

# Rover

## DEPRESSION SUPPORT NEWSLETTER



*'Black Dog is fat and lazy, he would far rather you lie on your bed and feel sorry for yourself. So go for a walk or run and leave the mutt behind.'*

Illustration by Matthew Johnstone



Rover is a Support Newsletter published four times a year for people who are touched by the black dog of depression and those who care for them. It is endorsed and supported by the Black Dog Institute at Randwick. Most of the content of each newsletter comes from readers who post in or email their own ideas and suggestions for managing their depression.

**W**elcome to the winter 2011 edition of Rover. Just a reminder about the free seminar on Depression, Bipolar and Wellbeing at the Black Dog Institute on June 28th (see details on page 2). We look forward to meeting some of our Rover readers!

Professor Gordon Parker, the inspiration behind the establishment of the Black Dog Institute, will be stepping down as its Executive Director later this year. He has described his role as Executive Director as his most privileged career responsibility. We would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge Professor Parker's enthusiasm for the idea of a depression support newsletter, as well as his ongoing support of Rover. Many thanks.

*Nerida*, on behalf of the Volunteer Committee

It is better to light one small candle than to curse the darkness.  
*Eleanor Roosevelt*

### HELP US FILL FUTURE EDITIONS OF ROVER

Do you have something to contribute to our newsletter? We would like to receive your comments or ideas, stories or tips. Perhaps you would like to share your experience with depression.

You can email them to us at [blackdog@blackdog.org.au](mailto:blackdog@blackdog.org.au) (type in 'Rover' as the subject)

Or you can post them to:  
Rover Newsletter  
Black Dog Institute,  
Hospital Road, Randwick, NSW 2031

### FOR YOUR FREE SUBSCRIPTION TO ROVER...

Ph: 02 9382 4523. Rover can also be accessed online at [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)  
Click Newsletters on the Home Page.





# Dark Chocolate for Stress

By Tabby Biddle

Not only have studies shown that eating dark chocolate can lower the risk of heart disease, lower blood pressure, relieve pain, and protect from skin cancer, a new study reports that eating dark chocolate may actually reduce your level of stress.

In the study conducted by researchers at the Nestle Research Center in Lausanne, Switzerland and published in the Journal of Proteome Research, researchers looked at the effects of eating 1.4 ounces of dark chocolate (the equivalent of an average-sized chocolate bar) every day for two weeks in 30 highly-stressed adults, ages 18-35. The participants (19 females and 11 males) ate half of the dark chocolate mid-morning and the other half in the middle of the afternoon. To analyse the changes in the participants' stress levels, researchers collected blood and urine samples at the start of the study, at the mid-way point, and at the finish of the two-week period. The data collected indicated that by eating the 1.4 ounces (40 grams) of dark chocolate every day for two weeks, the participants had a reduction in their levels of the stress hormones-cortisol and catecholamines. Other studies have shown that eating dark chocolate can stimulate the production of endorphins (the "feel-good" hormones) and the release of serotonin (a natural antidepressant), which have both been linked with reducing stress levels. Additionally, dark chocolate has a touch of caffeine that can provide a burst of energy and a mood boost in times of stress. All of this is good news for those of you who are passionate about dark chocolate, but be aware that chocolate has plenty of saturated fat and sugar, which can lead to weight gain. Tip: Enjoy small portions of dark chocolate as part of a healthy stress-reducing diet and combine with other stress-reducing strategies.

(Reference) <http://www.qualityhealth.com/depression-articles/dark-chocolate-stress> January 8, 2010

## In The News

Scientists at the Monash Alfred Psychiatry Research Centre in Melbourne have developed an ear probe providing a direct line to the brain, which they believe will revolutionise the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness.

The probe works via the ear canal to reach a part of the brain that controls balance, but can also gauge depression and schizophrenia. Inventor Brian Lithgow, a Monash University biomedical researcher, calls it an "ECG (electrocardiogram) for the mind". It analyses the brain's electrical signals the same way an ECG detects heart problems. One of the major advantages: it can detect differences in signals from people with bipolar disorder as distinct from uni-polar depression.

(Reference) Reader's Digest Australia, 2010, p.62

## An Invitation to our Rover

### Readers

### Book Now!

Find out about the different types of depression and bipolar disorder, strategies for increasing your wellbeing and where you can get help.

The Black Dog is running a **FREE** seminar on Depression, Bipolar Disorder and Wellbeing in June. The seminar runs for about an hour and light refreshments will be provided afterwards.

Date: Tuesday, June 28th  
Time: 12 pm – 1 pm  
Location: Black Dog Institute,  
Hospital Road, Randwick

Please ring Anett on (02) 9382 4523 to book and to have the directions to the Black Dog Institute sent to you.

We look forward to seeing you!

*Nerida*, on behalf of the Volunteer Committee

## Caring for Carers ~ **FREE** DVDs and Booklets

Volume 1: **'Guide for Carers: Caring for yourself, caring for others'** includes:

- overcoming setbacks
- crisis situations
- accepting how you feel
- carers and relationships
- looking after yourself
- a full list of carer organisations, information and support phone numbers/web addresses.

Volume 2: **"Carers' Stories of Hope and Recovery"** features interviews with:

- John McGrath, Deputy Chairman of beyondblue – on how his two sons battled mental illness
- Jessica Rowe, TV presenter and beyondblue Ambassador – about growing up and caring for a mother who has bipolar disorder
- Prof Michael Baigent, beyondblue's Clinical Adviser – information and advice for carers.
- Plus personal accounts from four ordinary Australian families about their journey as carers.

To order the free DVDs and booklets call **1300 22 4636** or visit **[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)**



# What is Happiness?



The term happiness captures a huge variety of positive emotional responses, including such things as cheerfulness, serenity, optimism, and joy. Throughout history, philosophers, religious writers and poets have pondered on the meaning of happiness and how it might be achieved.

More recently, scientists, psychologists and even politicians, have joined the discussion. Psychologists have found it useful to distinguish between a hedonic and a eudemonic state. A hedonic state is a transitory state of pleasure, while a eudemonic state is one associated with ongoing wellbeing, engagement and contentment. Eudemonia is based on Aristotle's notion of the 'good life'. Sociologist Corey Keyes argues that wellbeing is more than just the absence of persistent negative emotions. His concept of 'flourishers' describes people who are satisfied with their life and/or have positive mood - plus at least 6 eudemonic qualities including:

- ⊕ Making a contribution to society
- ⊕ Being socially integrated
- ⊕ Belong to a wide range of social groups
- ⊕ Being accepting of others
- ⊕ Experiencing self acceptance
- ⊕ Demonstrating environmental mastery
- ⊕ Having positive relationships with others
- ⊕ Having autonomy
- ⊕ Demonstrating personal growth
- ⊕ Having purpose in life

This is an excerpt from the Black Dog Institute's fact sheet on Happiness. To read the whole article, visit [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au) and click on the Fact Sheets tab on the Home page.

## Finding a Silver Lining

'Through (depression) I have learned humbling lessons: I am less angry, less impatient, less driven, less reactive. I have learned to identify what I am feeling and why, and to make choices about my actions. I believe I have become wiser, more compassionate, more open-hearted and spiritually aware due to these depths I have plummeted to, and somehow survived.'

*(Reference) Contributor to Journeys with the Black Dog: Inspirational Stories of Bringing Depression to Heel. Edited by: Tessa Wigney, Kerrie Evers and Gordon Parker (2007) Allen & Unwin*

### Tips for Reducing Stress

- ✓ MAKE SOMEONE A CUP OF TEA
  - ✓ BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE 30+ MINUTES A DAY
  - ✓ BREAK DOWN TASKS INTO MANAGEABLE STEPS
  - ✓ DO SOMETHING FOR YOUR COMMUNITY
  - ✓ ALLOW YOURSELF AND OTHERS TO BE IMPERFECT
  - ✓ FIGURE OUT WHAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT TO YOU
  - ✓ PERFORM A RANDOM ACT OF KINDNESS EVERY DAY
- (From the Mental Health Association NSW)



## Rob's Story

People with chronic health conditions are much more likely to have depression. I should know. I was 16 when I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes. It was a traumatic experience that left me struggling to breathe and in casualty at the local hospital. I left three days later, having had my first experience with my own mortality. I was always an anxious child and this had left me shaken. It was six months later that I was diagnosed with depression. I am now 28. I have been working with psychologists for 12 years and have been on anti-depressants for 11. I am lucky that I have a very supportive family and excellent psychiatric health professionals.

I am trained as an Occupational Therapist. I have had the privilege to work with people who have depression and work alongside very talented medical professionals. Through these experiences and training I have found some strategies that work for me. When I am unwell, I sit with my family and organise my week. I need the help from my family as I am usually too disorganised when I am sick. The timetable has a good mix of productivity and leisure. Exercise is included. Every day I get up at 7 am whether I want to or not. I shower. I eat breakfast. Sometimes this is easy, sometimes not. I take my medication.

The next strategy is sunlight. Lack of natural light has been linked with depression in many studies. I have to admit that I HATE going outside. However, if I exercise outside by walking for 20 minutes, I have killed two birds with one stone. The light has to hit your arms and legs. In summer, make sure it is early, around 8:00 and it only needs to be 10 minutes.

The last strategy is finding support people. This includes seeing a psychologist.

Medication is NOT effective enough on its own for me. It must be supported by friends, family and appropriate thinking techniques. I get my support from my family and a wonderful psychologist from Salvation Army Counselling. She is very highly trained and easy to talk to. If you do not have a psychologist, get one NOW. Ensure they are trained at a university level and that you can relate to them.

Overall life with depression can be really difficult. So I really encourage you to take care of yourself every day and try to surround yourself with a supportive network.

**Rob Payne**



# Undisclosed depression in the workplace

By Jinia MUKERJEE NATH



**D**epression is often considered the most common, the most debilitating and the most expensive mental health disorder. It impacts not only on the individual concerned, but also their family and friends, colleagues, employers and the nation as a whole.

The workplace plays an important role in the life of an adult. A working professional is known to spend anything from one-fourth to one-third of his lifetime at the workplace. International statistics reveal that almost 70% of people diagnosed with depression are in some form of employment. Sadly, a high percentage of people diagnosed with depression do not disclose their condition at work due to the fear of being stigmatised, a problem that still exists in most societies. They carry their depression as a dark secret, well guarded under their professional outer shell, which can be quite a Sisyphean task! Such lack of disclosure can have a profound impact on the individual concerned as well as on the organization.

From the individual's perspective, it could mean poor concentration and decision making, which for some, who are working in construction and handling machinery, can be quite disastrous. It could also mean a lack of accuracy in one's perception of positive performance, which can further spiral down one's global sense of well being. In certain cases, loss of productivity can lead to a loss of job, which, other than its financial implication may also be perceived by the individual as an experience of failure that can haunt and challenge his/her self-esteem for years to come.

From the organisational perspective, the cost of undisclosed employee depression (both tangible and intangible costs), can also be staggering.

Absenteeism, long-term 'sickness' leave, early retirement and loss of work productivity impact the organisation's financial goals and its reputation to name a few. Considering that the workplace is unable to accommodate the needs of someone who is depressed due to lack of disclosure, both the human and financial costs are bound to escalate.

As an employee with depression:

- Seek Help: talk to your G.P who is trained to help you identify, understand and treat your symptoms of depression. If needed take time off work to get your depression treated professionally.
- Provide a medical certificate at work so that your employer can organise and make decisions for the management of your tasks when you take 'time off'.
- Talk to a confidante, a friend or a family member.
- Seek help from a trained psychologist.

As an employer/manager

- Improve communication.
- Assure your employees that a disclosure of mental illness will not affect their future growth in the organization.
- Be sensitive to signs of depression.
- Make workplace changes to help your employee cope better with work while coping/treating his/her depression.

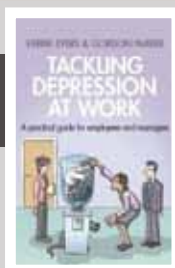
If you know someone at work who may be depressed:

- Talk.
- Encourage the person to seek help.

At the end, remember depression is a condition that can be treated and well managed!

*Jinia Mukerjee Nath, M.Psych. (Clin). from Macquarie University, currently professing in Nice, France, on psychopathology in the workplace.*

good  
book



## Tackling Depression at Work: A practical guide for employees and managers

This book is a useful source of information for any worker with depression, whether it's temporary or an ongoing condition. It is also a resource for line managers and human resource managers.

(2010) Kerrie Eyers & Gordon Parker: Allen & Unwin Ph: 8425 0100

'I was at work from the time the security guard opened the front door at 7 a.m. to well after dark. My advice to those pleased managers out there who see a super-keen but clearly half-dead employee is that workaholism isn't always indicative of good mental health' *Soula*

Excerpt from Tackling Depression at Work, p.22



• "Doctor, Doctor, I have  
• bipolar disorder."

• Calm down. Cheer up.  
• Calm down. Cheer up.  
• Calm . . .

