

## **Hunting and Gathering Anyone? Jude LaClaire, Ph.D.**

*The earth called to my friend and he went,  
Deep into the Earth Root from which he came,  
Down into Blue Lake where our ancestors dwell,  
Deep into the heart of the Yellow Corn Maiden,  
To a place of beauty and light.*  
Nancy Wood from "Spirit Walker"

Steve Ilardi, Ph.D., a psychology professor at KU tells us to behave more like our caveman ancestors to beat depression, a major illness affecting about 20% of Americans. He says, "The human brain has been sculpted by 2 million years of life within a hunter-gatherer context. Agriculture has only been around for 10,000 years, and it's only been since World War I that we've become truly toxic. We were never designed to be so sedentary, socially isolated."

Dr. Ilardi is researching a six-part plan that incorporates well-studied links to healing depression. I am drawn to the simplicity and directness of this approach and believe it has much merit for everyone, especially those with depression or predisposition to depression.

### **Omega-3 Fatty Acids**

Any good program of health suggests getting our EFA's (essential fatty acids). They are the foundation of our mental and physical health. Dr. Ilardi suggests a daily minimum of 1,000 milligrams of Omega-3. You can get Essential Fatty Acids by taking flaxseed (1-2 tablespoons ground) in a smoothie or in capsules. Some fish (e.g., wild salmon, herring, mackerel) contain Omega-3's. Some suggest fish oil but only organic compounded to eliminate toxins the fish may have today. Some research associates omega-3 deficiency with risk of depression.

### **Light Exposure**

Hunter-gatherer societies spent hours a day outdoors doing physical activities. I don't know about you but I really don't spend a lot of time gathering herbs, vegetables, firewood or hunting animals to eat. I don't think going to the store really counts as we are in artificial light or a vehicle emitting toxic fumes. So what are we to do about getting light exposure? It has been suggested for decades that using full spectrum light exposure can help alleviate depression, especially SAD's (Seasonal Affective Disorder). Dr. Ilardi's program provides people with a 10,000-lux light box.

### **Sleep**

Many people are sleep deprived and get less than the desired goal of 8 hours of sleep per night. Think about ways to provide a better environment for sleep, turn off the TV and get to bed.

### **Exercise**

The benefits of physical exercise for overcoming depression and increasing endorphins have long been documented. Get thirty minutes of aerobic exercise three times a week.

### **Social Connectedness**

Hunter-gatherer societies lived closely in groups of 50-150 people. They shared the intimacies of daily life with friends and relatives. Today, we often live in isolation from family members and friends. It is predictable when someone comes to me manifesting symptoms of depression that he/she has become disconnected, isolated and is suffering from loneliness. Reach out to people, re-establish relationships. Strengthen existing ones by spending special, scheduled time together. Find communities that can become a home base of social connection.

### **Anti-Ruminative Behavior**

If one is working hard everyday to find food, shelter and clothing, there is little time to sit around being negative and imagining catastrophes. The demands of daily life then kept people grounded in the moment. The attitude of mindfulness, being in the moment, would be a great antidote for the negative self-talk that takes up a great deal of our thinking as we sit alone in our vehicles, at our desk or work station or sitting watching TV, not conversing with others. Dr. Michael Yapko wrote “Breaking the Patterns of Depression” which addresses many of the various ways we trap ourselves in negative thinking. I highly recommend this book as it gives practical, workbook exercises for overcoming these thinking patterns. Dr. Ilardi suggests balancing time alone and time with others.

Take a look at your daily life and see if implementing the six-point program could help you. We can't turn back time, but we can learn from our ancestors and can hear the call of the 'Earth' and go "Deep into the Earth Root' from which we came.

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