



SAFETY OUTLOOK

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Where does substance abuse begin? Part 5

In the last few newsletters, we've been discussing the reasons one might become dependent on illicit drugs and how to overcome those obstacles. So far, we have covered the following reasons: Illness, Stress, Peer Pressure, and Financial Challenges. Today we will finish our series by talking about Depression and its ability to lead to substance abuse.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 10% of Americans suffer from clinical depression. Unfortunately, many individuals who struggle with depression will turn to drugs & alcohol to help them cope. Since drugs & alcohol have a direct impact on the central nervous system, their symptoms usually grow worse. Feeling hopeless and a deep sadness can create a dangerous cycle that feed each other. While we all go through hard times & deal with disappointment in life, if you begin to struggle with depression that lasts longer than 10 days, it's important to reach out for help. Don't let drugs & alcohol become the answer to your struggle!

Here are some tips to beat depression before it gets too deep:

1. **Think about what you eat.** By reducing or eliminating sugar and eating more protein at meals, you will notice that your responses to stressful situations are improved and your mood lifted. Kathleen DesMaisons, Ph.D recommends in her book, *Potatoes Not Prozac*, to enjoy a small white potato an hour before bedtime to increase your serotonin levels naturally. As a result, you will sleep better & feel less depressed.
2. **Enjoy the sunshine!** Spring is the perfect time to get outside and soak in the Vitamin D that comes from sunshine. Just 15-20 minutes daily in the mid-day sun will have a positive impact on your mood levels.
3. **Exercise.** Aerobic exercise is very effective at decreasing depression by releasing endorphins (feel good hormones) and increasing your serotonin levels. A brisk walk or run, swimming, or biking are all great options. Find something you enjoy and get busy!
4. **Finish a Project.** Depression can come from unfinished tasks that weigh heavy on our minds. Find a project or task that you have been procrastinating on and complete it. You'll be amazed at how it will make you feel!

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