Everyone experiences the blues from time to time. Feelings of sadness, hurt, loneliness, stress, or anger can strike along with difficult life experiences. You feel upset. Feelings linger longer than you’d like, but you can still function and you know you will bounce back. Can you learn skills to help you bounce back faster and achieve new personal heights in response to life’s difficulties? Yes, you can!

**Are the Blues a Clue?**

Certain life events or medical problems can cause overwhelming sadness. These conditions include symptoms of depression that require medical treatment or support from mental health professionals. This is not the blues. These are serious health concerns. Conditions such as postpartum depression, seasonal affective disorder (winter depression), grief reactions, medical or drug-induced depressive disorders, and the sudden onset of depressive symptoms in elderly persons may require medical care.

**Think Differently.** Much has been said about the power of positive thinking. Don’t dismiss it as too simplistic. It is easier to believe that external events control the way you feel and that the environment must change, not you. Sometimes the environment (or other people) should change, but what if change is not forthcoming? The only thing left is altering your reaction. This is the pathway to empowerment and the way ordinary people have accomplished extraordinary things.

**Don’t deny it.** When you feel yourself slipping into the blues, don’t deny it. Instead, take charge of your thoughts, and decide, “I am not going to let this happen. I am not going to let this drag me down.” Then take action. Do things that will cause you to think in more positive ways. Do things you enjoy, talk to people who will lift you up, seek out humor, dress cheerfully, alter your routine, and get proactive with important goals, exciting plans, and magnificent ideas you have for your life.

**SIGNS OF DEPRESSION**

- noticeable increases or decreases in appetite with significant changes in weight, either up or down;
- loss of concentration, memory difficulties;
- low energy;
- inability to feel pleasure, reduced interest in fun activities;
- loss of sexual interest or interest in being with others;
- feeling physically worn down and sick;
- thoughts of “wanting to be out of your misery”;
- suicidal thoughts or planning suicide (Note: This is a medical emergency. Get help immediately.)