



DEPRESSION PREVENTION

Familiar feelings of dread and despair wrapped themselves around my heart like a wet wool blanket. Tears flowed too often and at inappropriate times. Exhausted, I felt tempted to give up. I wasn't suicidal; I just didn't desire to live. There was no joy. I knew what was wrong, and I knew why. And I also knew if I didn't take some immediate action, my depressed feelings might develop into clinical depression. (Clinical or major depression is diagnosed when someone experiences the symptoms of depression for two weeks or longer without a break.) You can take a free depression test on my website at <http://www.leslievernick.com/resources.php>.

Depression is so prevalent today that it is considered the number one cause of disability in woman. I not only have battled depressed feelings off and on my own life, but as a Christian counselor, I have worked with many other women who, like me, struggle with mild to severe depression. Most of these women have gotten better, but some haven't.

Please hear me. Breaking free from the grasp of depression isn't as easy as the TV commercials would like to suggest. Antidepressant medication, although a wonderful blessing for many people, does not cure depression; medication only lessens the symptoms of depression. To get better and to minimize the recurrence of future depressions, it is crucial that we learn to recognize some of the unhealthy patterns in our lives that contribute to our depression and work hard to change them.

There are also certain things that we can do to build depression prevention in to our lifestyles. Practicing these steps will not only lessen our vulnerability to depression, but they can help reduce the intensity and length of our depressed moods. We often hear about cancer prevention or ways to reduce our risk of heart disease and take steps to do our part to ward off these dreaded diseases; however, since one in five females will experience clinical depression in her lifetime, it is crucial that we also learn to practice depression prevention.

Take Care of Your Body

Some of the causes of depression in woman have to do with how our bodies work. Research shows that certain diseases cluster in families. Coronary artery disease, diabetes and certain forms of cancer are physical problems that particular individuals may be more biologically predisposed to through their family genetics. If you know that you have a family history of these illnesses, it is all the more reason to do what you can to take steps to minimize your risk of getting them. Depression has been shown to also have a genetic link. My mother was

diagnosed with bi-polar depression, and her mother, my grandmother, suffered with post-partum depression that was so severe she was institutionalized for many, many years.

Pregnancy, childbirth, hormonal changes, menopause, illness and even stress can throw our body's chemistry out of balance, and depression may follow these physical upsets. When these risk factors are present, we must be more vigilant about taking care of our physical body so that we minimize our risk of getting depressed.

Research shows that regular aerobic exercise can be very effective at alleviating some of the symptoms of depression as well as producing natural endorphins for the body. It's recommended that we do 30 minutes of aerobic exercise three times a week to yield best results.

Many women I know, including myself, struggle to eat healthy. We're either too busy to take care of our bodies or we're watching our weight and think we can manage on diet soda and salad. But it's not true. If you want to help your body fight off depressed feelings and moods, you must not only exercise, but increase your intake of Omega 3 fats such as salmon or take EPS rich fish oil capsules. You should also take a good multi-vitamin especially loaded with B and D and eat lean proteins, complex carbohydrates, whole foods, fruits and vegetables instead of processed ones.

Today, research indicates that we are getting 90 minutes less sleep per night than our ancestors did 100 years ago. What is that costing us? We have more road rage, shopping rage, family rage and inability to handle stress than ever before. We're impatient and easily frustrated, and much of the cause is because we're not getting enough sleep.

We are not only spiritual beings, but we are also physical beings. In order to function properly, manage stress, think properly and grow spiritually and emotionally, we must take better care of our bodies.

I'm always touched by how God ministered to Elijah's body first when he became despondent. God fed him and told him to rest (1 Kings 19:4-8). If you can't sleep, you're not eating, you're crying all the time, you're exhausted and you're not able to think properly. You begin the healing process by taking better care of your body.

You can read more about depression in my book ***Defeating Depression: Real Hope for Life Changing Wholeness.***