is so ugly! There are rusty fishing boats, old fish nets, barrels floating in the water. All the buildings nearby are old and rotting."



Her grandmother replied, "All that you say is true. But look at how beautiful the sun is as it sets over the water. Look at the pelicans and how sleek they are as they dive into the water looking for fish. Look at the many colors of the fishing nets and how they glisten in the sun like rainbows."

As the little girl looked out at the harbor, she found that she saw all the things her grandmother mentioned. And she was able to see the beauty. After a while, she didn't see the ugly fishing boats or the rusty barrels, she saw only the beauty.

Many times during her childhood, the girl would visit her grandmother's house by the harbor. And she always loved looking out at the beautiful scene out the back window.

And when she grew up and had a daughter of her own, she took her to her grandmother's house by the harbor. The first time, her daughter said, "Oh Mom, the harbor is so ugly! There are rusty fishing boats, old fish nets, barrels floating in the water. All the buildings nearby are old and rotting."



But her mother said to her, “All that you say is true. But look at how beautiful the sun is as it sets over the water. Look at the pelicans and how sleek they are as they dive into the water looking for fish. Look at the many colors of the fishing nets and how they glisten in the sun like rainbows...”

There is beauty in our lives, even when, because of stress and depression, all we see is ugliness. Sometimes we just need someone to point out the good things to us so we can remember to see them.

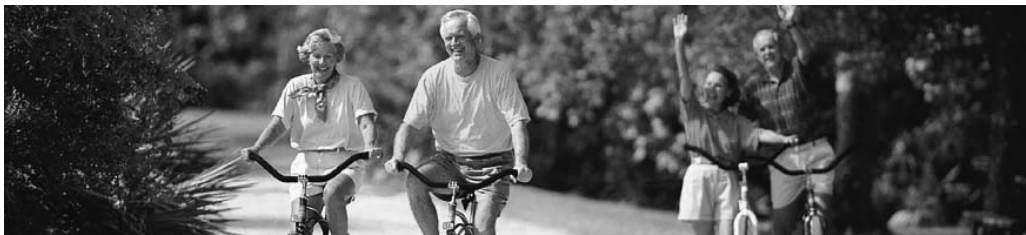
Focus on activities that help you to feel better

It often helps to change activities and usual routines. Start with the easiest:

- 🔑 Make a daily schedule. Schedule time for pleasant activities as well as routine and work tasks.
- 🔑 Increase activities that you enjoy and find pleasant and relaxing.

Focus on learning to cope with sadness, anger, and anxiety

- 🔑 Focus on thoughts and activities that are not upsetting to you.
- 🔑 Pay attention to those things that help you feel better. Try to do more of them.
- 🔑 Practice replacing negative thoughts with positive ones.
- 🔑 Practice expressing strong feelings in a calm way.
- 🔑 Keep a sense of humor.
- 🔑 Focus on the present, the “here and now.”



EXERCISE

Ask yourself the “Miracle Question”: *Imagine that you go to sleep tonight and, while you are sleeping, a miracle happens and all of your troubles disappear. But since you’re asleep, you don’t know that this miracle has happened.*

When you wake up, what things would you notice different about your life that would let you know that this miracle has happened? What things would you be doing differently if this miracle happened? For example, if the miracle happened, someone might say that they would make an appointment to get their hair cut. Or they might go out to the library or go for a walk. Make a list of things you might notice that were different about your life if a miracle happened and all your troubles and depression disappeared. Keep thinking of things until you have a good list.



Now, look at your list. Draw a circle around those things that you could do **right now**. For example, if one of the things you would do if you didn’t feel depressed is go for a walk, make an effort to schedule a walk tomorrow. If your list included dressing up and meeting a friend for lunch, try to schedule that.

These are the things that will help you to feel better and feel less depressed! Hint: If your list includes things like “My daughter and I wouldn’t be arguing,” schedule time for a fun activity with your daughter. Make it a point to avoid arguments, even if for just an hour. Just that little bit of success will help you feel less depressed. Or remember things that you did with your daughter without arguing. Try to repeat one of those activities. Small changes lead to big changes. Just as a snowball rolling down a hill will get larger as it goes.

Key 4

A Healthier Lifestyle Can Help You Feel Better

You can help yourself feel better by making healthier lifestyle choices. Here are some ideas. But remember, always check with your doctor before starting any strenuous activity. Think about how you can do some of these things for yourself. Which of these actions is easiest for you? Try it today! Add another tomorrow!

Make physical activity a part of your life

🔑 Take care of your plants or garden.

🔑 Take a walk.

🔑 Exercise.

Increase pleasant activities

🔑 Read a good book.

🔑 Play with a pet.

🔑 Listen to music.

🔑 Meditate or pray.

🔑 Find a relaxing hobby.

🔑 Spend time with a friend.



Increase sunlight

While protecting your skin and eyes from UV rays with sunscreen and sunglasses, increasing the amount of sunlight early in the day is known to affect symptoms of depression. People with Seasonal Affective Disorder are most prone to mood problems related to reduced sunlight.

Avoid excessive alcohol or other depressants

Although alcohol and other depressant drugs seem to relieve stress temporarily, they change body chemistry. This can result in increase in symptoms of depression.

Limit caffeine, nicotine or other stimulants especially late in the day

Caffeine, nicotine, and other stimulants cause temporary feelings of increased energy and wellbeing. However, they also can increase irritability and anxiety and disturb natural sleep-wakefulness cycles.

Eat well-balanced, nutritious meals

🔑 Avoid eating to relieve feelings of stress, anxiety, loneliness, or other negative emotions.

🔑 Avoid over-eating.

🔑 Avoid fad and extreme diets.

🔑 Adopt any changes to your diet that your physician's may have recommended.

🔑 Unless you have a disorder requiring modification of your food intake, adopt balanced eating habits as recommended by the "Food Guide Pyramid." More information about the USDA's "Food Guide Pyramid" can be found at <http://www.nal.usda.gov> or at your local library. Most of the calories should come from complex carbohydrates, vegetables, and fruits. Use milk products and meats moderately. Use fats and oils and sugars sparingly.

🔑 Drink enough water, at least 8 glasses of caffeine-free, sugar-free fluids daily, unless your doctor recommends otherwise.



Practice good sleep habits

🔑 Establish regular hours for sleep.

🔑 Allow enough hours of sleep that you feel alert during the day.

🔑 Avoid excessive physical exertion or emotional stress just prior to bed time.

🔑 Engage in relaxing activity prior to bedtime.

🔑 Establish relaxing bed time habits.

🔑 Do not eat large amounts of food just prior to bed or go to bed hungry.



Spend time with others who make you feel happy

- 🔑 Talk to friends who share your interests, goals and help you to solve problems.
- 🔑 Join a support group.
- 🔑 Family and friends can help you to cope with life problems and your symptoms.
- 🔑 Offer to help others - Ask for help if you need it.

Take a few moments to think and write down some of the things you can do this week. Pick one thing to start doing today and one thing to try tomorrow. Keep it up. You will be helping yourself to feel better soon!

Key 5

Joining a Support Group Can Help You Feel Better

Ask your mental health provider about joining a support group. Or call these organizations to find out about becoming an active member:

National Mental Health Association (NMHA)

www.nmha.org

Mood Disorder support groups are available. Groups discuss bipolar disorders, depression and dysthymia for all levels. Contact NMHA at (800) 969-NMHA to register for a group.

National Alliance for Mentally Ill (NAMI)

www.nami.org

Sharing & Caring groups discuss array of mental health issues including depression for family members only (not patients). Contact NAMI at (800) 950-NAMI for more information.

Emotions Anonymous, International

emotionsanonymous.org

Adult self-help group in the 12 step model. Call (651) 647-9712 for more information.

National Depressive and Manic Depressive Association (NDMDA)

www.ndmda.org

Mood disorder support groups available. Call NDMDA at (800) 826-3632 for additional information.



CONCLUSION

In this workbook, we at ValueOptions have tried to give you some information to help you:

1. Find out up-to-date information about depression.
2. Start and stick to treatment for depression.
3. Learn some ways for helping yourself feel better as quickly as possible.

We believe strongly that people who are depressed can learn to deal successfully with depression and that there are many things that can be helpful. With treatment, many persons who have been depressed have gone on to enjoy life, be productive, and have good relationships with family and friends.

We at ValueOptions hope that you have found this brief workbook helpful. If you have any questions, please contact your mental health provider or call your ValueOptions member service representative. Good Luck!

REFERENCES

More information about depression from the following highly regarded organizations is available at your local library or on the Internet.

American Medical Association. Depression. (1999) On the World Wide Web: www.ama-assn.org

American Psychological Association. How Therapy Helps People Recover from Depression. On the World Wide Web: <http://helping.apa.org>

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1999). Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General - Chapter 4 Mood Disorders. Rockville, MD: Author. On the World Wide Web: <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/chapter4/sec3.html>

This workbook has been prepared for informational purposes only, as a resource for your review and consideration. This workbook is not intended to provide and should not be relied upon as providing medical judgement or medical advice. If you need medical advice or have questions regarding a course of actual treatment to pursue, please contact your health care provider.

Tools for Managing Depression

Getting Out of the Dumps



Brought to you by ValueOptions

ValueOptions Depression Series #

1

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, 10% of the population suffers from depression during any one year period. The good news is that depression is easy to treat and many people being treated recover.

• Signs of Depression Include:

- Loss of interest in activities you usually enjoy
- Feeling worthless
- Sleeping too much, too little or waking up very early
- Loss of appetite and weight loss or increased appetite and weight gain
- Having less energy or feeling slowed down
- Feeling grumpy or restless
- Problems focusing or remembering
- Physical problems that don't go away such as headaches, or stomach pain
- Thoughts of death or suicide

If you are suffering from depression, you should get help. There are also steps you can take to control your symptoms and begin living a positive life.

Tips for Managing Depression Include:

- **Get Medical Care:** Some depressions are caused by medical problems. The first step in treating depression is to treat any physical illness.
- **Educate Yourself:** Learn about your illness. Knowing about the illness and what to expect gives you a sense of control. Your mental health center, your doctor, and self help groups are all good sources of information.

- **Avoid Negative People:** Do your best to avoid people who put you down and make you feel bad. Try to be around people who care about you.
- **Join a Self Help Group:** Involvement in a self help group can give you support and friendship. A self help group can also teach you new ways to cope.
- **Evaluate Your Lifestyle:** Sometimes, your lifestyle can contribute to depression. Evaluate the way you live. Try to avoid stress, loneliness, or being around angry people. Evaluate the things you need to change in your life and do them.
- **Set Small Goals for Yourself:** Depression has a negative impact on self esteem. People who are depressed often feel worthless. Setting and accomplishing small goals will give you a sense of self worth and achievement.
- **Schedule Your Day:** Scheduling your time gives you a sense of control over your life. It can help you achieve your small goals.



1

- **Learn to Relax and Manage Stress:** Stress can make you feel out of control and can add to depression. Find something relaxing to do. To learn more about stress management methods, talk to your doctor or staff at your mental health center.
- **Exercise:** For many, exercise has been shown to decrease the symptoms of some depression. You don't need to buy expensive exercise equipment, just get out and take a walk. If you have medical problems, talk to your doctor before starting to exercise.
- **Help Someone:** Helping others has a positive impact on your mood. It takes your mind off your own problems. You can feel good about helping someone else.
- **Take Your Medication:** Most people with depression or who are recovering will do better with medication. If your doctor has given you medication and it works, keep taking it. Sometimes a person will stop taking his or her medication when they begin to feel better. Doing so may cause the depression to return.

If you have any questions about this information or the services you are receiving, please call your behavioral health provider or the access line for your behavioral health benefits program.

ValueOptions believes that people can and do recover from mental illness. ValueOptions offers a series of tip sheets that are written by and for consumers about issues, opportunities and obstacles people face in their recovery from mental illness. Other tip sheets include "Handling Mania" and "Coping with Anxiety."



Getting the Most Out of Treatment



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2

Managing Your Medication

Although some of these points have been addressed in previous mailings, they are worth saying again. How you take your medication will be very important to helping you feel better as quickly as possible.

- Take the medication regularly - exactly as prescribed.
- Take the medication even as you are beginning to notice that your depression is lifting.
- Develop a reminder system for taking your medication, if it is difficult for you to remember to take medication. A pillbox makes it easy to remember which medications to take and when.
- Communicate with your physician
- Ask questions, note reactions to your medication, record side-effects so that you can describe to your doctor exactly how this medication makes you feel.

Taking Care of Your Health

Taking care of your basic health is very important. When depressed, you are at an increased risk of becoming physically ill. This can lead to a negative cycle, since physical illness can make you feel depressed.

1. Make sure you get enough sleep. Sleep during your normal, regular hours, going to sleep and waking at approximately the same time each day. Try to get about the same number of hours of sleep per day.
2. Eat a well-balanced diet, and eat at your regular times during the day (breakfast, lunch, and dinner). People with depression may lose their appetite and risk poor nutrition or weight loss. Make sure you get the right nutrition to keep your body healthy. Your primary care doctor can suggest a health nutrition plan for you.

3. Your doctor can recommend exercise that is appropriate to your state of health. Activities such as jogging, aerobics or riding a bicycle can help you focus your mind on a healthful activity rather than on depressing thoughts.

Getting Things Done

Even when you are depressed, as well as during your period of recovery, your life goes on and it is likely you will still experience demands on your time and effort. This may feel overwhelming. You can help yourself to manage these feelings by thinking about the following points:

1. Create a routine and simplify your daily life by:
 - Keeping a consistent daily schedule.
 - Setting small, realistic goals.
 - Rewarding yourself for each goal you reach.
 - Doing one thing at a time instead of trying to do everything at once.
2. Practice thinking positively.
 - When you are depressed, you are more likely to think negative thoughts (blaming yourself, feeling hopeless, expecting failure, and other such thoughts). This is part of depression and has little to do with your actual ability.
 - Start by writing down small things that you do well, or when other people say nice things to you.
 - Noticing positive things about yourself will help you see that the negative thoughts you have are not accurate.



3. Avoid making major life decisions when you feel depressed.
 - If you must make a decision about your life, ask your health care provider, family member, therapist, or someone you trust to help you think things through.
 - Once you start feeling better, resume your daily routine slowly and gradually.
4. Ask for help when you need it.
5. Don't get mad at yourself when things go wrong. Understand and accept that there may be setbacks.

Socializing

When you are depressed, it is often hard to be with other people. At the same time, close relationships can be a key to feeling better, feeling supported, and getting help in times of crisis.

1. Make sure that you are not alone for long periods. Even though you may not feel like being with people, getting out and being around them is helpful. It's all right to limit your contact with others but it's also important not to shut everyone out.
2. Work at forming and keeping close friendships and a group of people who support you. You do not need to confide in everyone, but having someone to talk to—whether a friend, family member, or therapist—is very important.
3. Ask friends and family members to help you figure out ways to decrease stress.

Additional Mental Health Treatments

Depression is a “biological” illness. But, frequently, stressful life events play a role in the start of a depression or in keeping you depressed. Medications will not make these stressful parts of your life go away. But talking about these problems with a therapist, or taking action to change

your thoughts, the way you act, or ways of being with others can help.

1. Consider therapy. Your doctor or health plan can give you a referral based on your situation. Talking to a therapist can be very helpful and can work together with antidepressant medication.
2. If you are already in therapy, we urge you to go to your appointments regularly, even if you are feeling better. Stopping therapy without talking about it with your therapist or doctor is not a good idea.
3. Stress management or “assertiveness” classes can teach you skills that may help you deal with those problems you may be having with other people that can lead you to become or stay depressed.
4. Think about joining a self-help group for people who have had trouble with depression.
5. If you or people who are close to you think you have a substance abuse problem in addition to depression, we urge you to talk to your doctor about what treatment may be appropriate. Common substance abuse treatment is very important in helping you get better from depression.

Information About Drugs to Treat Depression



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3

What are antidepressants and how do they work?

There are certain areas of your brain that control your mood and your feelings. Experts have found that people who are depressed have too little of some of the chemicals that help to send messages between nerve cells in that part of the brain. This may be why people start to feel sadness and other symptoms of depression. The chemicals that seem to be involved are called serotonin, epinephrine, dopamine and norepinephrine. Stressful life events and changes in brain chemistry seem to go together but no one seems to know for sure quite how this works.

Antidepressants increase the levels of these chemicals in the body. This seems to help people feel better. There are different ways of doing this, and so there are several different types of medication. There are currently over 24 different medications used to treat depression. Most depressed people are able to feel better, at least after a period of time, when they take one of these medications. It may take you and your doctor some time to figure out which is the best for you.

How was my antidepressant chosen?

Your doctor chooses medications based on the symptoms you describe. Your doctor also considers past treatment you may have had. If a relative has been treated for depression and a certain medication has been helpful, your doctor may consider this helpful in choosing a medication for you. Your doctor also considers how side effects

may impact your life, since antidepressants can be very different in the side effects they produce.

People respond differently to medications and different amounts. The medication that works well for friends may not be the medication or amount that works best for you. Different medications require different amounts to be helpful.

How do antidepressants help?

For many people, antidepressant medications seem to decrease restlessness, improve mood, increase energy, and improve interest in sex. People who take these medications often say they feel more like doing usual activities. They often report having fewer thoughts of death or suicide, and feeling less guilty, happier, and more hopeful. They may also notice they have more normal sleep habits, increased appetite, and are better able to focus on things. Remember, though, not all medicines affect people in the same way. Also, some people are more likely to harm themselves when they have more energy. If you feel that you might do anything to harm yourself, you should contact your doctor or call 911 immediately.

Antidepressant medications can help you feel better and more like doing things you normally do. But antidepressant medications cannot solve certain other problems that can lead to depression. Stressful events often cause or maintain depression. These can include

family and relationship problems, loss of a loved one, stress at work, financial trouble, or serious medical problems.

The best treatment for depression seems to involve medications *and* talking to a mental health therapist. Therapy may help you deal with some of the problems that cause depression. It can also help you learn to change the thoughts and behaviors that may be involved in your depression. We suggest that you ask your doctor about whether or not talking to a mental health therapist might be a good idea for you (along with taking your medication).

Common Side Effects of Antidepressant Medications

Antidepressants work best when you take them exactly the way your doctor tells you, every day. The information you give your doctor before and after he or she puts you on an antidepressant is very important to safe and effective treatment. Some people notice short term side effects from antidepressant use.

Common side effects include:

- Restlessness
- Difficulty sleeping
- Nervousness
- Nausea
- Blurred Vision
- Constipation
- Sleepiness
- Reduced sexual desire
- Delayed orgasm
- Sweating
- Dizziness
- Shaking
- Dry mouth
- Trouble urinating
- Headache
- Weight gain

A few people (between 3 and 10 percent) notice side effects that are bad enough to change medications. However, in most cases, many of the side effects occur only during the first treatment phase. Dry mouth and

sleepiness, as well as sexual problems, are the most commonly reported side effects. By 2-6 weeks, many may have disappeared. However, in the event that the side effects that you experience do not disappear, or are particularly bad, be sure to discuss them with your physician. If you notice side effects that seem dangerous to your health, you should contact your doctor immediately. The side effects you might feel depend on several things, including the type and amount of medicine you take, your body chemistry, age, other medical problems you have, and additional medicines you may be taking.

If side effects are a problem, do not make changes to your medicine on your own. Your doctor can make several possible changes. Changes can be made to the *type* of medication you take, the amount of medicine you take, the time of day you take your medicine, or how your medicine is taken (such as one single daily dose instead of several smaller doses taken several times a day). Antidepressant medications can also be taken along with medications that reduce side effects. In any case, changing your medicine is a medical decision that should only be made in talking to your doctor.

Antidepressants are not addictive and most experts believe there are few or no long term risks. However, as with all medications, antidepressants are not without some risks. You should talk to your doctor about these risks. Please be sure to tell your doctor if you have a history of substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, or have any medical conditions. Based on your history, your doctor will consider whether any medical problems may be causing your depression.

What You Should Know About Your Treatment



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ValueOptions Depression Series #

4

The risk for relapse - a return of depressive symptoms - is high.

Relapses can be worse than the initial episode, and are very upsetting to people. The symptoms you have worked so hard to get rid of may come back, and treatment must usually start all over again.

Consider the first few months when you are feeling better as a time when you can look at areas of your life that you may want to change. Some of these areas may have led up to your depression, or made it worse. You may already know what kinds of changes are necessary. You may read self-help books (found in any large bookstore), join a self-help group, or ask for a therapy referral if you have not done so already. Therapy can be effective in helping you learn ways to cope with your problems. When you feel better, you are more able to think about and solve problems for the long term.

Continuation Phase

The continuation phase refers to the period when your depressive symptoms have largely gone away. You have returned pretty much to normal (that is, how it was at work, with friends, with your family, etc.). Again, while it may seem as though your depression has been successfully treated, you should continue to take your medication until you talk to your physician. This is to avoid having the depression return.

If this is your first period of depression, at approximately 7-9 months, you and your physician should discuss how

and when to stop taking medications. Stopping medications should be done gradually over a period of weeks. Just quitting your medications can result in a variety of symptoms that may seem like the flu. When stopping medications, you should be alert to any return depressive symptoms. In the event that any symptoms begin to come back, talk to your physician to decide if medication should be started or changed early, before you develop a full relapse.

Maintenance Phase

Major depression happens only once for about half the people who get it. For the other half, it is an illness that will return one or more times. For most people with repeated episodes of depression, the symptoms go away completely between episodes. But for some people with depression, there are continuing symptoms between episodes. Maintenance treatment refers to ongoing use of medications. This is often recommended for people who have had more than one episode of depression. The more times you have been seriously depressed, the more likely you are to have it come back again. In such cases, your physician may talk to you about using medications on a long-term basis (over several years). He or she may even urge lifetime use of the medications that have been helpful in treating your symptoms.

ValueOptions, the company that manages mental health and substance abuse services for the New York State Empire Plan, is offering a new program that can help you.

You can learn more about ValueOptions' Depression Identification and Management Program online at:
www.valueoptions.com

or by calling toll free:
(877) 7-NYSHIP (769-7447), *option 3*

SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

- Have you lost interest in activities you usually enjoy?
- Are you sleeping too much, too little or waking up very early?
- Are you having trouble focusing or remembering?
- Do you have unexplained physical symptoms that don't go away?

If you answered "Yes" to any of these questions, you may suffer from depression.



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Why Suffer Depression?
We can help.



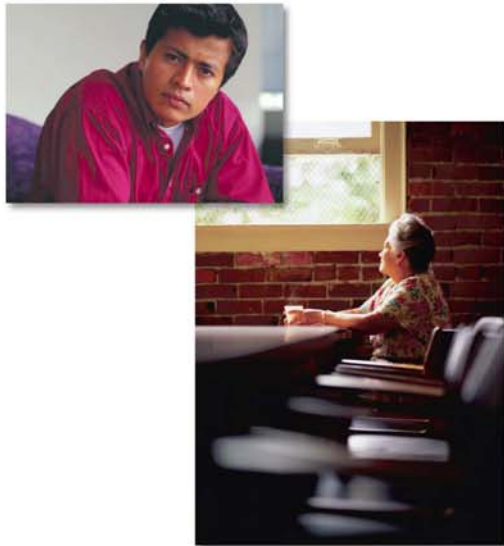
**FOR NEW YORK STATE
EMPIRE PLAN MEMBERS**

Depression Identification and Management Program

Call (877) 7-NYSHIP, option 3 or go online at www.valueoptions.com to sign up.

DEPRESSION

- Is a common and serious medical condition.
- Affects nearly 10% of adults in the US.
- Is a leading cause of disability.
- Can impact your family, friends, health, and job.
- *Is Treatable.*



WHEN YOU SIGN UP

- You will receive a complimentary copy of our workbook “Keys to Recovering from Depression” and our Depression Fact Sheets. These materials contain important information about depression, its treatment, and suggestions for overcoming depressed feelings.
- You will gain access to a confidential screening. With your permission, we will share the results with your physician or other healthcare professional.



THE PROGRAM INCLUDES

- Free, confidential screening that you can take online, by telephone, or by mail;
- Information about depression, its symptoms, and treatment; and
- Assistance in assessing your treatment options.

PARTICIPATION IS

- **Confidential:** We won't share information without your permission.
- **Voluntary:** Participation is strictly voluntary.
- **Free:** ValueOptions offers this program as part of your behavioral health benefit.
- **Easy:** Just call or log-on to sign up.

If you suspect you may be depressed, discuss your symptoms with your physician and contact ValueOptions.