



THE BRIDGE STUDY
 JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY
 2809 BOSTON STREET, SUITE 7, ROOM 111
 BALTIMORE, MD 21224
 TEL: (410) 522-6500
 FAX: (410) 522-6512



**BLACKS
 RECEIVING
 INTERVENTIONS
 FOR DEPRESSION
 AND GAINING
 EMPOWERMENT**



- Some people think depression is a sign of personal weakness, failure, or some thing to be ashamed of.
- These people feel that there is a “stigma” associated with depression and other mental health problems.
- Stigma is a negative view of something usually held by people who are not knowledgeable about it.
- The stigma associated with depression can be removed by educating people about depression.
- People need to know that depression is an illness, not a personal weakness.
- Having depression does not mean you are crazy.
- Depression is not something people bring upon themselves.
- Depression is a medical condition that requires treatment; it is not like some one can just “get over it”.
- Treatment works! Do not be ashamed to ask for help.

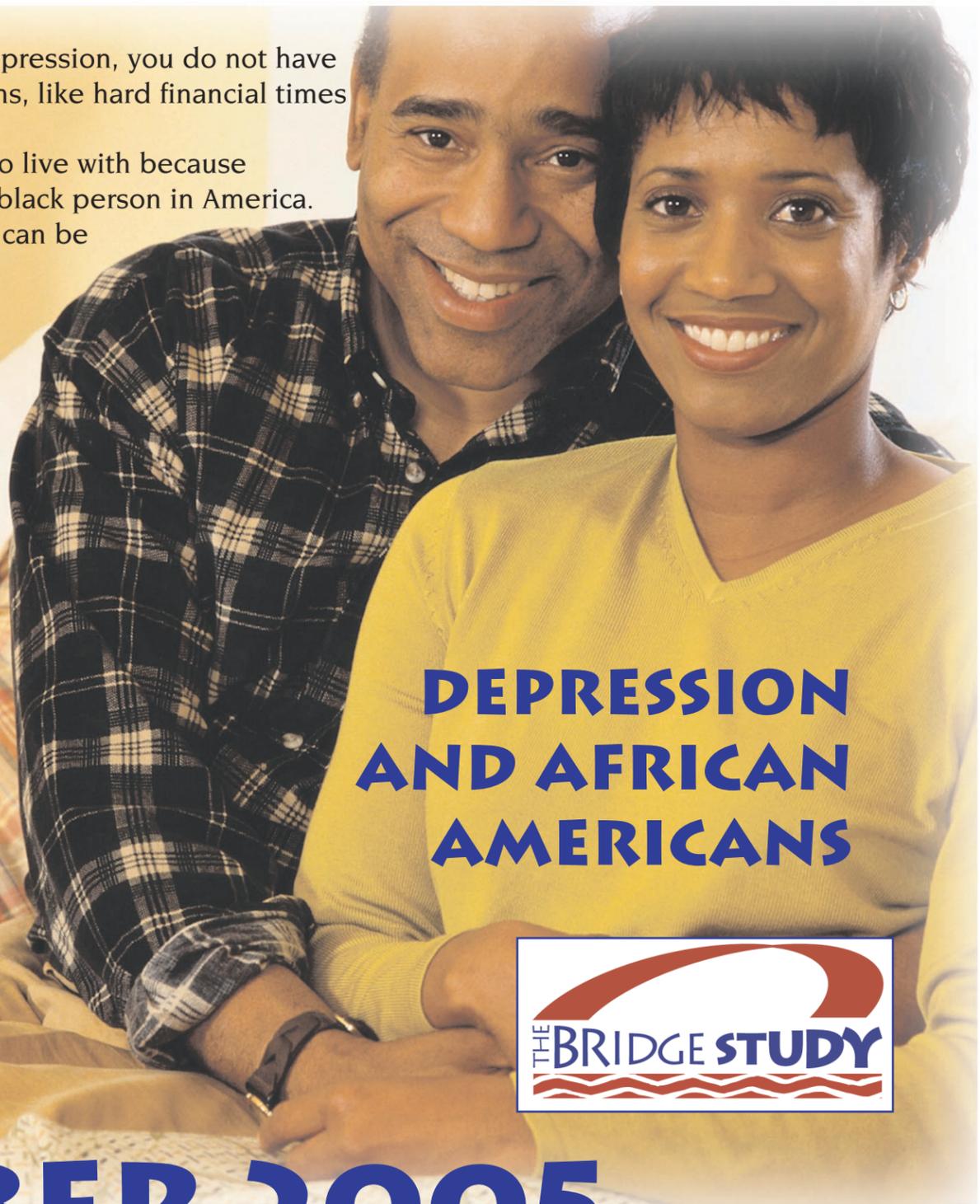
DEPRESSION IS A TREATABLE ILLNESS, NOT A WEAKNESS



AUGUST 2005

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- Depression is a medical illness.
- Although life stress can contribute to depression, you do not have to be experiencing stressful life problems, like hard financial times or personal loss, to get depression.
- Depression is not something you have to live with because suffering is expected as part of life as a black person in America.
- Even though life as an African American can be difficult, you do not have to live with depression without getting help.
- Support from family, friends and your church, mosque or synagogue are helpful.
- Prayer, faith, and a positive outlook on life can help.
- All of these things help, but they do not replace treatment from health care professionals.
- If you still feel depressed after trying the usual things that make you feel better, you should get help from a health professional.
- The biggest reason for suicide is untreated depression.
- Many African Americans believe that suicide is not a problem for black people. Although suicide rates are lower for blacks than they are for whites, suicide is increasing in younger African Americans.



DEPRESSION AND AFRICAN AMERICANS



SEPTEMBER 2005

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In general, it is a good idea to seek professional help when:

- A symptom becomes severe or disrupts your normal activities.
- A disruptive symptom becomes a continuous or permanent pattern of behavior and does not respond to your efforts to take care of yourself.
- Symptoms become numerous and affect all areas

of your life and do not respond to your efforts to take care of yourself or communicate with your family, friends, or co-workers

- You are thinking of suicide.

There is a wide range of professional resources to choose from for mental health problems.

Primary care doctors: Mental health problems may have physical causes. Your doctor can review your medical history and medications for clues, provide some counseling, prescribe medications, or refer you to other resources.

Psychiatrists: Psychiatrists are medical doctors who specialize in mental disorders. They counsel patients, prescribe medications, and order medical treatments.

Psychologists, social workers, and counselors: These professionals receive special training in helping people deal with mental health problems. They help patients identify, understand, and work through disturbing thoughts and emotions.



WHEN TO CALL A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL



OCTOBER 2005

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DEPRESSION AND SPIRITUALITY

- Faith, prayer, going to religious services, and other spiritual beliefs and practices can play an important role in healing from depression.
- However, depression is not caused by being sinful or not having enough faith in God.
- Depression is not a sign that God is punishing you.
- If your spirituality and faith are helping you, keep using them to gain comfort, but seek help from a health professional, too.



NOVEMBER 2005

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WHAT YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE YOUR OWN MENTAL

In addition to staying fit, eating right, and managing stress, the following three strategies will improve your mental and physical health.

1. Create positive expectations for health and healing

- Stop all negative self-talk. Make positive statements that promote your recovery. Optimists are more likely to overcome pain and adversity in their efforts to improve their medical treatment outcomes.
- Try to stay hopeful and remember that depression is treatable.
- Write your illness a letter. Tell it that you don't need it anymore and that your immune system is now ready to finish it off.
- Tell yourself affirmations. An affirmation is phrase or sentence that sends strong, positive statements to you about yourself, such as "I am a good person," or "My body is strong and healthy."
- Visualize health and healing.
- Become a cheerleader for your immune system.

2. Open yourself to humor, friendship, and love

- Laugh. A little humor makes life richer and healthier. Laughter increases creativity, reduces pain, and speeds healing.
- Seek out friends. Friendships are important to good health.
- Volunteer. People who volunteer live longer and enjoy life more than those who do not. By helping others, we help ourselves.
- Plant a plant and pet a pet. Animals and plants help us feel needed.

3. Appeal to the Spirit

- If you believe in a higher power, ask for support in your healing and health. Faith, prayer, and spiritual beliefs can play an important role in recovering from an illness. Your sense of spiritual wellness can help you overcome personal trials and things you cannot change. Use spiritual images in visualizations, affirmations, and expectations about your health and your life.

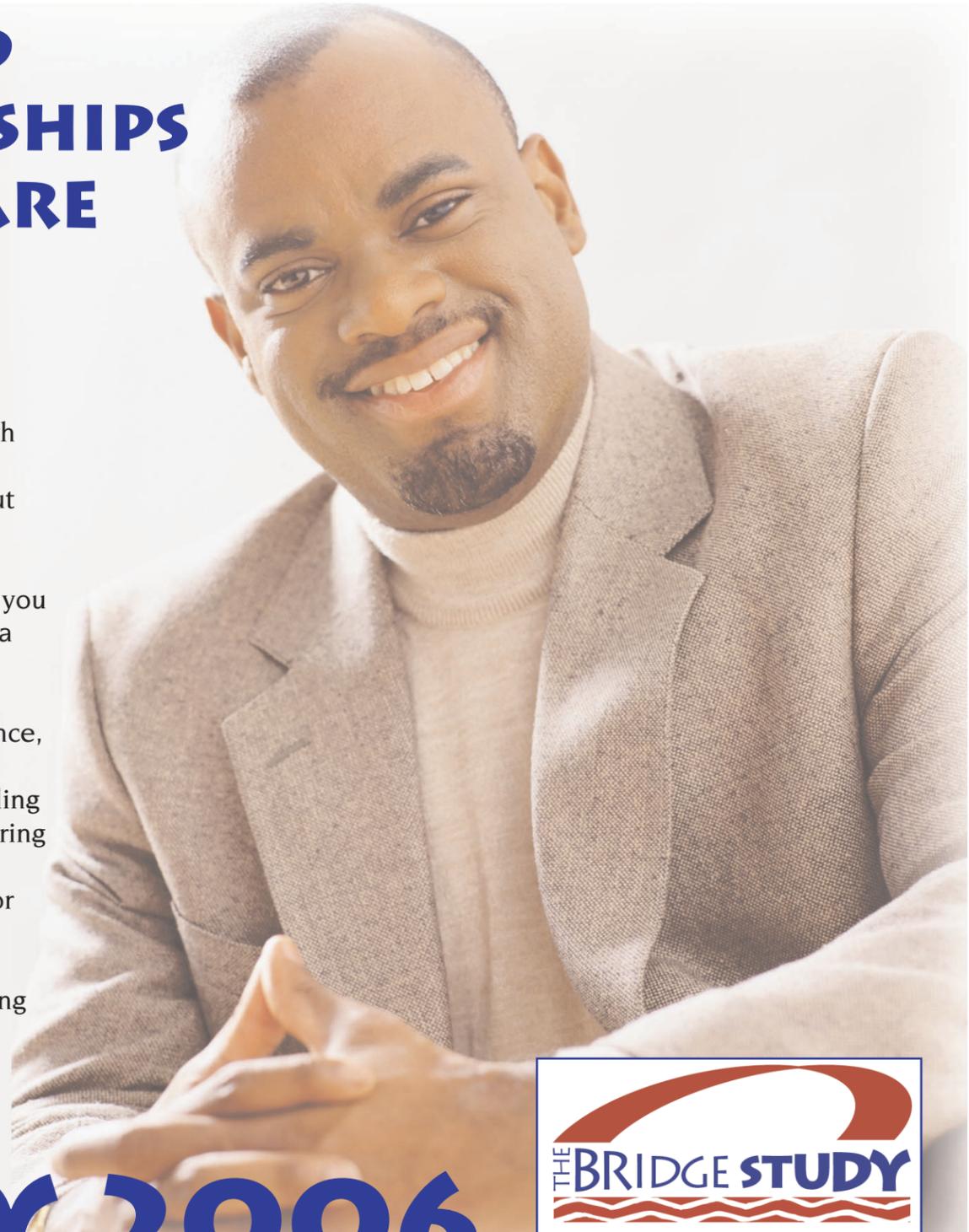


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DEPRESSION AND YOUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

- Some people are ashamed to talk about depressive feelings because they think health professionals would not understand.
- Health professionals not only understand, but many are trained to diagnose and treat depressive feelings.
- Your regular doctor is a good place to start if you are not sure if what you are feeling is due to a physical condition.
- Health professionals can help you with your depression by giving you support and guidance, listening to you, diagnosing your condition, giving you information about depression, telling you what to expect from treatment, and referring you to a specialist if necessary.
- It is important to talk openly to your doctor or health care provider about depression.
- Keeping depressive feelings inside can be a bad thing because it prevents you from getting help for it.
- Find a health professional that you trust and feel comfortable with to talk about how



JANUARY 2006

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Untreated depression can lead to serious social and health problems:

* Substance use: some people turn to alcohol and drugs to help them feel better only to find that they eventually feel worse and have ended up with an additional health problem.

* Problems on the job: some people with depression have trouble concentrating, make mistakes, or even lose their jobs because of time they miss due to depression.

* Problems with relationships: some people with depression don't want to be bothered with friends or family and prefer to be alone or act angry and irritable. This can put a strain on relationships.

* Suicide: some people who are depressed feel that life is not worth living and consider ending their lives.

All of these negative results can be prevented if you get help for depression from trained professionals.

HARMFUL EFFECTS OF UNTREATED DEPRESSION

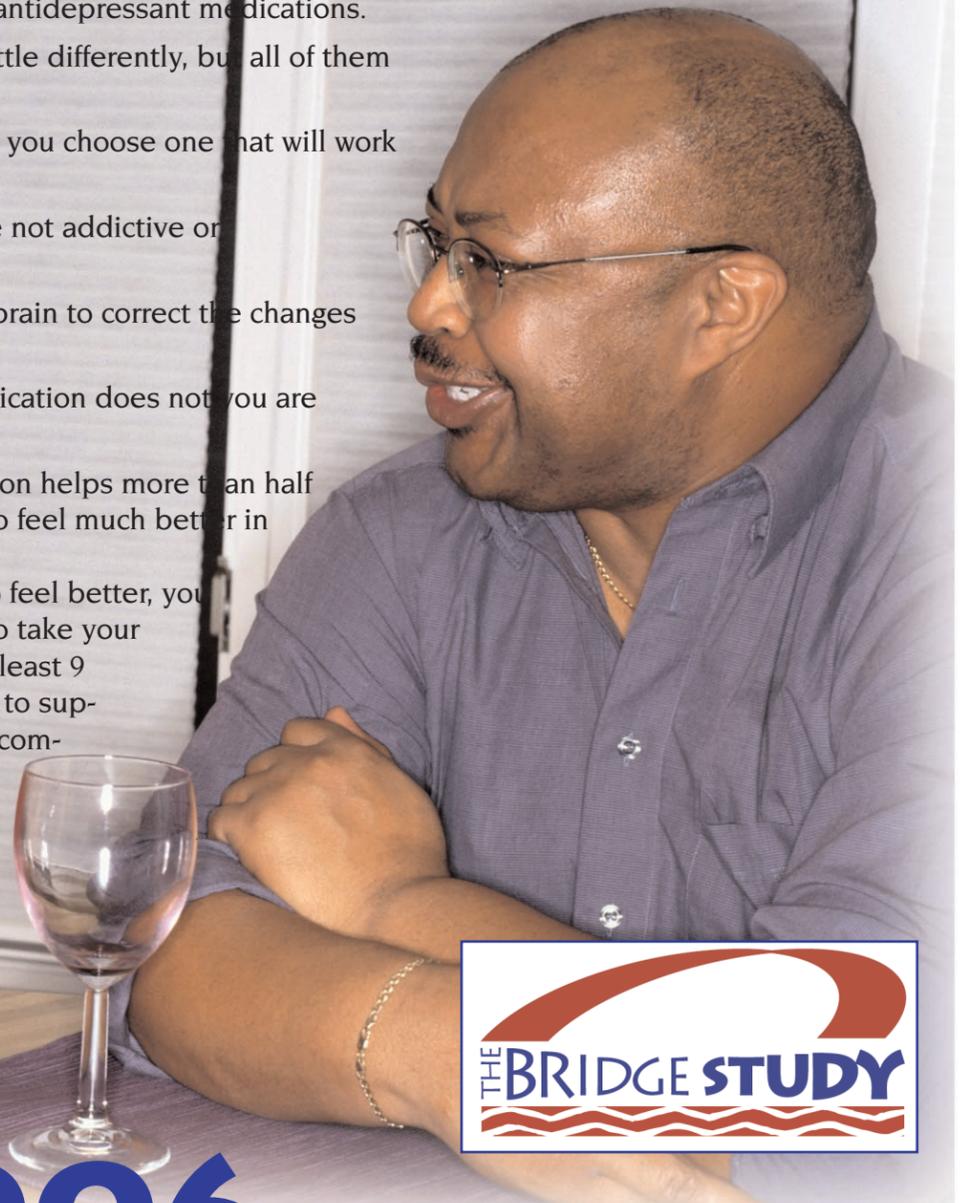
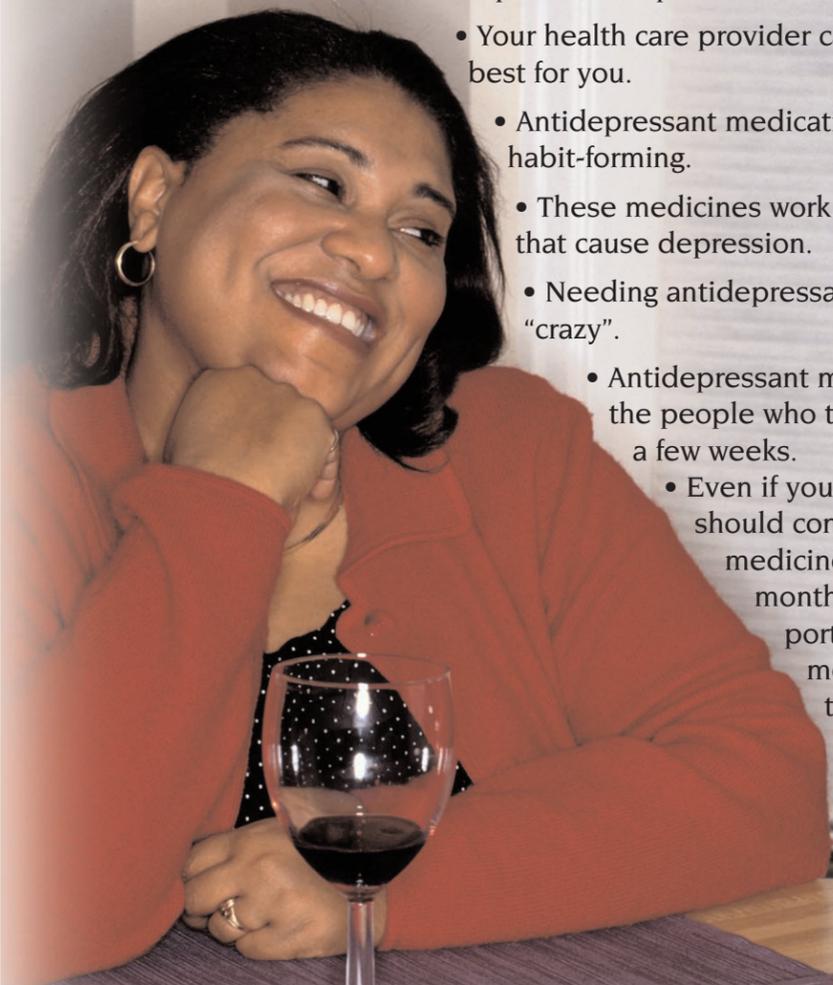


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ANTIDEPRESSANT MEDICATIONS ARE SAFE AND EFFECTIVE

- There are many different types of antidepressant medications.
- Each type of medication works a little differently, but all of them help to heal depression.
- Your health care provider can help you choose one that will work best for you.
- Antidepressant medications are not addictive or habit-forming.
- These medicines work in the brain to correct the changes that cause depression.
- Needing antidepressant medication does not mean you are “crazy”.
- Antidepressant medication helps more than half the people who take it to feel much better in a few weeks.
- Even if you start to feel better, you should continue to take your medicine for at least 9 months (data to support this recommendation?)



MARCH 2006

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THERAPIST SELECTION TIPS

There are some ways to improve the likelihood of finding the therapy that's right for you.

- Ask people you trust for a good referral.
 - Ask mental health professionals to help you identify the real problem and develop a self-management plan to resolve it.
 - Emphasize the importance of learning how to take care of yourself in your treatment plan.
 - Ask about group therapy options
 - Spend time with special friends, join support groups, or look for peer counseling opportunities.
- Understanding and acceptance can help you resolve the problem.

Check out 12-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, and other groups that can help you deal with addiction problems. Such programs are usually free, effective, and available in most communities.

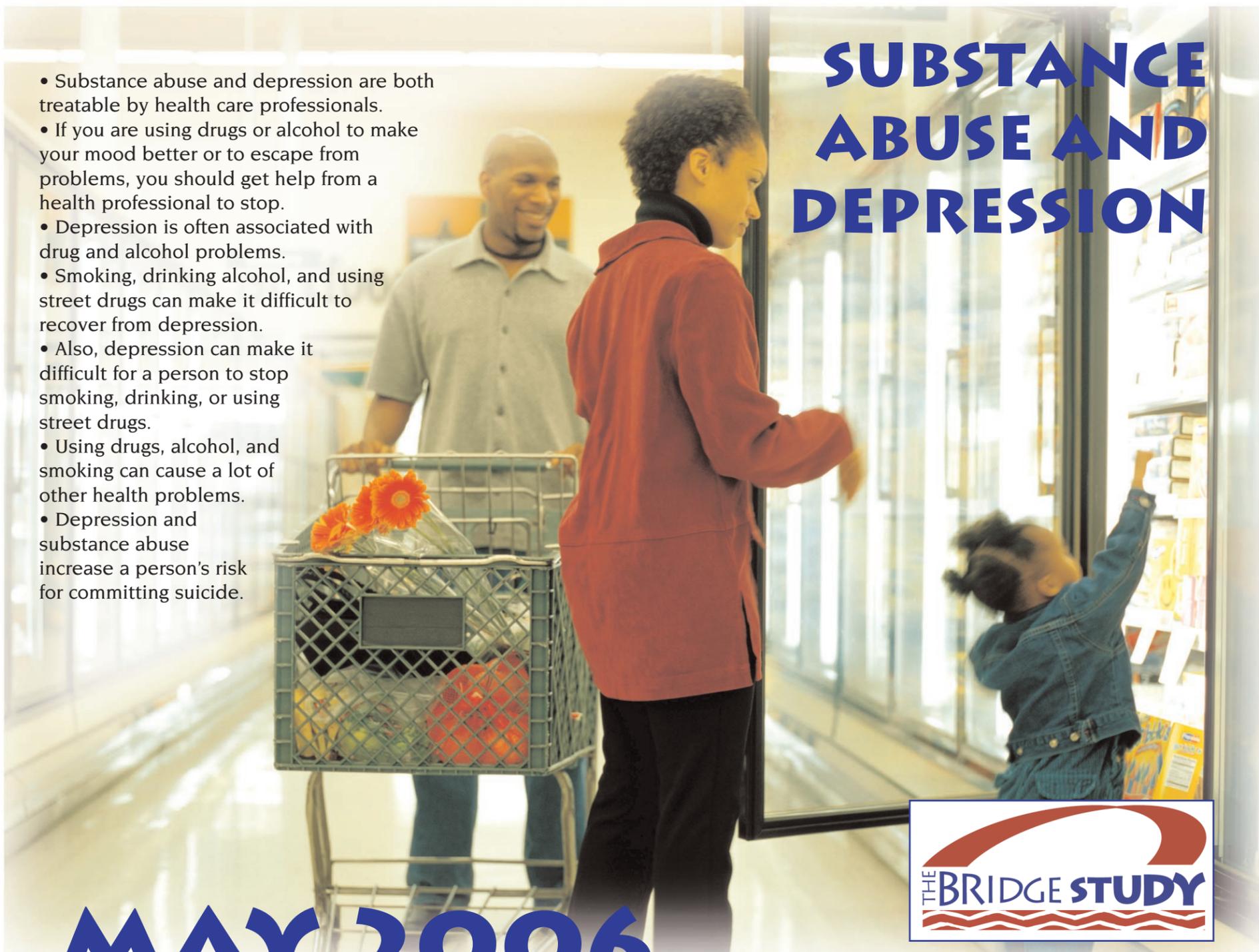


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- Substance abuse and depression are both treatable by health care professionals.
- If you are using drugs or alcohol to make your mood better or to escape from problems, you should get help from a health professional to stop.
- Depression is often associated with drug and alcohol problems.
- Smoking, drinking alcohol, and using street drugs can make it difficult to recover from depression.
- Also, depression can make it difficult for a person to stop smoking, drinking, or using street drugs.
- Using drugs, alcohol, and smoking can cause a lot of other health problems.
- Depression and substance abuse increase a person's risk for committing suicide.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND DEPRESSION



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PREVENTING SUICIDE

Use your common sense and a direct approach to determine if the suicide risk is high. Ask yourself or the person who you feel is a risk:

1. Do you feel there is no other way?
2. Do you have a suicide plan?
3. How and when do you plan to do it?

- Ask someone you trust to stay with you or the suicidal person until the crisis has passed.
- Encourage the person to seek professional help.
- Don't argue with the person ("It's not as bad as that") or challenge the person ("You're not the type") who is thinking of suicide.
- Don't ignore warning signs, thinking that you or another person will "snap out of it."
- Talk about the situation as openly as possible. Show understanding and compassion.
- If you feel the situation is urgent or life-threatening, call 911.
- Call a health professional or suicide or crisis hotline (look for the number in the Yellow Pages).



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TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

- At the first sign of depression, ask friends and family for some extra attention.
- Consider what might be causing or adding to your depression.
- Are medications causing it? Review your prescription and over-the-counter medications with a pharmacist or doctor.

Most people will improve or recover from depression. Taking good care of yourself always helps.

- Stay active and involved in activities you enjoy.
- Get regular exercise. If nothing else, go for long walks. They help to clear the mind.
- Look for a laugh. Laughter, like exercise, can help restore balance to your system.
- Boost your self-esteem.
- Believe that this mood will pass. Then look for signs that it is ending.
- Surround yourself with happy, upbeat people.
- Books can help.
- If your problems continue for more than 2 weeks, you should get help from a health professional.



JULY 2006

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