

AS@W...THE IMPACT OF DEPRESSION ON FAMILIES

What is the prevalence of depression in Canada?

- In any given year, 5% of Canadians will experience clinical depression. Women (6-7%) are more likely to be diagnosed with depression than men (3-4%). A further 10% will experience some depressive symptoms (low mood) every year.
- Up to 1 out of 6 Canadian adults will experience depression at some point in their lifetime.
- Depression is one of the most prevalent mental health conditions in Canada.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that by the year 2020, depression will be responsible for the 2nd highest rate of disability, following cardiac disease.

What are some difficulties experienced when a family member is depressed?

- Depression can show up as withdrawal, lack of interest or irritability with others. This can lead to strains within the family or with their extended family, friends, or neighbours.
- If an individual is depressed but has not been properly assessed or treated, it can put other family members in the difficult position of encouraging the person to seek diagnosis and intervention.
- When a parent or partner is depressed, their capacity to participate in household or child-rearing responsibilities, engage in shared positive interactions and provide support can be diminished.
- If the depressed individual is the principal income earner, families may experience financial strain due to lost time from work as well as costs of medical or mental health care.
- Families may feel guilt, fear and frustration arising from speculation that they contributed to the development of depression.
- Families may feel isolated from friends, community, and social support networks due to the fear of stigma or prejudice.



AS@W Antidepressant Skills at Work Dealing with Mood Problems in the Workplace

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- Depression in an individual can contribute to elevated health and psychological problems in other family members. This is particularly true for women, who are most often the principal caregivers within families.

How can depression affect children and adolescents?

- It is estimated that 3.5% of children and adolescents will experience depression in any one-year period.
- Children or adolescents who are experiencing depression often experience a drop in their academic performance due to difficulties with concentration, motivation and energy.
- Depression or depressed mood can have a negative impact on social, recreational and extracurricular opportunities and successes.
- For many adults with depression, their first episode was when they were teens. If depression in adolescents is not properly addressed it can lead to recurrent episodes as well as other mental and physical health problems as an adult.
- Concerns have been raised about the safety of some antidepressants with children and teens. The latest research supports the use of one particular form of medication along with cognitive-behaviour therapy.

What is the relationship between parenting and depression?

- There exists a two-way relationship: depression can influence an individual's ability to parent and parenting can have an impact on the way an individual experiences depression.
- The day-to-day demands of parenting can be a major stressor for an individual who is trying to manage depression. When a parent is depressed, it can impact their ability to be emotionally and physically available to their children.
- Parenting can alternatively be a major contributor and motivator to an individual's recovery by providing an opportunity for structure, scheduled activities, involvement with others, and a source of a positive sense of self-identity.



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What can families do to deal with depression?

- Families are often the main support for an individual struggling to manage and recover from depression. Thus, family involvement is critical but can also be challenging and isolating.
- Research tells us that when families have improved mental health literacy (i.e., accurate mental health knowledge) and access to care, family members with depression or other mental health concerns are better able to cope, more likely to engage in treatment and have improved quality of life.
- Joining a support group can offer family members the opportunity to be with others who are experiencing similar situations. Support groups can also help to provide information about managing symptoms, finding community resources, and available treatments. Support groups or information sessions can be found in most communities through the local mental health association or hospital.
- If a family member may be experiencing depression, encourage them to seek appropriate diagnosis and treatment. Although depression can lift without intervention, it may not and it can seriously undermine personal, family and social relationships in the process.
- Become informed about the nature of, and treatment options for depression. Also, with their permission, become involved in the care that a depressed family member is receiving. This may include attending appointments or participating in reactivation goals.
- Try to maintain regular family activities, plans and responsibilities. Explain what is going on to children, neighbours and friends in a manner that is appropriate while respecting the individual's wishes and confidentiality.
- Take care of yourself and other family members. Set aside time for leisure activities and, if needed, access respite resources.

References

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ABOUT AS@W

How was *Antidepressant Skills at Work* developed?

The guide was developed by British Columbia Mental Health and Addiction Services (BCMHAS), an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority. The guide and accompanying materials have been authored by **Dr. Dan Bilsker**, **Dr. Merv Gilbert**, and **Dr. Joti Samra** – registered psychologists and scientist-practitioners with expertise in issues relating to workplace mental health. These psychologists are with the Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction (CARMHA), Faculty of Health Sciences, Simon Fraser University. The guide was written on the basis of a review of the scientific literature; consultation with employers, unions, mental health providers and employee groups; and adaptation of existing self-care depression programs.

How can the manual be accessed?

The manual is available for viewing and free download at www.carmha.ca/antidepressant-skills/work/ or from www.bcmhas.ca/research. Individuals or organizations are free to print and make multiple copies of the guide, with permission from CARMHA (publications@carmha.ca). Print copies and audio CDs are available at a low cost from our ordering page at www.carmha.ca/ordering.

For further information about AS@W and associated resources and materials, please visit www.carmha.ca/selfcare. This information will be updated on a regular basis.



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