



Health Awareness

Separating Myth From Fact: An Important Step In Combating Depression

(NAPSA)—Most people know someone who always seems to be down in the dumps. For many, the natural inclination is to grab that person by the shoulder and insist that he or she simply “snap out of it.” Depression is just a state of mind, and if people just change their negative outlook, they will soon realize that life’s not so bad after all.

That’s just one of the many myths about depression, according to Keith Romero, director of communications for the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA), the nation’s largest patient-driven organization focusing specifically on those illnesses. Romero says that people need to realize that depression is a real and treatable medical illness, not a character flaw or sign of weakness.

“Unfortunately, myths and misunderstandings about depression are still far too prevalent,” said Romero. “We’ve made a lot of progress in educating the public about mood disorders, but we’ve got a long, long way to go.”

Romero said that understanding the facts about depression is the best way of ensuring that wrong but long-held beliefs are corrected.

Myth: Getting treatment for depression is a cop-out for people who are just too weak to cope with



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the pressures of day-to-day life.

Fact: Seeking treatment is the smart thing to do and takes a great deal of strength. Getting help means a person has the courage to look for ways to feel better.

Myth: Talk therapy is just whining about life problems. It doesn’t help.

Fact: Talk therapy has been clinically tested and found to be effective and in some cases even works as well as medication.

Myth: Medications to treat depression are habit forming and can change a person’s personality.

Fact: When properly prescribed and used, medications are not addictive and do not change a person’s personality. Medications help a person’s mood become more stable and even. They are not “happy pills” and should not be compared or confused with street drugs.

Myth: People diagnosed with depression should not have children. They won’t be able to handle the pressures of parenting.

Fact: With proper treatment, people with depression can parent as well as anyone else. They can also—and do—hold positions of authority in fields such as law enforcement and government.

Given the prevalence of these myths, DBSA and other organizations are increasingly joining forces to combat misinformation and stigma associated with mental illness and mood disorders. One such coalition recently launched a national campaign called “Depression Is Real” at www.DepressionIsReal.org.

“More than a half dozen organizations came together to launch this campaign,” Romero added. “We all know that dispelling common myths is critical to helping people get the help they need.”

For more information on depression and mood disorders, visit www.dbsalliance.org.