Depression

**Nearly one in three Americans will experience a bout with mental illness, usually some form of anxiety disorder or depression. Fewer than one in five will seek treatment. *(Rocky Mountain News, April 29, 1992)***

**Antidepressants: Costly placebos?: Some 30 million Americans take medication to treat depression, but for most people, antidepressants serve mostly as a placebo, scientists now say. Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania reanalyzed six major studies, involving seven hundred patients, who had sought to determine whether antidepressants (including Paxil) were more effective than placebos at treating the subjects’ symptoms. They found that the benefit of the drugs rose with the degree of depression: The most severely depressed patients saw their conditions improve, but the rest saw no improvement compared with patients who simply took a placebo. In other words, study co-author Robert DeRubeis tells The New York Times, many of these patients felt somewhat better, but that may have been a function of believing the pills would help them, or of the attention they received from doctors prescribing the medication. “The message for patients with mild to moderate depression,” he says, “is, ‘Look, medications are always an option, but there’s little evidence that they add to other efforts to shake the depression – whether it’s exercise, seeing the doctor, reading about the disorder, or going for psychotherapy.’” The study does affirm the value of medication for people with acute depression, says psychiatrist Erick Turner, but it “could dampen enthusiasm for antidepressant medications a bit, and that may be a good thing.” One out of 10 Americans is taking antidepressants. *(The Week magazine, January 22, 2010)***

**Ziggy says to himself: “Doctors say depression is bad for your heart! Great! That just gives me one more thing to be depressed about!” *(Tom Wilson, in Ziggy comic strip)***

**I lost everything in the postnatal depression. *(Erma Bombeck)***

**Compliments are great anti-depressants, and they have no side effects. (Rose L. Korotkin)**

**Dirt: A natural antidepressant? There may be such a thing as too much cleanliness, a new study suggests. After Dr. Chris Lowry of Bristol University in the U.K. inoculated some mice with a harmless type of bacteria called Mycobacteria vaccae, their serotonin levels soared, indicating an upswing in their sense of well-being. The bacteria apparently stimulates a mood-regulating part of the brain's limbic system, Lowry says, which suggests that by expressing ourselves to certain kinds of "friendly" bacteria present in soil, people may be able to combat depression naturally. "These studies help us understand how the body communicates with the brain and why a healthy immune system is important for maintaining mental health," Lowry tells BBC News. "They also leave us wondering if we shouldn't all spend more time playing in the dirt." (The Week magazine, April 27, 2007)**

**The FDA has approved the first ever transdermal patch for the treatment of depression. Simply remove the backing and press the patch firmly over your mother’s mouth. (Tina Fey, in Time magazine)**

**Financial planners and accountants work in one of the 10 most depression-prone job categories, according to a new study. Experts say the planners’ responsibility for clients’ financial well-being, combined with a lack of control over volatile markets, add up to low spirits. (*Health.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 18, 2011)***

**Depression's genetic origins: While researchers have identified genes associated with many debilitating diseases, the biological underpinnings of depression have remained elusive -- until now. A large-scale study that tapped into crowd-sourced data discovered a trove of 17 different variations linked to depression in people of European ancestry, reports The Guardian (U.K.). In order to pinpoint genetic variants, which may have a very subtle influence on a person's overall depression risk, a team of researchers analyzed saliva samples of more than 300,000 people collected by the genetic-profiling company 23andMe. Of those people, 75,607 anonymously reported being diagnosed or treated for depression. The researchers combined their results with data from another study involving roughly 9,000 people with depression and 9,500 healthy adults. They found the genetic variations linked to depression are spread across 15 regions of the genome, including several sites in or around genes involved in brain development. The study doesn't prove these gene variations cause depression, but it could alter perceptions about the condition and lead to better treatments. "It just underscores that depression really is a brain disease," says researcher Roy Perlis. "Depression is about biology, and I think that will be helpful for some people in reducing stigma." *(The Week magazine, August 19 / August 26, 2016)***

**Depression raises heart risks: Stress and depression can take a combined toll on the heart, creating a "psychosocial perfect storm" that dramatically increases the risk of death from heart disease, new research has found. A study involving nearly 4,500 adults with coronary artery disease found those who also suffered from significant stress and depression were nearly 50 percent more likely to die or have a heart attack during a six-year study period, regardless of other risk factors. A separate study, meanwhile, found that having a strong sense of purpose in life actually lowers the risk of heart disease and stroke. "Developing and refining your sense of purpose could protect your heart health and potentially save your life," cardiologist Randy Cohen, the study's lead author, tells ScienceDaily.com. People with goals that are important to them, his analysis of 10 studies involving 137,000 people found, are 23 percent less likely to die over a given period than those without such goals. *(The Week magazine, March 27, 2015)***

**I think that depression is not so much an issue of nobody loving you. Depression is an issue of not having found a place to give your love, not being able to love enough. *(Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen, in The Healing Process)***

**Lawyers are particularly likely to suffer that disorder called depression. So reports a Johns Hopkins researcher. They’re even more vulnerable than school counselors or secretaries, he says. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Among people who say they’re happily married, that ailment called depression is nearly four times more common in women than in men. If divorced, though, men are more likely to experience profound depression even though divorce usually hits women far harder financially. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**Studies by Swedish doctors have shown that low levels of the hormone melatonin produced by the human pineal gland may turn out to be a powerful indicator of a major depressive disorder that people develop later in life. *(Dr. Stephen Langer)***

**Why are New Yorkers always depressed? The light at the end of their tunnel is New Jersey. *(Motivational Manager)***

**If you're feeling low, don't despair. The sun has a sinking spell every night, but it comes back up every morning. *(Dolly Parton)***

**No matter how dark it gets, we all have to be light for each other. *(Tyler Perry, writer, actor and director)***

**GET DIRTY, BE HEALTHY!: Not only does it "feel good" to be outdoors and dig in the dirt, it's literally a healing experience. Lowly soil bacteria called Mycobacterium vaccae have been shown in studies to ease depression and speed learning by activating a set of serotonin-releasing nerves in the brains of mice, the same neurons targeted by Prozac and similar prescription antidepressants. Dr. Chris Lowry, lead author on the original paper from England's Bristol University, says: "These studies help us understand how the body communicates with the brain and why a healthy immune system is important for maintaining mental health. They also leave us wondering if we shouldn't all be spending more time playing in the dirt." Interest in the project arose after human cancer patients being treated with M. vaccae unexpectedly reported increases in their quality of life. So plant your garden, or just spend more time outdoors. People are likely to inhale or ingest the "feel good" microorganisms just by being around Mother Nature, experts say. (*The Saturday Evening Post, January, 2016 issue, on page 69)***

**Sometimes when I’m depressed, I get a pregnancy test so I can say, “Well, at least I’m not pregnant.” *(Daniel Tosh, host of Tosh.O)***

**Helga tells the doctor: “I’m constantly depressed with feelings of hopeless despair, Doctor!” Doctor: “Here’s a prescription that will provide immediate relief.” Helga then says to Hagar: “The doctor says you should leave to invade England immediately!” *(Dik Browne, in Hagar The Horrible comic strip)***

**Hello, welcome to the Psychiatric Hotline. If you are obsessive-compulsive, please press 1 repeatedly. If you are co-dependent, please ask someone to press 2. If you have multiple personalities, please press 3, 4, 5 and 6. If you are paranoid-delusional, we know who you are and what you want. Just stay on the line until we can trace the call. If you are schizophrenic, listen carefully and a little voice will tell you which number to press. If you are manic-depressive, it doesn’t matter which number you press. No one will answer. *(Jacquelyn Mayerhofer, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Not depressed, just sad: A quarter of people taking antidepressants are misdiagnosed and would bounce back without medical help, says a new study. In a study of 8,000 Americans, researchers found that about one in four "depressed" people were suffering the aftereffects of an emotional blow, such as the loss of a loved one or a job. Unlike those who are clinically depressed, these people will return to a normal state of mind after a few weeks or months. Still, when patients walk into a psychiatrist's office with sad feelings, they are likely to emerge with a prescription for antidepressants -- and that can be dangerous, says researcher Allan Horwitz. "People are starting to think that any negative emotion is unnatural, that they can take medication and feel better," Horwitz tells The Washington Post. But when we dull the pain with pills, he says, we "make it less likely for people to make real changes in their lives." *(The Week magazine, April 27, 2007)***

**Along Connecticut's Merritt Parkway are several signs saying: "Depressed Storm Drains." Below one is written: "Counseling Will Help." (James E. Roberts, in Reader's Digest)**

**An epidemic of anxiety and depression is affecting American teenagers. In 1985, 18 percent of incoming college freshman said they "felt overwhelmed by all I had to do" the previous year. By last year, that number had surged to 41 percent. Hospital admissions for suicidal teenagers have doubled over the past decade. *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, October 27, 2017)***

**What time of day do you get depressed, if depressed you ever get? The deep downers that chronically come upon some people right after they get up in the morning are probably glandular in origin. That’s the claim of a Miami psychiatrist. She says the biotechs are working hard to come forth with better pills for that kind. *(L. M. Boyd)***

**When you are feeling blue, try painting yourself a different color. *(Advice from the granddaughter of Guideposts reader, Janet Stewart)***

**Nature's cure for anxiety: People tormented by an endless stream of negative thoughts can greatly benefit from an alternative to expensive psychotherapy or medications: a walk in the woods. Psychologists at Stanford University found that strolling outdoors in natural settings can stave off the human tendency to dwell on that breakup, layoff, or family problem, The Washington Post reports. The study involved 38 city dwellers with no history of mental illness. Half of the participants strolled for 90 minutes through an unspoiled landscape surrounded by greenery; the others walked along a busy downtown street. Before and after their walks, the participants underwent a brain scan and questioning about how often they engaged in rumination -- inward, self-referential thinking, which is tied to depression and anxiety. The nature walkers brooded far less, and their brain scans revealed reduced activity in the subgenual prefrontal cortex, the region that regulates negative emotions. "This provides robust results for us that nature experience, even of a short duration, can decrease this pattern of thinking that is associated with the onset, in some cases, of mental illnesses," says the study's lead author, Gregory Bratman. One downer: By 2050, about 70 percent of the world's population is expected to reside in cities. *(The Week magazine, July 17, 2015)***

**The world's most depression nation: It's hard to believe, said Bret Stephens, but Americans are the unhappiest people on Earth. That is the conclusion of a new study by the World Health Organization and the Harvard Medical School, which found that 9.6 percent of Americans suffer from depression of bipolar disorder -- the highest rate of the 14 nations surveyed. Our "Prozac nation" has a greater percentage of depressed people than war-torn Lebanon (6.6 percent); job-starved Mexico (4.8 percent); carefree, hedonistic Italy (3.8 percent); and overworked, socially rigid Japan (3.1 percent). And how's this for a paradox: Nigeria, a land of desperate poverty, rampant corruption, and violent tribal conflict, had the lowest depression rate of all -- just 0.8 percent. How can this be? One possibility is that when your life is a struggle for clean water and adequate food, you don't have time to indulge in existential despair. In New York, on the other hand, a lawyer making $200,000 a year may find himself "depressed" if he doesn't make partner by his mid-30s. It may also be that in less modern societies, people find comfort and meaning in their families, their religion, and their cultural traditions. Even for Americans, "such consolations still exist, though we no longer think of them as cures." Perhaps, in addition to Prozac, we should give them a try. *(The Week magazine, March 23, 2007)***

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