

Assessing and Addressing Sad or Anxious Feelings

There are times in life when it is normal to be sad or worried. Examples of these include when:

- An important person in your life dies or moves away,
- A marriage, serious dating relationship or close friendship ends,
- You or a loved one has a serious medical or work problem,
- You are the victim of a scary crime or accident,
- You are being evaluated, as in a job interview or taking a test.

The following symptoms could indicate that sadness or anxiety is significantly interfering with your life.

- Increase or decrease in your eating or sleeping
- Decrease in your energy level, concentration, memory or decisiveness
- Loss of interest in socializing or spending time with others
- Increase in your use of alcohol or drugs
- Worrying or sadness causes you avoid certain activities, situations or tasks, or with completing important responsibilities?
- Being more critical of yourself and/or others
- Shortness of breath or a racing heartbeat often

These symptoms may be due to either medical or psychological causes. If a physician's exam has not revealed a physical cause, counseling is often recommended. Sometimes just a few sessions with a therapist can reduce clinical depression or anxiety. Research has shown that there are numerous types of therapy available to successfully treat depression and anxiety. Medication may also be indicated when symptoms are severe.

However, there are steps you can take on your own to improve your mood.

- Be more socially active and seek support from those that you trust.
- With your physician's input, increase your amount of exercise.
- Make a list of happy and successful experiences that occur daily.
- Make a list of things you are grateful for that you read and add to daily.
- Take slow deep breaths when anxious, and imagine being in a relaxing setting.
- Remind yourself that no matter how uncomfortable you feel at the moment, all feelings are temporary and that they will soon improve.

If you are concerned about anxiety or depression in yourself or someone you are close to, contact Dr. Lazar at (619) 540-6038 or drjoel@joellazarphd.com.