



Parish Nurse Notes – October 1, 2023

Depression Awareness Month

October is recognized as Depression Awareness Month each year. The purpose is to increase understanding, decrease stereotypes, and help educate on how depression and other mental health issues impact people. Awareness months give people affected by a specific condition a chance to share their stories. The goal is to help increase the overall understanding of depression or other conditions and help overcome stereotypes. Some organizations may also use the month as an opportunity to raise money for research. Funding research can help improve treatment options, increase access to treatment, and help fund other important efforts surrounding depression and [mental health](#).

Depression is a [common](#) mental health concern in America and throughout the world. Far more than just “feeling sad,” depression negatively impacts how a person feels, thinks, and acts. It can cause disruption to school, work, and personal interests. Misconceptions and misunderstandings of depression contribute to continuing stigmas about people living with the condition, the reasons it occurs, and their willingness to seek care. In a [2018 study Trusted Source](#), researchers conducted a survey to assess the public’s knowledge of depression and the severity of the stigma surrounding it. Key findings included:

- 30% reported believing a “weak personality” causes depression
- 58.9% reported believing that pharmaceutical interventions or medications are not an effective treatment
- over 70% reported understanding the importance of rest and that a person may appear happier than they actually are when living with depression.

They recommend that educational interventions or campaigns may help decrease stigma and improve understanding of treatment compared to general health knowledge. Depression Awareness Month can help fulfill their recommendation for raising specific understanding and knowledge of depression.

Ways to observe depression awareness month

A person can get involved or observe Depression Awareness Month in several ways. No way of observation is superior to another. A person can be as involved as they like. Some examples of how a person can get involved are described below.

Reach out!

Reaching out to loved ones, friends, or others living with depression could make a big difference in their life. Some ways a person can reach out to others include but are not limited to [the following](#):

- Offer help with finding therapy or support groups.
- Offer help with daily tasks.
- Start a conversation about how they are feeling and express support.
- Keep asking them to come along or join an activity even if the likelihood of them joining is low.
- Keep in touch with them.
- Remember to just spend time with them, have fun, and not always focus on depression.

Though a person can take many steps to reach out to friends and family, there are some things they should attempt to avoid. These can include:

- taking things personally
- giving advice
- minimizing or comparing experiences
- attempting to fix them
- expressing a strong opinion on medication

Share your story!

People living with depression, those living with people with depression, survivors of victims of suicide, and others can get involved by sharing their stories. This may be done at events, through organizations' websites, or on social media.

Throughout the year, the [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#) welcomes people to share their stories through their site. Through their website, a person can:

- Submit a story to them directly to share on their website or blog.
- Apply to share a personal story at a presentation.
- Apply to share a personal story with law enforcement.

Around October, organizations like NAMI will share social media hashtags and groups for a person to join. They also offer a platform for people to share their stories. A person can sign up to follow NAMI's for updates on upcoming events, donating opportunities, and to stay informed.

Get educated!

Learning more about depression will help remove the stigma surrounding the condition, its causes and effects, and treatments. A person should consider learning more about what depression is, its symptoms, how it presents, its types, causes, and treatment options and effectiveness.

[Links for more information on depression](#)

The following websites offer more information on depression and how to seek help.

- [Medical News Today](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)Trusted Source
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#)Trusted Source
- [National Institutes of Health](#) Trusted Source
- [American Psychiatric Association](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)

Depression facts and statistics

Depression is a common mental health condition. It causes changes in how a person thinks, feels, and acts.

There are several different types of depression.

- major depressive disorder
- persistent depressive disorder
- [seasonal affective disorder](#)
- perinatal depression
- depression with symptoms of [psychosis](#)

In the U.S., depression affects about 16 million people each year, with about 1 in 6 adults experiencing depression at some point in their life. It can affect anyone at any age, including children and teens. Though the exact cause is still unknown, experts indicate that a combination of different factors may contribute to its development, including:

- **genetics:** such as a family history
- **environment:** changes to a living situation, job, or school; major life events and other factors
- **biological:** living with certain medical conditions, taking certain medications, or other conditions may play a role in depression
- **psychological factors:** such as traumatic events, [stress](#), or other influences

Symptoms of depression can be different for each person, and how a person presents with symptoms can vary. Some common symptoms and signs of depression can include:

- feelings of hopelessness
- persistent sad, anxiety, or “empty” mood
- feelings of irritability, frustration, or restlessness
- physical aches or pains, [headaches](#), cramps, or digestive problems
- loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities

- feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- difficulty sleeping, waking early in the morning, or oversleeping
- decreased energy, [fatigue](#), or feeling slowed down
- changes in appetite or unplanned weight changes
- thoughts of death or suicide or suicide attempts

Suicide prevention

If you know someone at immediate risk of self-harm, suicide, or hurting another person:

- Ask the tough question: "Are you considering suicide?"
- Listen to the person without judgment.
- Call 911 or the local emergency number, or text TALK to 741741 to communicate with a trained crisis counselor.
- Stay with the person until professional help arrives.
- Try to remove any weapons, medications, or other potentially harmful objects.

If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, a prevention hotline can help. The [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) is available 24 hours a day at 988. During a crisis, people who are hard of hearing can use their preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988.

Where to find support

A person can seek support for depression or other mental health conditions from several areas. Some starting places could include:

- talking with a friend or family member about how they are feeling
- speaking with a doctor about concerns
- reaching out to a mental health professional or social worker

People having trouble finding a mental health professional can search for providers online. For example, a person can use the [Anxiety & Depression Association of America's \(ADAA\)](#) search feature to find a therapist. A person could also contact the [National Helpline](#) either by calling 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or visiting their search tool online to help find a mental health professional.

To contact Diane or Glenn, parish nurses, their email address is: parishnurse@fpcwinc.org or you can leave a message for them at 540-662-3824.

WHAT'S UNDERNEATH?

People are pretty bad at identifying their true feelings.

When asked about our feelings, most people will usually say they feel: bad, sad, mad, good, or fine. But underneath "good, bad, sad, mad, or fine" are many words that better describe how we feel.

Taking the time to slow down and identify what we are really experiencing can help us feel better and can improve our communication and relationships with others.

Using the prompts below, think of a specific action (this could be something you did, or something someone else did) or event and fill in the blank to identify what's underneath. The feelings list on the back of this page can help you build your mental collection of feelings. This type of activity takes practice, but once you start doing it you'll find it easier over time.

I felt bad when _____ (action or event).
But what I was really feeling was _____, _____, and _____.

I felt sad when _____ (action or event).
But what I was really feeling was _____, _____, and _____.

I felt mad when _____ (action or event).
But what I was really feeling was _____, _____, and _____.

I felt good when _____ (action or event).
But what I was really feeling was _____, _____, and _____.

I felt happy when _____ (action or event).
But what I was really feeling was _____, _____, and _____.

NEGATIVE FEELINGS

Afraid

Nervous
Dread
Frightened
Cowardly
Terrified
Alarmed
Panicked
Suspicious
Worried
Apprehensive

Agitated

Bothered
Disoriented
Uncomfortable
Uneasy
Frenzied
Irritable
Rash
Offended
Disturbed
Troubled
Grumpy
Unsettled
Unnerved
Restless
Upset

Angry

Furious
Livid
Irate
Resentful
Hate
Hostile
Aggressive
Worked up
Provoked
Miffed
Outrage
Defensive

Annoyed

Irritated
Frustrated
Bothered
Impatient
Aggravated
Displeased
Exasperated
Disgruntled
Disturbed
Irk

Anxious

Shaky
Distressed
Distraught
Edgy
Fidgety
Frazzled
Irritable
Jittery
Overwhelmed
Restless
Stressed
Preoccupied
Flustered

Confused

Lost
Disoriented
Puzzled
Chaotic
Uncertain
Stuck
Indecisive
Foggy
Mistrust
Dazed
Baffled
Flustered
Perturbed
Perplexed
Hesitant
Immobilized
Ambivalent
Torn

Disconnected

Lonely
Isolated
Bored
Distant
Removed
Detached
Separate
Broken
Cold
Aloof
Numb
Withdrawn
Rejected
Out-of-place
Apathetic
Indifferent
Misunderstood
Abandoned
Alienated

Disgust

Appalled
Horried
Dislike
Loathing
Disturbed
Repugnant
Contempt
Spiteful
Animosity
Hostile
Bitter

Disorganized

Distracted
Disheveled
Bedraggled
Run-down
Confused
Discombobulated
Disjointed
Displaced
Jumbled
Out of sorts

Embarrassment

Awkward
Self-conscious
Silly
Mortified
Humiliated
Flustered
Chagrined
Ashamed
Put down
Guilty
Disgraced

Envy

Jealous
Rivalry
Competitive
Covetous
Resentful
Loning
Self-conscious
Insecure
Inadequate
Yearning
Nostalgic
Wistful

Helpless

Paralyzed
Weak
Defenseless
Powerless
Invalid
Abandoned
Alone
Incapable
Useless
Inferior
Vulnerable
Empty
Distressed

Pain

Hurt
Remorseful
Regretful
Disappointed
Guilty
Grief
Bereaved
Miserable
Agony
Anguish
Bruised
Crushed
Wounded

Sadness

Heartbroken
Disappointed
Hopeless
Regretful
Depressed
Pessimistic
Melancholy
Sorrowful
Morbid
Heavy-hearted
Low
Blue
Gloomy
Miserable
Despair

Stress

Tension
Pressure
Overwhelmed
Frazzled
Strain
Imbalanced
Worried
Uneasy
Cranky
Distraught
Dissatisfied
Weighed down
Overworked
Pounded
Anxious
Shocked
Frustrated

Tired

Bored
Fatigued
Exhausted
Uninterested
Overworked
Worn out
Fed up
Drained
Weary
Burned out
Lethargic
Beat
Sleepy
Depleted

Vulnerable

Insecure
Shaky
Open
Unsure
Exposed
Unguarded
Sensitive
Unsafe
Inferior
Raw
Weak
Judged
Inadequate

POSITIVE FEELINGS

Admiration

Adoration
Affection
Appreciation
Delight
Fondness
Pleasure
Wonder
Regard
Amazed
Amused

Affectionate

Caring
Friendly
Loving
Sympathetic
Warm
Doting
Soft
Tender
Attached
Compassionate

Confident

Bold
Courageous
Positive
Sure
Fearless
Optimistic
Encouraged
Safe
Powerful
Proud
Satisfied
Trusting
Secure
Brave
Empowered

Excited

Enthusiastic
Delighted
Amazed
Passionate
Amused
Aroused
Alert
Piqued
Astonished
Dazzled
Energetic
Awakened
Eager
Charged

Exhilarated

Blissful
Ecstatic
Elated
Enthralled
Exuberant
Radiant
Rapturous
Thrilled

Gratitude

Thankful
Grateful
Moved
Touched
Appreciative
Graceful
Responsive
Recognized
Indebtedness

Included

Engaged
Understood
Appreciated
Accepted
Acknowledged
Affirmed
Recognized
Welcomed
Connected
Supported
Belonging
Heard
Respected
Involved

Intrigued

Absorbed
Fascinated
Interested
Charmed
Entertained
Captivated
Engaged
Engrossed
Curious
Surprised

Joyful

Cheerful
Festive
Heartening
Lighthearted
Upbeat
Glad
Merry
Elated
Enjoyable
Euphoria
Delighted
Jubilant
Hopeful
Tickled
Pleased

Peaceful

Clam
Quiet
Trusting
Fulfilled
Harmonious
Steady
Collected
Composed
Comfortable
Centered
Content
Relieved
Constant
Mellow
Level
Restful
Still
At ease
Satisfied
Relaxed
Clear
Reassured

Refreshed

Stimulated
Replenished
Exhilarated
Reinvigorated
Revived
Enlivened
Restored
Liberated
Lively
Passionate
Vibrant
Rested

Keep Your Mind Grounded

Do you feel like your mind is constantly racing? It's like a train running through a million thoughts, thinking about the past, the future, or all the things that went wrong or could go wrong. As people struggling with anxiety or trauma, instead of staying grounded on the platform, we run and launch ourselves on the anxiety train and our minds go somewhere else.

When this happens it's hard to sleep, to stay focused, or be around others.

The following exercise is designed to help you calm down and retrain your body and mind to stay grounded in the moment. The exercise can be used when you catch your mind wandering or if you notice you're about to have an anxiety or panic attack.

It's pretty hard to have two different thoughts in your head at one time. The goal is to fill your brain with thoughts on the here and now – and stop allowing your brain to go to the other place. The more you practice, the faster you'll notice your body and brain responding well.

Hop off the Train

BEFORE YOU START, YOU MUST LEARN TO CATCH YOURSELF. IT'S HARD TO PRACTICE COPING SKILLS IF YOU'RE ON THE ANXIETY TRAIN. STOP YOURSELF FROM GETTING ON – OR GET OFF THE TRAIN IF YOU'RE ALREADY ON IT. SOMETIMES WE LITERALLY HAVE TO TELL OUR MINDS, "STOP IT!" AFTER YOU DO THAT, PRACTICE EITHER OF THE TWO STRATEGIES BELOW.

Stay Grounded Physically

TOUCH IS A POWERFUL FORCE FOR KEEPING YOUR MIND IN THE HERE AND NOW.

- AN OBJECT CAN HELP WITH FIDGETING AND REFOCUSING. IF YOU FIND AN OBJECT YOU LIKE, KEEP IT IN ONE HAND AND PULL IT OUT IF YOU NEED IT.
- USE YOUR SURROUNDINGS. IF YOU'RE ON A WALK, TOUCH A FENCE OR A WALL. IF YOU'RE IN THE CAR, FEEL YOUR SEAT OR THE DOOR. IF YOU'RE TRYING TO SLEEP, FEEL THE PILLOW ON YOUR FACE.

HOW DOES IT FEEL? IS IT COLD? ROUGH? DOES IT HAVE PATTERNS? DESCRIBE IT IN YOUR MIND OR OUT LOUD. DESCRIBE IT IN A CALM, RHYTHMIC WAY. TALK THROUGH IT UNTIL YOU FEEL YOUR MIND AND YOUR BODY CALM DOWN. FEEL FREE TO INTERRUPT YOUR THOUGHTS WITH WORDS OF AFFIRMATION LIKE, "I'VE GOT THIS" OR "I'M GOING TO BE OK."

5 Senses

USE THE FOLLOWING PROMPTS TO GO THROUGH YOUR ENVIRONMENT IN FIVE SENSES.

I SEE _____ (Example: I SEE THE WALL)

I FEEL _____ (Example: I FEEL MY TOES)

I HEAR _____ (Example: I HEAR THE CARS)

I SMELL _____ (Example: I SMELL THE DOG)

I TASTE _____ (Example: I TASTE MY DRINK)

YOU CAN TALK THROUGH EACH OF FIVE SENSES. YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THEM IN ORDER OR DO ALL FIVE. YOU DON'T EVEN NEED TO MAKE SENSE. AS LONG AS YOUR MIND IS TALKING THROUGH ANY OF THE STATEMENTS ABOVE AND NOT ON ANXIOUS THOUGHTS, YOU'RE GOOD. TRY TO FIND A CALM RHYTHMIC PATTERN. TALK THROUGH IT UNTIL YOU FEEL YOUR MIND AND YOUR BODY CALM DOWN. FEEL FREE TO INTERRUPT YOUR THOUGHTS WITH WORDS OF AFFIRMATION LIKE, "I'VE GOT THIS" OR "I'M GOING TO BE OK."