

HEALTHY LIVING

More than sad? Support is here

Have you been feeling really sad, tired and worried for more than a few days? If yes, you could have depression. This is not a character flaw or a sign of personal weakness. You can't make yourself well by trying to "snap out of it" or "lighten up."

The depression support group offered by the Mental Health Association of Southwest Florida welcomes anyone who is suffering from this very real mental illness. The group meets from 10:30 a.m. to noon every Thursday at 2335 Tamiami Trail.

Support groups provide mutual acceptance and understanding and help facilitate self-discovery. They also give people the opportunity to benefit from the experiences of those who have been or are in the same shoes.

Common symptoms of depression include: loss of enjoyment, restlessness and poor nighttime sleep, overeating or loss of appetite, forgetfulness, wanting to stay in bed all the time, unexplained feelings of anger or fear, general aches and pains that don't go away, no sexual energy, lack of focus and no interest in socializing.

Talk to your doctor if you are experiencing any of the above symptoms. Depression is treatable and you can feel better. For more information about the support group, call 261-5405 or email info@mhaswfl.org.

Planned Parenthood clinics offering HRT therapy

Planned Parenthood of Southwest and Central Florida has expanded health services in its 11 centers to include hormonal replacement therapy for transgender patients who are transitioning.

According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, LGBT individuals often face challenges and barriers to accessing needed health services and, as a result, can more often experience worse health outcomes. One national survey found that of transgender people seeking health care:

- 28 percent were subjected to harassment in medical settings and 2 percent were physically assaulted in doctor's offices.

SEE HRT, A25 ►

Considering the pros and cons of health screening tests

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH

Catching chronic health conditions early — even before you have symptoms — seems like a great idea. That's what screening tests are designed to do. Some screenings can reduce your risk of dying from the disease.

But sometimes, experts say, a test might cause more harm than good.

Before you get a test, talk with your doctor about the possible benefits and harms to help you decide what's best for your health.

Screening tests are given to people who seem healthy in an effort to find unnoticed problems. Done before any signs or symptoms of the disease present themselves, these tests come in many forms. Your doctor might take your health history and perform a physical exam to look for signs of health or disease. They can also include lab tests of blood, tissue or urine samples, and imaging procedures that look inside your body.

"I wouldn't say that all people should just simply get screening tests," says Dr. Barnett Kramer, a cancer prevention expert at NIH. "Patients should be aware of both the potential benefits and the harms when they're choosing what screening tests to have and how often."

Teams of experts regularly look at all the evidence about the balance of benefits and harms of different screening tests. They develop guidelines for who should be screened and how often.

Choosing whether you should be screened for a health condition isn't always easy. Screening suggestions are often based on your age, family health history and other factors. You might be screened for many conditions, including diabetes, sexually transmitted infections, heart disease,



osteoporosis, obesity, depression, pregnancy issues and cancers.

Every screening test comes with its own risks. Some procedures can cause problems like bleeding or infection. A positive screening test can lead to further tests that come with their own risks.

"Most people who feel healthy are healthy," says Dr. Kramer. "So a negative test to confirm that you're healthy doesn't add much new information."

But mistakenly being told that you do or don't have a disease can be harmful. It's called a misdiagnosis.

A false negative means that you're told you don't have the disease, but you do. This can cause problems if you don't pay attention to symptoms that appear later on because you think you don't have the disease. A false positive means that you're told you may have the disease, but you don't. This can lead to unnecessary worry and potentially harmful tests and treatments that you don't need.

Even correctly finding a disease through screening might not improve your health or help you live longer. You might learn you have an untreatable disease long before you would have. Or find a disease that never would have caused a problem. This is called over-diagnosis. Some cancers, for

example, never cause symptoms or become life threatening, but they are likely to be treated if found by a screening test. Cancer treatments can have harsh and long-lasting side effects. There's no way to know if the treatment will help you live longer.

An effective screening test might decrease your chances of dying of the condition. Most have not been shown to lengthen your overall life expectancy, Dr. Kramer explains. Their usefulness varies and can depend on your risk factors, age or treatment options.

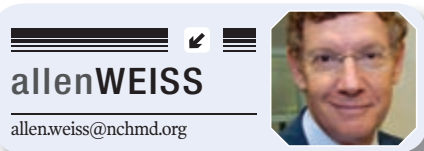
If you're at risk for certain health conditions — because of a family history or lifestyle exposures, like smoking — you might choose to have screenings more regularly. If you're considering a screening, talk with your health care provider. ■

in the know

Questions for your doctor about screening tests

- >> What's my chance of dying of the condition if I do or don't have the screening?
- >> What are the harms of the test? How often do they occur?
- >> How likely are false positive or false negative results?
- >> What are possible harms of the diagnostic tests if I get a positive screening result?
- >> What's the chance of finding a disease that wouldn't have caused a problem?
- >> How effective are the treatment options?
- >> Am I healthy enough to take the therapy if you discover a disease?
- >> What are other ways to decrease my risk of dying of this condition? How effective are they?

Collaborating to help the next generation



Collier County Public Schools and the NCH Healthcare System have partnered for decades with school nurses and athletic trainers. When the two biggest institutions in our community collaborate,

everyone benefits.

NCH Director of School Health Christine Parker and I recently visited Lely High School and Manatee Elementary School so that we could understand and share examples of the noble work performed by NCH nurses and trainers toward improving the health and welfare of CCPS' 47,000 students.

Lely High Principal Ryan Nemeth, along with NCH Athletic Trainer Edison Cantor, explained some of the free services provided to the school's student athletes

in East Naples. Creating a theme of family, giving students a "safe" and compassionate listener in Mr. Cantor and standardizing care across the school system for health policies and injuries — including concussions — are just some of the goals. Helping injured student athletes to safely and quickly return to school to continue their education and sports is the outcome desired by all — athletes, parents, teachers and everyone involved with nurturing our next

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HRT

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■ 19 percent were refused medical care,
 ■ 28 percent postponed medical care when sick or injured due to discrimination.
 “We are proud to contribute to improving the way transgender people receive health care in our region,” says Barbara Zdravecky, CEO of PPSWCF. “Continually working to make our health centers safe and supportive environments is valuable for all patients, by allowing people to be who they are, and by providing them with a supportive,

inclusive and nonjudgmental health-care environment.”
 PPSWCF handles more than 40,000 patient visits each year and also reaches nearly 20,000 young people, parents, teachers and social services professionals throughout the region with sexual health information, education and professional training. Services include breast and cervical cancer screenings, birth control, vasectomies, HIV/AIDS testing and counseling, STD testing and treatment, and routine gynecological care.
 For more information about services for the transgender population, call Anna Eskamaniat (407) 376-3690 or email anna.eskamani@ppswcf.org. ■

WEISS

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generation. Mr. Nemeth plans to start the Blue Zones journey with his school in the near future and already has a charismatic wellness champion, Polly Whiting, for the project.
 In an area south of the intersection of the Tamiami Trail and Collier Boulevard, Manatee Elementary serves a region where close to 93 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced meals. The goal of Principal Laurie Mearsheimer and school nurse Mary Lou Mercer, R.N., is to keep their 740 students healthy and in class. Knowing and understanding the whole child, including socioeconomic stressors that exist in the family, helps them to accomplish this. For example, if a child needs treatment for head lice (a common problem in all schools regardless of background) and the treatment is unaffordable, then the child misses school unnecessarily.
 Having inadequate housing is another stress because when several children share

the same bed, no one sleeps soundly. Subsequently, a sleepy child shows up not ready to learn. Missing school and/or coming to class ill-prepared to learn are among bad habits that, when formed early in an academic career, set a pattern for later failure.
 Having an educated and healthy next generation is the joint mission of CCPS and NCH. School nurses like Ms. Mercer utilize community resources to assist families to overcome these and other health-related challenges.
 Additionally, school nurses work closely with NCH’s Robert, Mariann, and Megan MacDonald Pediatric Emergency Room and our 24-bed pediatric unit at our North Naples hospital. The benefits of collaborating for the benefit of children cannot be overstated.
 Sharing these examples of altruistic, self-motivated professionals helping our next generation live longer, happier and healthier lives is yet another reason we have the healthiest and happiest community in America. ■
 — Dr. Allen Weiss is president and CEO of the NCH Healthcare System.



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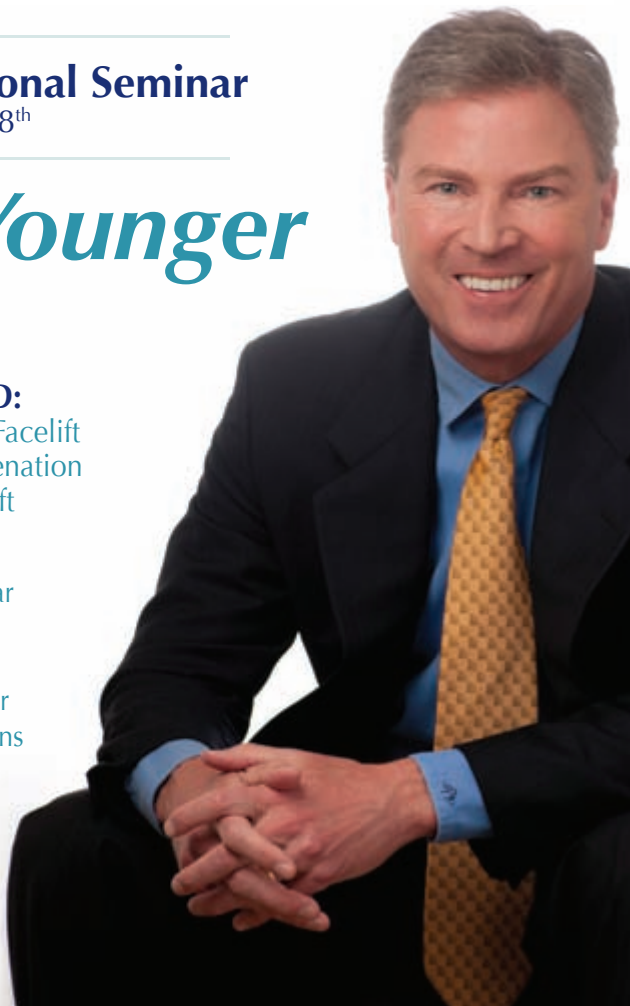
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