

DEPRESSION

Coping with Depression

- **Challenge the negative thoughts in your head.** Depression can make you feel alone or worthless. You might find yourself thinking that nothing good ever happens, that no one cares about you, or that things will never get better. Realize that these thoughts are coming from depression – not you.
- **Be aware of your stress levels.** Now is not the time to be taking on new projects and responsibilities. Consider paring down what you are doing to make your schedule more manageable.
- **Take care of your body.** Try to eat nutritious meals, get exercise, and get enough sleep (7-8 hours a night).
- **Surround yourself with supportive people.** Friends who have a negative outlook will only make you feel more negative.
- **Take life one day at a time.** Do not get consumed with thoughts of the future: make small goals and do not think about the whole semester. Try to add more structure to your life.
- **Avoid alcohol.** It is a depressant, and will only amplify your depressive feelings.
- **Become involved** – Don't take on a huge commitment, but try to find something you enjoy. Volunteering to help others might help you to focus more on positive things.
- **Remember depression is treatable.** You may need to talk with a counselor, but you can overcome depression.
- **Express your feelings.** Do not keep your emotions bottled up. Find a way to experience feelings that is comfortable for you – talk to someone (friend, family member, counselor, religious leader, professor, etc.), write in a journal, go to a support group.

Helping a Friend Who is Depressed

- **Be supportive.** Listen to your friend. Set aside time so that you can talk without being interrupted. Let your friend know that you care and are willing to help.
- Introduce your friend to **coping techniques** such as those suggested above. If these do not seem to help, suggest that your friend seek professional help. You may wish to contact your state's Commission on Lawyer Assistance Program (contact information for each listed in Chapter 6), or visit your university health services, if available, to find resources for your friend.
- Understand that your friend is suffering from **depression**. Your friend will not just "snap out of it." Overcoming depression takes work and time.
- Remember to **take care of yourself**. Being there for your friend should not come at the expense of your own health, physical or mental. If you are overwhelmed, take a step back and consider calling a counselor for advice.