



Arizona Natural Medicine ®, L.L.C.

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INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TO TREATING DEPRESSION

by

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MORE THAN JUST THE “BLUES”?

Julie had been struggling with low level “blues” for a long time. She seemed to be on a continual “merry go round” of life’s ongoing stressors and busy lifestyle but in the last year she had broken up with her long-term boyfriend and support system. She felt tired and unmotivated, short-tempered with family members and found it increasingly difficult to focus at her dead-end job. She tried to keep her feelings buried inside but figured it was just one of those times in life that eventually it would get better. Over the last year her sleep had become increasingly difficult, waking in the middle of the night restless but not sure of the reason and she would wake exhausted. She would try to stick to a low fat diet, but in the evening, she craved sugar and carbs and would find herself binge eating on cookies and sweets late at night. She found herself withdrawing slowly from friends and family, staying at home rather than accepting social invitations. She mentioned to her medical doctor at her last physical that she was feeling tired and felt “blue” but her doctor told her that her blood work was normal and she was fine. The only thing was, she didn’t feel “fine” and couldn’t recall the last time she felt truly joyful about something in her life. The thing was, Julie didn’t know what to do. She was perplexed that her doctor said nothing was wrong with her when she didn’t feel herself at all. Does Julie’s story sound familiar? You feel down and tired and your doctor tells you nothing is wrong and you are “fine”. Then why do you feel so miserable? What Julie didn’t realize is that she was suffering from depression.

Depression often goes undiagnosed because the physical symptoms that may accompany depression such as fatigue and insomnia may be attributed to other diseases or to no disease at all. In addition many patients either don’t tell their doctor about their emotional well-being because they don’t share it and often most doctors don’t ask you how you feel emotionally. At Arizona Natural Medicine we treat the mind and the body and are able to determine if you are depressed and even more importantly determine why. Our approach is to treat the underlying cause of your depression and therefore treat you effectively.

Whether you are someone who has been undiagnosed such as Julie, you can’t tolerate conventional drug treatment or on anti-depressant medication but still have depressive symptoms, you may not be treating the cause of your depression. In order to get long-term symptom relief it is vital to address the underlying cause. Naturopathic Medicine focuses on identifying and treating the underlying cause of



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depression and offering an individualized and integrative approach to successful long-term management and treatment of this disorder.

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

Depression is different from normal sadness in that it engulfs your day-to-day life, interfering with your ability to work, study, eat, sleep, and have fun. The feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and worthlessness are intense and unrelenting, with little, if any, relief.

There are varying degrees of depression. You sometimes think of a person who is depressed who is locked in their room crying, unable to engage in normal daily living, who doesn't eat or sleep. This can be a description of "clinical depression" but many people like Julie hold jobs and go through the "normal" tasks of daily living that are also depressed.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition know as the *DSM-IV*® is a manual published and used to define certain mental health disorders. According to the *DSM-IV*, major depressive disorder (or "depression") is diagnosed when five or more of the following symptoms of depression are present for most of the day, nearly every day for at least 2 weeks. At least one of the symptoms must be either persistent sad or "empty" feelings or loss of interest in activities:

- **Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.** A bleak outlook—nothing will ever get better and there's nothing you can do to improve your situation.
- **Sadness.** Persistent sadness or "empty" feelings in your daily life.
- **Loss of interest in daily activities.** No interest in former hobbies, pastimes, social activities, or sex. You've lost your ability to feel joy and pleasure.
- **Appetite or weight changes.** Significant weight loss or weight gain—a change of more than 5% of body weight in a month.
- **Sleep changes.** Either insomnia, especially waking in the early hours of the morning, or oversleeping (also known as hypersomnia).
- **Anger or irritability.** Feeling agitated, restless, or even violent. Your tolerance level is low, your temper short, and everything and everyone gets on your nerves.
- **Loss of energy.** Feeling fatigued, sluggish, and physically drained. Your whole body may feel heavy, and even small tasks are exhausting or take longer to complete.



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- **Self-loathing.** Strong feelings of worthlessness or guilt. You harshly criticize yourself for perceived faults and mistakes.
 - **Reckless behavior.** You engage in escapist behavior such as substance abuse, compulsive gambling, reckless driving, or dangerous sports.
 - **Concentration problems.** Trouble focusing, making decisions, or remembering things.
 - **Unexplained aches and pains.** An increase in physical complaints such as headaches, back pain, aching muscles, and stomach pain.

DEPRESSED BUT MISDIAGNOSED?

Many times depression is misdiagnosed because the person has physical complaints such as pain or fatigue. Since there is no routine blood work that determines whether you have depression, traditional lab work is done to rule-out or exclude other disorders that can cause depressive symptoms such as hypothyroidism. However with advances in medicine, there are tests that can help determine the cause of depression. Many "main stream" doctors don't use these tests even though they are tremendously helpful in determining the cause of your depression. At Arizona Natural Medicine, we take an integrative approach to treating depression and other mental health conditions and utilize cutting edge testing to assist in effective diagnosis and treatment.

IS IT GRIEF OR DEPRESSION?

To answer this question we must understand what grief is to differentiate it from depression. Dr. Elizabeth Kübler-Ross is best known for identifying the five stages of grief. Kübler-Ross has said that it's important to note that these stages are not meant to be complete or chronological. Not everyone who experiences a life-threatening or life-changing event feels all five of the responses nor will everyone who does experience them do so in a linear order. Grief is a normal and natural process after a loss. The five stages of grief are listed below:

1. **Denial** — "I feel fine."; "This can't be happening, not to me."
2. **Anger** — "Why me? It's not fair!"; "How can this happen to me?"; "Who is to blame?"
3. **Bargaining** — "I'll do anything for a few more years."; "I will give my life savings if..."
4. **Depression** — "I'm so sad, why bother with anything?"; "I'm going to die soon so what's the point... What's the point?"; "I miss my loved one, why go on?"



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5. **Acceptance** — "It's going to be okay."; "I can't fight it, I may as well prepare for it."

Although, grief is a natural process of dealing with the death or loss in your life, when you get stuck in one of the stages of grief and it starts to affect you on a daily basis this is when depression becomes a treatable disorder.

Homeopathy is one of the best non-toxic, fast acting and effective ways to treat grief and depression. Homeopathy uses a dilute amount of a plant or substance that then can treat physical and emotional symptoms. Because homeopathy is so dilute it is past Avogadro's number (no particles left) it has little to no side effects, can be used while on anti-depressant medication and can be an effective way to help a person move through the phases of grief and treat depression. The doctors at Arizona Natural Medicine are experts in homeopathic medical prescribing. They can determine the specific homeopathic "remedy" or medicine that can release emotions and inner turmoil.

Kelly is a great example of the power of homeopathy to help grief and depression. Kelly had just lost her mother and began to feel increasing sadness and despair; she was crying daily and had lost interest in her normal daily tasks. She wanted to feel better but the pain of this loss was just too deep. Upon her initial visit it was determined the cause of her depressive symptoms was grief and the loss of her mother. A homeopathic medicine was prescribed and taken for two days only. She noticed an immediate improvement in her symptoms. She felt lighter, had more joyful moments, she was crying only occasionally, was sleeping better, had more energy and was happier after taking the homeopathic prescription.

Like Kelly there are countless people where homeopathic medicines have been a viable treatment option for depressive symptoms and especially the symptoms associated with grief and loss. The beauty of homeopathy is that if grief is the root of your depression, whether that grief occurred last month, last year or a decade ago, it still has the ability to release the internalized trauma and restore natural emotional balance.

TRADITIONAL DRUG TREATMENT AND DEPRESSION

It is fortunate that we have traditional drug treatments for patients who are suffering from depression, as they can be effective tools for treatment. One of the most widely used therapies is prescription drug treatment, specifically the two types of anti-depressant medications: selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) such as Prozac and Lexapro; and serotonin norepinephrine reuptake



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inhibitors (SNRIs) such as Pristiq, Cymbalta and Effexor. However, many people do not like the associated side effects with these medications. Some but not all side effect may include: insomnia, headache, nausea, diarrhea, fatigue, weight loss, anxiety, decreased sex drive, blurred vision, heart palpitations, decreased appetite and dry mouth. In addition, many of the antidepressant medications have the black box warnings that concern the consumer. This example from the Pristiq print advertisement states, **“Antidepressants increased the risk compared to placebo of suicidal thinking and behavior (suicidality) in children, teens, and young adults. Depression and certain other psychiatric disorders are themselves associated with increases in the risk of suicide. Patients of all ages who are started on antidepressant therapy should be monitored appropriately and observed closely for clinical worsening, suicidality, or unusual changes in behavior. PRISTIQ is not approved for use in children under 18.”**

Many people are looking for alternatives to these common drug treatments due to side effects they experience. Some people that are sensitive to medications, in general, may not be able to tolerate these medications at all and are left without any treatment options.

WHY ARE PEOPLE ON ANTI-DEPRESSANTS STILL DEPRESSED? ARE WE TREATING THE RIGHT NEUROTRANSMITTERS? IS THERE A TEST TO FIND OUT?

Studies show that 2 out of 3 people being treated for depression with medication still have depressive symptoms. Why is this considered an acceptable and successful treatment if more than half of those being treated with drug therapies are still symptomatic? Prescription medication used to treat depression have come a long way and they can be effective tools to ease the symptoms of depression. Unfortunately, the anti-depressant drugs available today address only two primary neurotransmitters associated with mood: serotonin and norepinephrine. Other drugs may weakly affect dopamine or norepinephrine but most drugs generally focus on serotonin alone or serotonin and norepinephrine. What happens if an imbalance in other neurotransmitters such as gamma-amino butyric acid (GABA), predominant imbalances in dopamine or phenylalanine are the cause of your depression? We don't have a drug to address that imbalance. This might be why even with drug therapy many people still don't feel happy and joyful and remain symptomatic while on drug treatment.

Did you know we can test your neurotransmitter levels in the urine? We can see your "neurotransmitter blueprint" and see why you are depressed. In line with Naturopathic medical philosophy, this type of functional test allows us to address the root cause to treat your depression more effectively. This test is non-invasive



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(urine test) and extremely helpful in determining which neurotransmitters are normal or abnormal. This allows the practitioner to specifically address these imbalances either with natural precursors such as amino acids and vitamins or with drug treatment or a combination of both.

Many patients ask “Why didn’t my doctor tell me about this type of testing?” One of the reasons is that in Naturopathic Medicine we are looking at how the body is functioning and testing these neurotransmitters are considered a “functional” test rather than looking to rule-out a disease. The doctors at Arizona Natural Medicine are experts in natural interventions and are able to analyze the test findings and create a specific treatment strategy. It is a wonderful tool to know what your neurotransmitter “blueprint” and how your body tends toward a certain pattern. This is so vital to addressing your individual needs and a long-term treatment plan that will be effective. There is little risk and great benefit in looking at neurotransmitter profiles. An individualized approach to treating depression is most effective. Testing of your neurotransmitters and developing an individualized treatment plan can be done whether you are already on medication or not.

IS NEUROTRANSMITTER TESTING FROM URINE ACCURATE?

Neuroscience, Inc. provides laboratory assessments and clinical tools in the fields of neurology, endocrinology, and immunology in conjunction with Pharmasan Labs, Inc., (an independent laboratory). They are the leaders in neurotransmitter testing. They say this about the validity of testing neurotransmitters from the urine. “Urinary neurotransmitter assessment carries a long history as a means to assess nervous system activity. Early investigations date back to the 1950s when von Euler, et al, first described the measurement of urinary catecholamines as biomarkers for pheochromocytoma, a rare tumor of the adrenal gland. Since then, many studies have been published regarding neurotransmitter excretion and its relevance to neurological, endocrinological, and immunological function. While urinary neurotransmitter measures are not considered direct reflections of central nervous system activity, various disease states stemming from central nervous system imbalances have been associated with urinary neurotransmitter alterations. There is a definite association between urinary and central neurotransmitter concentrations and many studies have examined that association through various neuro-immune communication mechanisms. Controlled studies have shown that after intervention with centrally-acting medications, symptoms resolve with changes in corresponding urinary biomarkers.”



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COULD ADRENAL FATIGUE BE THE CAUSE OF MY DEPRESSION?

One of the causes that seem to elude mainstream medical conversations about depression is adrenal decline or adrenal fatigue. The adrenal glands modulate stress in the body and produce cortisol, our own steroid hormone, that gives us energy and helps us control inflammation in our body. They also produce adrenalin which is involved with the fight or flight response in the body. Although our bodies can adapt to stress they are made to adapt to short term stress. However, living in the 21st century with all our “to do” lists it is amazing we even sleep at all. We are bombarded with so many things, we live under a constant barrage of stress. With time this can reduce or spike our levels of cortisol and adrenalin and cause an overlap of depressive symptoms such as fatigue, insomnia, low sex drive, anxiety and increased pain. Therefore, it is vital to rule out adrenal issues. This is not ruling out a disease, rather how your body is functioning. Our doctors at Arizona Natural Medicine use specialty tests to rule out adrenal fatigue with a simple, non-invasive saliva test. We analyze the findings and treat the cause. The “grey” areas of your health are just as important to treat. We don't wait until you develop a disease. We attempt to regulate the body's ability to restore natural physiology and health. Whether you feel like an old Chevy or a new Mustang, it makes a big difference to you.

LIFESTYLE MANAGEMENT AND DEPRESSION

The doctors at Arizona Natural Medicine want to know “a day in your life” and all that you do and how you feel about it. Exercise and diet is important to your health. Whether we are teaching you lifestyle management skills such as meditation, conscious breathing, or healthy eating habits, we provide a holistic approach to your health and well-being.

EFFECTIVE TREATMENT OF DEPRESSION = TREATING THE CAUSE

Whether the cause of your depression is neurotransmitter imbalance, poor nutrition, adrenal fatigue, or another medical disorder, it is our job to be the detective and determine what is the underlying cause of your depressive symptoms. We are “experts” in natural and integrative medicine, and one of the primarily philosophies that are medicine is founded on, is to treat the underlying cause of your dis-ease. At Arizona Natural Medicine, let our “experts” in natural and integrative medicine help determine the cause of your depression and a corresponding effective treatment strategy. You deserve to live a rich, healthy, vital and joyful life.