

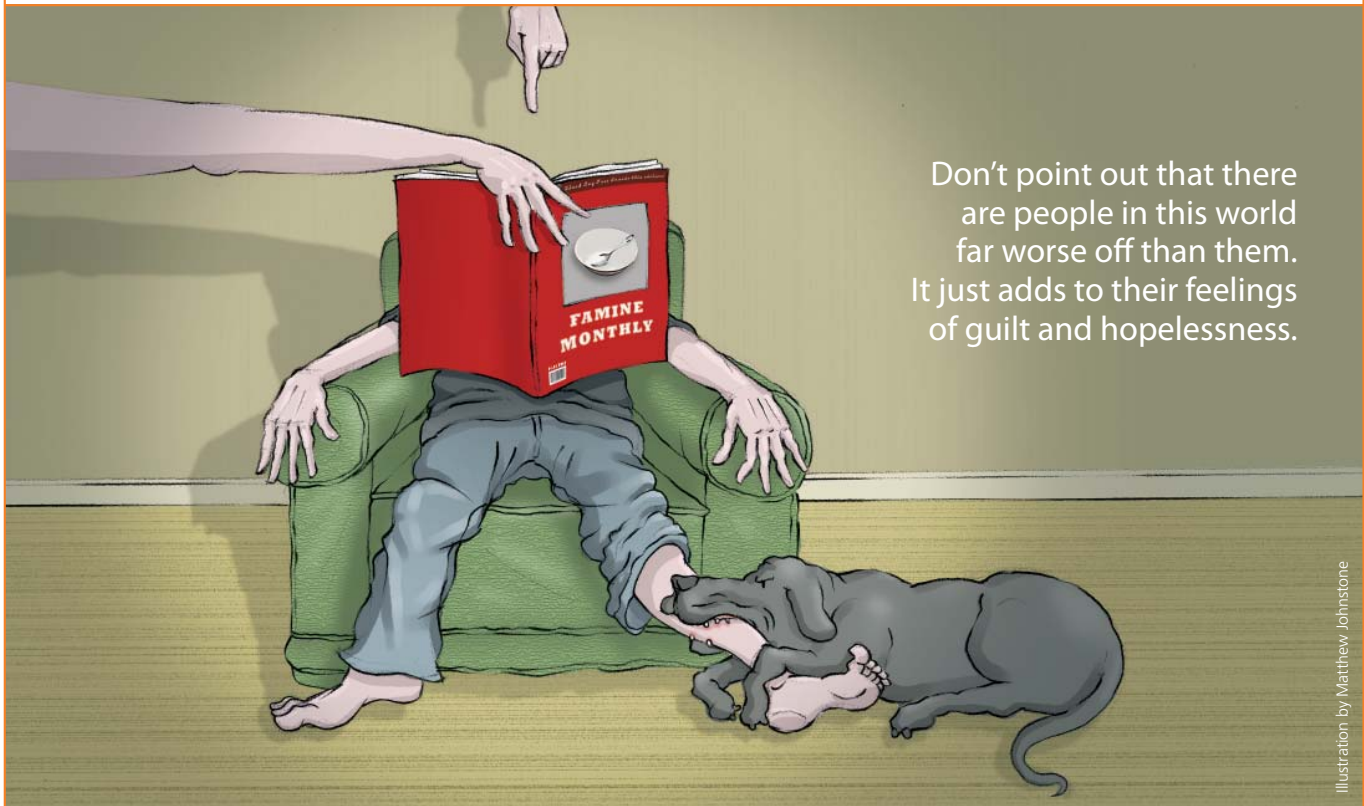
Rover



BLACK DOG INSTITUTE

A DEPRESSION SUPPORT NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2009



Don't point out that there are people in this world far worse off than them. It just adds to their feelings of guilt and hopelessness.

Illustration by Matthew Johnstone

Rover is a Support Newsletter published four times a year for people who **battle depression** and those who care for them. It is endorsed and supported by the Black Dog Institute at the Prince of Wales Hospital, Randwick. The majority of the content of each newsletter **comes from readers** who post in or email their own ideas and suggestions for managing their depression.

Welcome

to the first issue of Rover. The idea for the newsletter came after a discussion at one of our Depression Support Group meetings at the Black Dog Institute in Randwick. The meetings are run by a facilitator on a fortnightly basis and allow each participant to talk freely about their depression among fellow sufferers. But this is only one aspect of the meeting. The group also allows participants to share tips and strategies with each other, recommend books and CDs, share newspaper articles and information about upcoming events – as well as sharing a laugh and providing a shoulder to cry on. As a fellow sufferer, these meetings have become an important additional tool for managing my depression.

I warmly invite you to read this first issue and post or email your contributions to our next issue due out in Winter 2009. Also, a section will be designated for Comments and Questions relating to the newsletter. Send these in too! Our postal and email addresses are on the back page of this newsletter.

Nerida

A word from Professor Parker

Let me join Nerida and all those who conceived the idea and have brought the Newsletter to fruition in supporting this new and important means of communication. There is a real estate aphorism – “Position, position, position”. In terms of managing mood disorders, there is no simple aphorism. However, key components are: education, destigmatisation and support. This Newsletter is designed to address these priorities and it is a much welcomed addition to the Institute’s activities. **Prof. Gordon Parker**

contents

A word from Professor Parker	1
Welcome to our readers	1
Tips for staying well	2
In the News	2
Learning about depression	2
Weathering the storm – tips for managing an episode	3
Good Book	3
Silver lining stories	3
Poetry by Mark Fernon	3
No Boundaries – Geoff Gallop	3
Poetry by Col Henry	4
Ideas from carers	4
Useful contacts	4
How to contribute and subscribe to this newsletter	4



Tips for staying well

I start each day with 30 minutes on the treadmill. I like the privacy it gives me and I don't have to worry about sunscreen or what I'm wearing. The workout keeps my anxiety down and I use the time to calmly plan out my day. **Meg**

I have made a promise to myself not to say yes to a commitment straight away. Sleeping on it first has helped me avoid a lot of stress. **Matt**

I have made separate arrangements with two of my friends to meet for lunch on a certain day of each month. I have often let these friendships slip but these arrangements help me to maintain and strengthen our bond. **Lee**

I try to get outside in the fresh air for at least half an hour every day. I walk the dog, mow the lawn, do some weeding or better still, sit in the sun with a cup of tea. **Chris**

I am vigilant about getting enough sleep. For me, that's about 9 hours a night. I'm a coffee drinker but have switched to decaf – you really can't taste the difference. **Suresh**

In the News...

The key to happiness for middle-aged women could be as simple as putting on a pair of walking shoes.

A brisk stroll is the best way to stave off mid-life depression, researchers say. The ideal pace for keeping symptoms such as anxiety and stress at bay is around 6.5km/h according to a US study.

It found that women walking five times a week for 1.5 hours had the best mental health. With more menopausal women seeking natural therapies to ease symptoms, doctors claim it is vital to maintain mental wellbeing.

The study examined 380 women aged 42 on average and noted their physical activity level and menopausal symptoms including stress, anxiety and depression. The women were followed for more than eight years, a report in January's

Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention said.

Researchers found high levels of physical activity were most beneficial to post menopausal women, who had lower levels of stress than those who did little exercise.

Those who did a "middle-tier" amount of exercise – walking five times a week for 40 minutes – had better mental wellbeing than those doing very little – about 15 minutes, five times a week.

"A moderate-paced walking schedule can keep your weight down and lower stress, anxiety and depression," a researcher said.

'Walking, best way to avoid depression'

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, Friday January 4, 2008, page 11.



Learning about depression

Symptoms of depression

Signs of a depressed mood include:

- Lowered self-esteem (or self worth)
- Change in sleep patterns, that is, insomnia or broken sleep
- Change in appetite or weight
- Less ability to control emotions such as pessimism, anger, guilt, irritability and anxiety
- Varying emotions throughout the day, for example, feeling worse in the morning and better as the day progresses
- Reduced capacity to experience pleasure: you can't enjoy what's happening now, nor look forward to

anything with pleasure. Hobbies and interests drop off.

- Reduced pain tolerance: you are less able to tolerate aches and pains and may have a host of new ailments
- Changed sex drive: absent or reduced
- Poor concentration and memory: some people are so impaired that they think that they are going demented
- Reduced motivation: it doesn't seem worth the effort to do anything, things seem meaningless
- Lowered energy levels.

Fact sheet published by The Black Dog Institute 16-Mar-05



Weathering the storm

Tips for managing an episode:

- As impossible as the idea seems at the time, experience has shown me that if I can manage to get to the local swimming pool, I will gain some real relief after 30 minutes or so of swimming laps. **Maria**

- During an episode, I always get some relief at night time. I take advantage of this and take a walk around the streets around our home. The streets are quiet

and I feel a sense of calm, which allows me to remember that this episode will pass. **Graham**

- At night time, I lay on the kids' trampoline and simply stare up at the night sky. It helps to put things into perspective. I've been known to spend hours doing this. **Rebecca**

- I have built up a collection of feel-good DVDs to watch when I am not well. **Chris**

“Nothing is either good or bad but thinking makes it so.” *Shakespeare*



Journeys with the Black Dog Inspirational Stories of Bringing Depression to Heel

Edited by: Tessa Wigney, Kerrie Eyers and Gordon Parker, 2007

Published by: Allen & Unwin
(02) 84250100,
info@allenandunwin.com

An easy to read, inspirational book written by people who have suffered from depression. Chapters include the writers' experiences with diagnosis, seeking professional help, accepting and taking responsibility for their illness, wellbeing strategies and the positives that have emerged from their struggle with depression.

Silver lining stories

Send in your stories of kindness, good fortune or positive outcomes that have emerged from your battle with depression.

Though not feeling well, I had committed to taking my daughter dress shopping for her formal. Lining up at a crowded eatery to order lunch, I wore sunglasses to cover the tears that I couldn't hold back. I was so conscious that it was an occasion I should be enjoying with my beautiful daughter.

I was vaguely aware of a short, elderly gentleman standing next to me. My anxiety grew as person after person pushed in front of me. Suddenly, the man took hold of my wrist and gently waved my arm in the air at the staff and said over the din, "Excuse me. This lady is next." I couldn't help but smile and thank him. This little act of kindness helped bolster my reserves for the rest of the day. **Therese**

Poetry...

When I did falter I have lost
my friends.
They have fallen by the wayside,
of me at least and left
me friendless,
- at last and without peace.

There is war inside my head.
The friendships I thought alive
are dead.
Like a wreck of a ship upon a shore
Of weathered rock
Has friends to hoist the sails
no more
For they deserted in rough weather,
and won't be back

When I was a boat
I was only ever half afloat.
Perhaps I carried too many crew
And just never knew
Why I was so low in the water
In any case they're gone now,
They left me when I did,
(and still do) falter

Mark Fernon



“No boundaries
Geoff Gallop, Rhodes Scholar and Premier of WA from 2001-2006, describes his experience of depression

“The feeling of melancholy and gloom and being trapped inside myself almost to the point of where every second is a day. It's hard to explain, but you live every moment as though it's an eternity.”

Poetry...

Clothes of Dark Colour

You wear clothes of dark colour
Of a man who's too deep,
Mind walking in shadows,
Unable to sleep.
Your thoughts of tomorrow
Crowd thoughts of today,
Too fearful of running,
Yet too scared to stay. Col Henry

Ideas from carers

- I have learnt not to say, "What's wrong?" when my boyfriend gets depressed again. Instead, I tell him I will listen if he wants to talk. **Amanda**
- My wife has been seeing a psychiatrist for many years now. Recently, she asked me to attend one of her appointments with her. She said my being with her was very comforting and I gained a better insight into her illness. **Edward**



Some Useful Contacts

The Resource Centre is located at the Black Dog Institute in Randwick, NSW. It is open to the public on weekdays from 9.30am to 5pm. We provide information and resources about mood disorders and related topics. These include books and CDs which can be borrowed. Fact sheets written and developed by the Institute's professionals are also available at no cost. We run support groups and information sessions on various topics. Our friendly staff provide information by phone or email to the public about the Institute's services and activities as well as general information. You are invited to come in to see us. See previous page for contact details.

ARAFMI NSW provides free support, education, information and advocacy to carers, families and friends of a person with a mental illness or mental disorder. We have a calendar of upcoming events, both educational and social, for carers and we welcome all carers to access our service. We also run 'Connect for Kids' workshops for Young Carers in the school holidays. For more information please phone **(02) 98881819** or email **fcmhp@arafmi.org**.

Carers NSW offers confidential support for relatives and friends of people with depression, bipolar disorder or other mental health problems. Phone David Loncar on **(02) 9289 4249** or email him at **davidl@carersnsw.asn.au** OR Lorna Downes on **(02) 9289 4226** or email her at **lornad@carersnsw.asn.au**

“ At least with depression, you get your rest.

Billy Crystal's character in the movie, When Harry Met Sally laments to Meg Ryan's character



Contribute to Rover

Help us fill the Winter 2009 Edition of Rover! Do you have suggestions for staying well, managing an episode or caring for someone with depression? Perhaps you have a short poem or your own 'silver lining story' relating to depression to send in. We would love to receive them and will publish as many as space permits.

There are two ways you can get these to us. You can post them to:

Rover Newsletter
Black Dog Institute
Hospital Road, Randwick NSW 2031

Or you can email them to:

blackdodgevents@unsw.edu.au
(and type in Rover as the subject)
We look forward to reading your

contributions.

How to get your free copies of Rover

Rover will be published four times per year. Get them sent to your home: Phone the Black Dog Institute on Ph: 02 9382 4523 and give them your postal address.

Alternatively, phone and provide your email address to have the Newsletters emailed to you.

or access them on the Black Dog Institute website: www.blackdoginstitute.org.au (and search under 'Resources').

or various community centres and libraries.

We are attempting to have copies of the Newsletter at as many community centres and libraries as possible but please check availability first.

The Black Dog Institute's mission is to advance the understanding, diagnosis and management of the mood disorders by continuously raising clinical, research, education and training standards. In so doing, the Institute aims to improve the lives of those affected – and in turn – the lives of their families and friends. The Black Dog Institute is not a crisis facility. In an emergency, contact your GP, psychiatrist or attend the nearest hospital emergency department. For a 24 hour counselling service, call Lifeline on 13 11 14.



BLACK DOG INSTITUTE