

Managing Stress and Pursuing Wellness in Times of Tight Margins

Brief Lesson 1

Understanding Stress and Depression

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Lindy Berg, B.S., Extension Agent

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What is depression?

Discuss: What do you think or feel are some of the ways that depression can affect an individual?

Definition: A mental health condition characterized by an inability to concentrate; insomnia; loss of appetite; physical tiredness or fatigue; feelings of extreme sadness, guilt, helplessness and hopelessness; and thoughts of despair, discouragement and death. Also called *clinical depression*.

Symptoms of Depression

- Difficulty falling asleep
- Sleep more than usual
- Feel tired all the time
- Feel less energetic than usual
- Feel nervous or unable to sit still
- Experience an increase or decrease in appetite or weight
- Feel sad or blue most of the day nearly every day
- Have trouble making decisions
- Think about suicide
- Have problems concentrating
- Irritability
- Lack of motivation
- Lose temper more easily than usual
- Lose interest in things that you used to enjoy

True or False?

Depression only develops when someone has had a major traumatic experience in life, such as the death of a spouse or a heart attack.



Answer – False

Myth

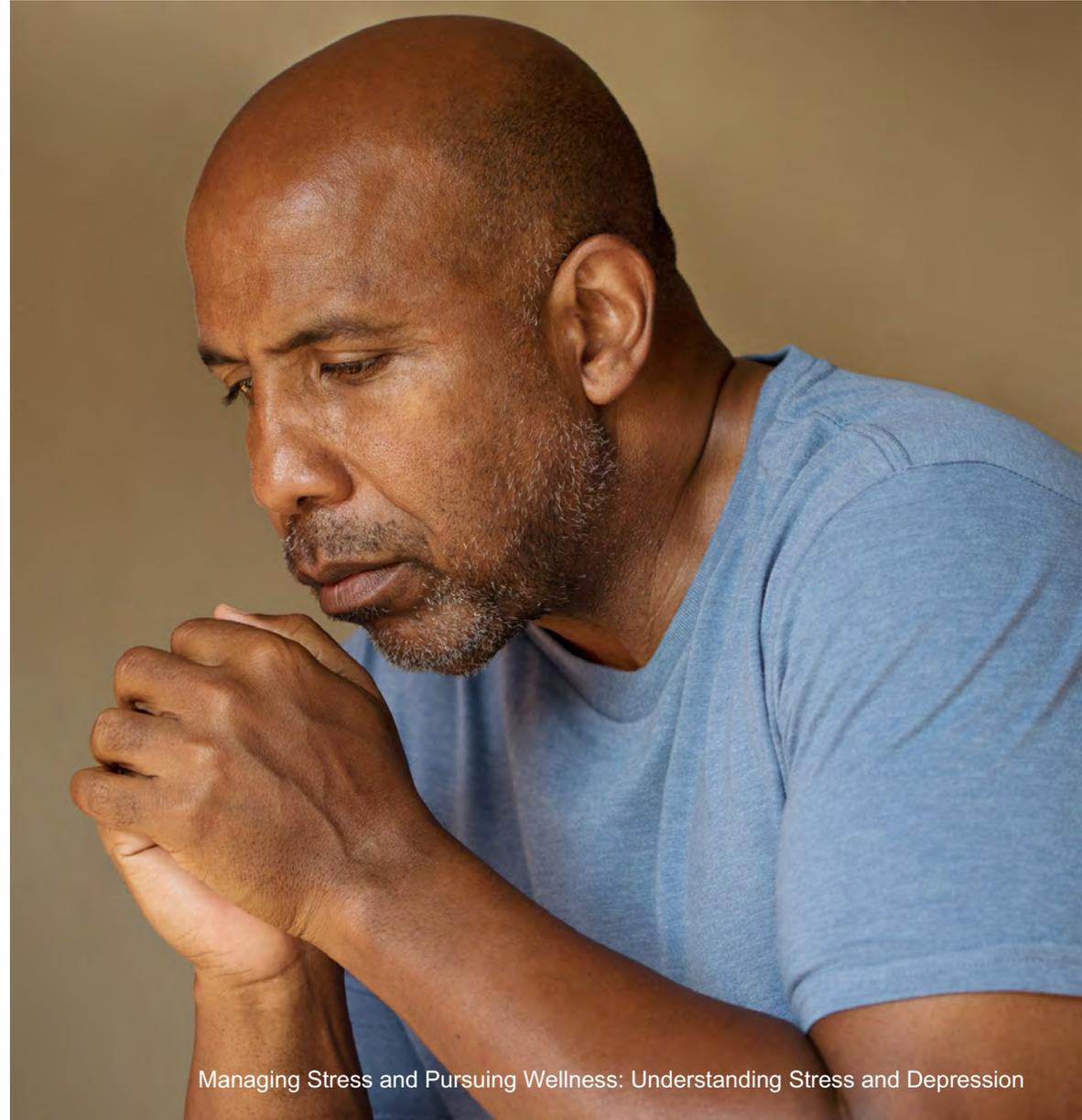
Depression occurs only when people experience major trauma in life.

Reality

Depression is a commonly occurring mental health condition that may arise due to a variety of factors, including genetic influences, body changes, ***life stress*** or personal losses or other influences.

True or False?

Individuals dealing with depression usually can overcome it if they just work to cheer themselves up or pull themselves up by their bootstraps.



Answer – False

Myth

Depression can be overcome simply by telling yourself to feel better or pulling yourself up alone.

Reality

Depression is a complex medical and mental health condition that typically improves with a variety of approaches, which may include therapeutic support, social support, exercise, diet, rest and medication.

True or False?

Seeking assistance from a doctor or mental health professional for depression is a sign of inability to handle your problems or personal weakness.



Answer – False

Myth

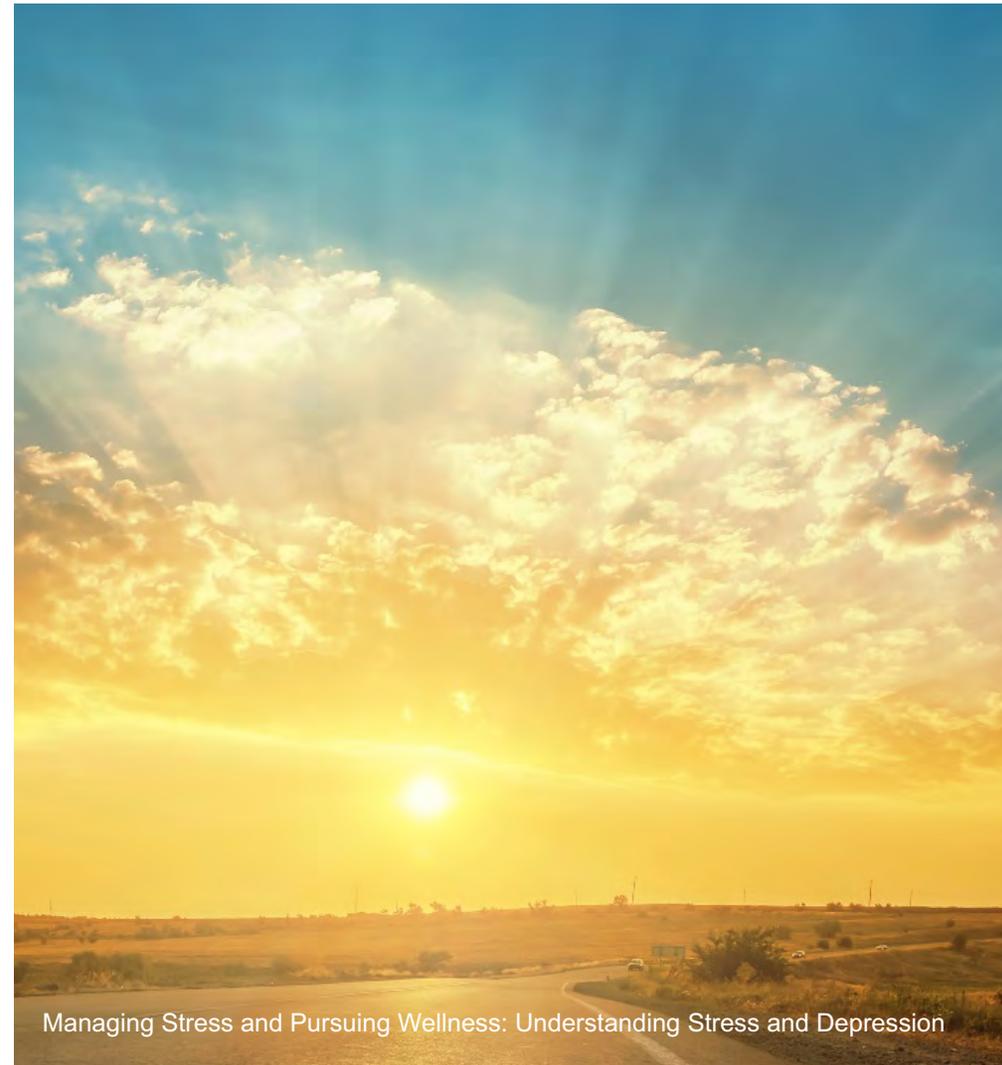
Individuals dealing with depression are emotionally weak or unstable and seeking help is a sign of weakness.

Reality

Depression is a condition that anyone can experience. Seeking assistance from competent professionals often is necessary and signals wisdom, understanding and strength.

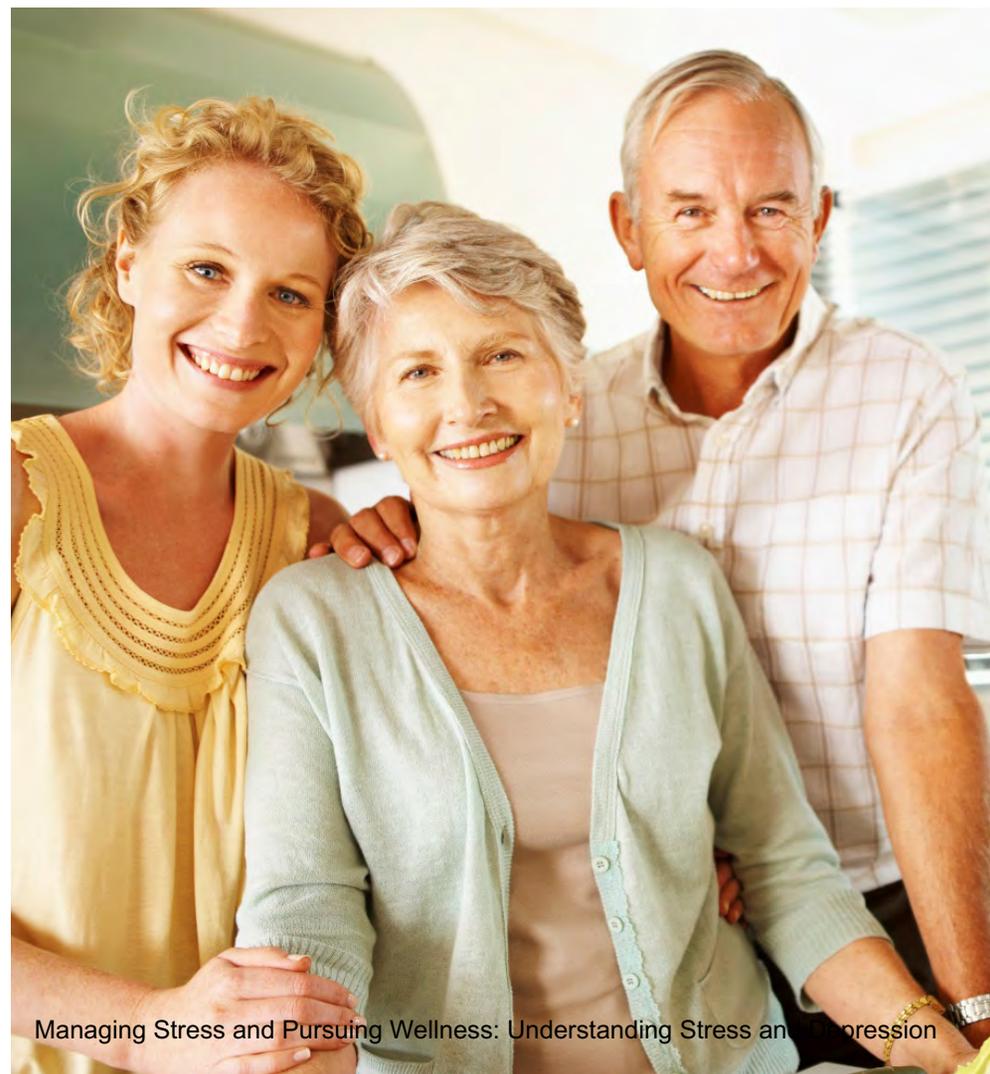
Key Help Factors in Managing Depression

- Seek effective medical care or sources of support and treatment.
- Identify and increase support from family and community members.
- Have a regular support checkup (weekly, etc.).



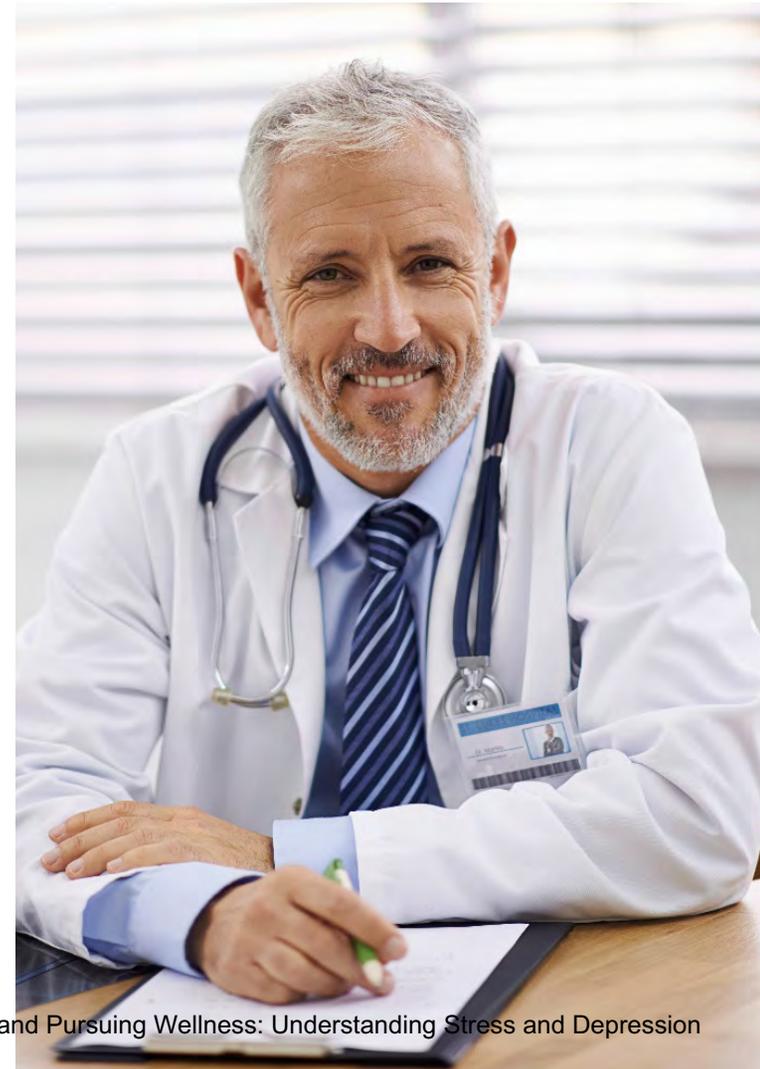
Key Help Factors in Managing Depression

- Focus on healthy living practices.
- Increase personal skills in stress management.
- Explore cultural and religious beliefs that encourage hope, optimism and personal support efforts.



Seeking Treatment and Support for Depression

- Focus on getting help and getting better, not on being embarrassed due to depression or anxiety.
- Start with your personal doctor.
- Begin by seeking an opportunity for a medical screening.
- Talk to a trusted counselor, pastor or friend.



Key Resources – Mental and Emotional Health

- **Call 2-1-1** – Statewide 24-hour helpline, health and human services information and referral
- **Refer to a local health-care provider or mental health professional.** If you or someone you know needs help, contact and connect with a local professional such as a clergy member, medical professional, law enforcement, school counselor or social worker.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:**
1-800-273-8255 (TALK)

Visit the K-State Families website for more information about families and stress:
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Lesson Introduction – Managing Stress and Pursuing Wellness in Times of Tight Margins

Brief Lesson 1 – Understanding Stress and Depression

Briefly identify the lesson topic. If planned, take a few moments to share your perspective on the importance of understanding depression and finding resources to manage it effectively during times of stress.

What is depression?

Discuss: What do you think or feel are some of the ways that depression can affect an individual?

Definition: A mental health condition characterized by an inability to concentrate; insomnia; loss of appetite; physical tiredness or fatigue; feelings of extreme sadness, guilt, helplessness and hopelessness; and thoughts of despair, discouragement and death. Also called *clinical depression*.

Key Points:

- Stress is made apparent in a variety of ways as a person responds physically, mentally or emotionally to existing pressures or concerns. Each person is affected differently. One of the common ways that stress in farming and ranching can affect individuals is to increase feelings of discouragement and fatigue, which can combine to develop into depression.
- **Discussion activity** – What do you think or feel are some of the ways that depression can affect an individual?
- **Definition** – A mental health condition characterized by an inability to concentrate; insomnia; loss of appetite; physical tiredness or fatigue; feelings of extreme sadness, guilt, helplessness and hopelessness; and thoughts of despair, discouragement and death. Also called clinical depression.

Symptoms of Depression

- Difficulty falling asleep
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- Have trouble making decisions
- Think about suicide
- Have problems concentrating
- Irritability
- Lack of motivation
- Lose temper more easily than usual
- Lose interest in things that you used to enjoy

Key Points

- Depression usually is marked by a variety of symptoms occurring together during a period of more than two weeks. Occasional episodes of fatigue, discouragement or anxiety are common for all individuals. However, when a wider array of symptoms develops and lasts longer than two weeks, then clinical depression may occur.
- **Discussion activity** – Discuss the different symptoms that can be associated with depression as a group.

True or False?

Depression only develops when someone has had a major traumatic experience in life, such as the death of a spouse or a heart attack.

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Key Point – Myths and Realities About Depression

- To stimulate discussion, ask the participants to respond to this “True or False” statement: Depression only develops when someone has had a major traumatic experience in life, such as the death of a spouse or a heart attack.
- **Note:** The answer is false.

Answer – False

Myth

Depression occurs only when people experience major trauma in life.

Reality

Depression is a commonly occurring mental health condition that may arise due to a variety of factors, including genetic influences, body changes, **life stress** or personal losses or other influences.

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Managing Stress and Pursuing Wellness: Understanding Stress and Depression

Key Point – Myths and Realities About Depression

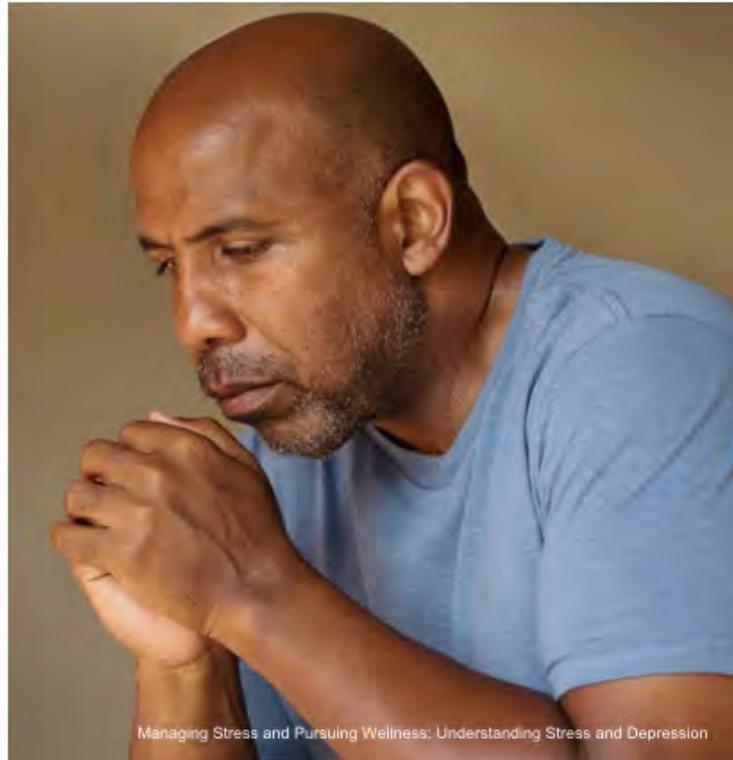
- Explain that the answer to the statement is “false” and that depression does not occur only when people experience major trauma in life.
- Ask participants to suggest some of the factors they think might contribute to depression in a person’s life. Discuss the reality that depression is a commonly occurring mental health condition and that it may arise due to a variety of factors, including genetic influences, body changes, life stresses, personal losses or other influences.

True or False?

Individuals dealing with depression usually can overcome it if they just work to cheer themselves up or pull themselves up by their bootstraps.

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Managing Stress and Pursuing Wellness: Understanding Stress and Depression

Key Point – Myths and Realities About Depression

- To stimulate discussion, ask the participants to respond to this “True or False” statement: Individuals dealing with depression usually can overcome it if they just work to cheer themselves up or pull themselves up by their bootstraps.
- **Note:** The answer is false.

Answer – False

Myth

Depression can be overcome simply by telling yourself to feel better or pulling yourself up alone.

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Reality

Depression is a complex medical and mental health condition that typically improves with a variety of approaches, which may include therapeutic support, social support, exercise, diet, rest and medication.

Managing Stress and Pursuing Wellness: Understanding Stress and Depression

Key Point – Myths and Realities About Depression

- Explain that the answer to the statement is “false” and that depression typically does not improve by telling yourself to feel better or pulling yourself up alone.
- Assist participants to understand that depression is a complex medical and mental health condition that typically involves a variety of approaches to treatment, including therapeutic support, social support from others, exercise, diet, rest and medication. Among these, support and understanding from others is very important.

True or False?

Seeking assistance from a doctor or mental health professional for depression is a sign of inability to handle your problems or personal weakness.

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Key Point – Myths and Realities About Depression

- To stimulate discussion, ask the participants to respond to this “True or False” statement: Seeking assistance from a doctor or mental health professional for depression is a sign of inability to handle your problems or personal weakness.
- **Note:** The answer is false.

Answer – False

Myth

Individuals dealing with depression are emotionally weak or unstable and seeking help is a sign of weakness.

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Reality

Depression is a condition that anyone can experience. Seeking assistance from competent professionals often is necessary and signals wisdom, understanding and strength.

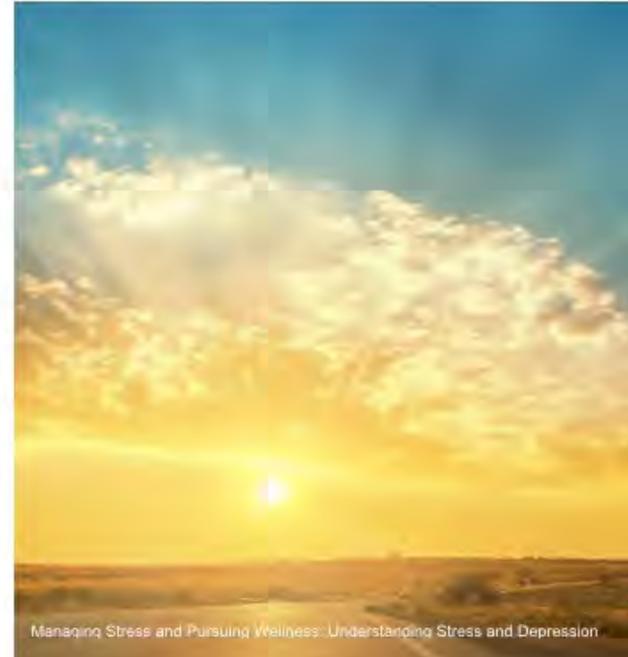
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Key Point – Myths and Realities About Depression

- Explain that the answer to the statement is “false” and that depression does not mean a person is emotionally weak or unstable or that seeking help is a sign of weakness.
- Discuss with participants the a that depression is a condition anyone can experience. Famous examples include Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln and Eleanor Roosevelt.
- Children often are wise in seeking help. Adults should understand that seeking assistance from competent professionals often is necessary and signals maturity, wisdom, understanding and strength.

Key Help Factors in Managing Depression

- Seek effective medical care or sources of support and treatment.
- Identify and increase support from family and community members.
- Have a regular support checkup (weekly, etc.).



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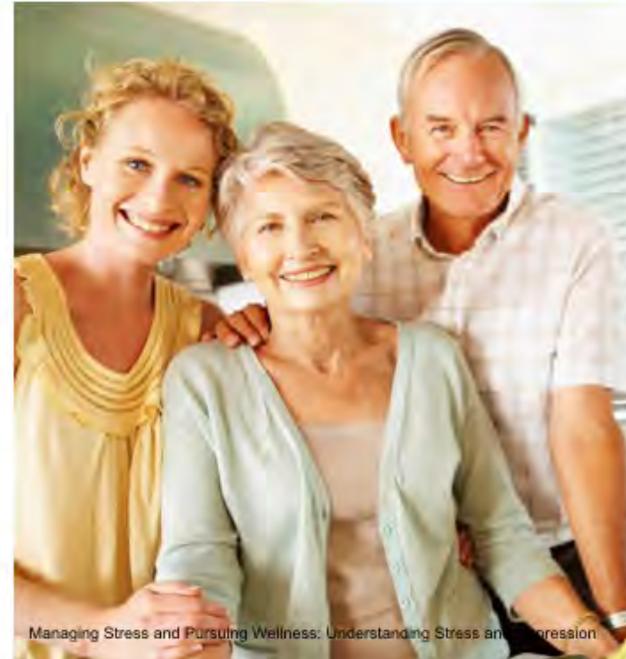
Key Point – Helpful Factors in Managing Depression

Some of the positive factors that protect someone from depression or limit its difficulty include:

- Effective clinical care and treatment
- Family, community and professional support
- A regular weekly check to assess how a person is doing

Key Help Factors in Managing Depression

- Focus on healthy living practices.
- Increase personal skills in stress management.
- Explore cultural and religious beliefs that encourage hope, optimism and personal support efforts.



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Key Point – Helpful Factors in Managing Depression

Additional factors that help in managing depression include:

- Healthy living practices
- Skills in problem solving and stress management
- Beliefs that promote hope, optimism and personal care

Seeking Treatment and Support for Depression

- Focus on getting help and getting better, not on being embarrassed due to depression or anxiety.
- Start with your personal doctor.
- Begin by seeking an opportunity for a medical screening.
- Talk to a trusted counselor, pastor or friend.



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Key Point – Seeking Treatment and Support for Depression

- Understanding the steps associated with getting treatment and support for depression is helpful.
- Many people do not seek help because of the stigma associated with mental health concerns. In general, the beginning point for many people in seeking help is to discuss concerns with a primary-care physician or general-health practitioner. A visit with one's personal doctor or a trusted counselor, pastor or friend can be an important step in getting help.

Key Resources – Mental and Emotional Health

- **Call 2-1-1** – Statewide 24-hour helpline, health and human services information and referral
- **Refer to a local health-care provider or mental health professional.** If you or someone you know needs help, contact and connect with a local professional such as a clergy member, medical professional, law enforcement, school counselor or social worker.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:**
1-800-273-8255 (TALK)

Key Points

If an individual feels a need to access mental health support or services, or if a person feels concern about an individual he/she knows who is under stress and may have difficulty coping or is suicidal, the resources listed here provide a starting point for information in North Dakota. Other states should identify helplines or other resources of use in that state.

Visit the K-State Families website for more information about families and stress:

www.ksre.ksu.edu/families

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