

## How to deal with a bout of depression

Depression: Mel Gibson's had it; Winona Ryder suffered with it as a teenager; Patty Duke is bipolar and Britney Spears regularly takes natural antidepressant St John's wort.

Depression is an escalating health concern that impacts relationships greatly. From reactive depression which may be brought on by a traumatic event, such as the death of a loved one, to clinical depression, traumatic stress syndrome, anxiety and panic, chances are you will be impacted by this illness at some stage in your life.

The World Health Organisation has warned that depression will escalate from the fourth-greatest cause of death to the equal-biggest in the west by 2020. The good news is that depression can be treated.

**Dear Rachael,**  
My husband has depression. He won't leave the house and cancels social outings regularly, claiming he's too tired. But all he does is sit around all day and mope. He works from home but it seems to me he spends more time asleep than he does at the computer – and our sex life has gone down the drain. I keep trying to get him up and out of the house for some fresh air, but the more depressed he gets the angrier I get – especially as he won't talk to me about it. I am at the end of my tether. We fight all the time and my kids complain when he won't play with them. I fear we're heading for divorce if he doesn't snap out of it.

*Victoria, Rosebery, NSW.*

**Dear Victoria,**  
It's important that your husband seek medical advice. There are many medications that can help lift the fog from depression and your doctor will know what to do and whether your husband needs counselling.

Depression can be a huge strain on a relationship. Try to remember that it's not personal and if he could 'snap out of it' he would.

One side effect may be a reduced libido but hey, touch is good for relieving depression, so some massage may lead to the intimacy you crave.

There are loads of websites, books and support groups you can



# BIG BLACK CLOUD

seek to learn more about the illness and how your relationship can survive.

Some research shows that morning light helps relieve the symptoms of depression, so making a date each morning to walk around the block without wearing sunglasses may help both your relationship and your husband's state of mind.

## SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

The following list contains just some of the symptoms – but not all – that may be displayed by a depressed person, based on information from the University of Melbourne's informative counselling service website.

Withdrawal from others, crying spells, loss of interest in personal appearance, lack of energy, sleeping too much or too little, weight loss or gain, a sense of helplessness and hopelessness, frequent self-criticism, impaired memory and concentration.

## WEBSITES

**[www.intimacyanddepression.com](http://www.intimacyanddepression.com)**

Explores issues faced by partners

**[www.depressionnet.com.au](http://www.depressionnet.com.au)**

Information and support

**[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)**

A national initiative on depression

## BOOKS

**Beating the Blues** Michael E. Thase (Oxford University Press)

**Sharing the Load: What to do**

**When Someone you Love is**

**Depressed** Gwendoline Smith

(Hale & Iremonger)

**Prozac Nation** Elizabeth Wurtzel

(Quartet Books)

## PHONE

The Mental Health Association:

Freecall number **1800 674 200**.

● Johanna Griggs' column appears in our family life supplement this week.

