



**Voice of Restoration  
International Ltd.**

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITI

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## **AFRICAN MENTAL HEALTH CONFERENCE 16-20 MAY 2022**

### **DEALING WITH DEPRESSION. HOW TO THRIVE AMIDST MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES.**

**BY**

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International Limited, Author, Mental health activist.**

Many people struggle in relationships, marriage, at work, business, career, etc. because of depression. Depression is a feeling of sadness that does not go away for two weeks or longer and begins to interfere with your ability to function day to day. Following the unfortunate process of hurting each other within our circles of influence, we may be directly or indirectly nursing unhealthy attitudes of fear, unforgiveness, hatred, anger, resentment, bitterness and all other negative feelings that has created many negative impacts on our lives. This has created a life of living with a lot of emotional wounds in our hearts.

Depression is one of the monsters that rob us off our loved ones prematurely. When not dealt with early enough it results to devastating consequences such as suicide which really affects the family and friends of the deceased. Depression doesn't start when you start seeing suicidal notes but this is a pointer that it's in its advanced stage. Lack of interest in what one used to do, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, withdrawal and isolation, over sleeping or sleeping for fewer hours than normal, loss of appetite, fatigue and loss of energy, trouble focusing, making decisions, or remembering things, an increase in physical complaints such as headaches, back pain, aching muscles, and stomach pain, poor hygiene or a person is

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- Honesty
- Commitment
- Excellence
- Respect
- Hardwork

#### **Services Offered:**

- Holistic Counselling & Guidance.
- Crisis & Trauma Healing & Management.
- Capacity Building.
- Positive Parenting Skills. Rehabilitation.
- Drug addiction.
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suddenly unkempt and untidy, talking uncoordinated things are some of the signs of signs of depression.

Helping your loved one get help from a psychologist or a trained counselor early enough is a sure way to preventing such occurrences. There are also support groups that help those undergoing depression. Do not let that situation blow off your candle, speak up! Mental health is a collective responsibility.

Depression is killing more youths and adults and their dreams today more than any virus. Depressed people suffer self-pain which manifests in many ways such as loss of self-esteem, anger, depressed moods, bitterness, sadness, and in worse case scenarios people end up with bad chronic ailments such as ulcers, heart attacks, even death through suicide.

In Africa, depression, suicide and mental health in general are taboo topics for discussion and this mentality has fueled stigma and discrimination in all its forms in homes, schools, churches, place of work, etc.

Such ignorance meted against people with psychosocial disorders leaves the survivors and families hurt and broken with nothing to hold on to.

While growing up, most boys are discouraged from expressing their emotions because it is termed unmanly. We are repeatedly told be a man! Endure the pains of life as a man. Also the society sees those with depression with a negative attitude and even give them names.

I grew up being repeatedly told and reminded to be a man! “Endure the pains of life as a man”. I was discouraged from sharing my pains in life. When I would fail to sleep in the night and tell others how I struggle to sleep, the response was that I was becoming a man. I was told that men do not sleep at night at times so that they can worry about life.



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It is sad that you cannot discuss your pains at your place of work, with your friends and at church. When your personal prayer item with regard to depression that has resulted into hyper sexuality, suicidal ideas and depression becomes gossip news, where should one turn to? It is really sad that one cannot even open up about their HIV status to a church member, workmate, family members etc. for fear of victimization.

Many relationships and marriages are in the Intensive Care Unit because some people choose to suffer in silence as they have been conditioned to by the norms in society. The consequences of stigma can be serious and devastating. With stigma comes a lack of understanding from others, which can be invalidating and painful, but stigma also carries more serious consequences including fueling fear, anger, and intolerance directed at other people.

People who are subjected to stigma are more likely to experience reluctance to seek out treatment, delayed treatment, which increases morbidity and mortality, social rejection, avoidance, and isolation, worse psychological well-being, poor understanding among friends and family, harassment, violence or bullying, poor quality of life, disability, and increased socio-economic burden, increased feelings of shame and self-doubt etc.

I strongly believe these fatal effects of depression can be avoided. Depression one of deadly effects of rejection is killing men and their dreams today more than any virus. Depression is a common, yet very treatable condition that affects anybody in our world. Statistics tell us that only about one-third of those who are depressed actually receive treatment. This is unfortunate since 80-90% of those who do seek treatment often report feeling better within just a few weeks. According to WHO report on 30 January 2020, depression is a common illness worldwide, with more than 264 million people affected.



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Close to 800 000 people die due to suicide every year. Suicide is the second leading cause of death in 15-29-year-olds. Although there are known, effective treatments for mental disorders, between 76% and 85% of people in low- and middle-income countries receive no treatment for their disorder.

Realistically more men are battling mental health challenges than women but the men shy away from getting help. In the Bible, more men suffered depression than women. The Bible quotes 7 men who suffered depression among whom is king David and Jesus Christ to 3 women only.

Though most Bible translations do use the word “depression” except in a few translations and verses, it’s often referenced by other similar words, such as “downcast,” “brokenhearted,” “troubled,” “miserable,” “despairing,” and “mourning,” among others. Throughout the Word, there are a number of stories about godly, influential men and women of faith, who struggled and battled through dark times of hopelessness and depression.

Men do not want to come out to seek for help and take care of their mental health. By the time the man comes out, it’s at the extreme where he can’t handle.

Most men show signs of depression through excessive drinking, serial womanizing and drug addiction which is detrimental to the society. I strongly believe men can avoid these fatal effects of depression. Help is available. Don’t feel the need to try to hide your pain, or struggle through on your own. Talk to a friend or counselor. Seek out professional treatment and care. Find comfort in support groups who have nourishing activities, and encourage you to continue your journey of recovery.



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## CAUSES OF DEPRESSION

“Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but a good word makes it glad.” Proverbs 12:25 NKJV

### THE REJECTIONS

Failed relationships

By family

By friends

At work`

### MISCARRIAGE

80-90% of young marrieds (1-5 years) go through miscarriage. Loss of a baby or any person in your life is a tough thing!

### INJUSTICES

Unfair treatment of others around you can drive you into depression. That explains why you sometimes feel bad when some people are poorly treated near you. You get emotional when you watch news and you see how the police is handling citizens, leaders etc. that is even why you who might not be concerned goes into demonstrations in the streets because of injustices to others.

By nature, humans are compassionate to others, they feel for others. Humans are emotional beings. When a sad moment comes, everyone gets sad, and when it's a party mood, everyone comes to have fun and to cheer up, dance and be happy. We change moods and feelings and emotions according to the environment. When your pals are treated unfairly it drives you into feeling sad, crying, and when this continues it ways you down and end up with depression.



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## **CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AND IMPRISONMENT**

When someone is punished severely with the aim of inflicting pain or being imprisoned for whatever offense whether they are guilty or innocent for weeks and months, it causes pain to the inner being and this results into feeling of sadness, loneliness, emptiness, hopelessness which when persists for some period leads to total breakdown of the person.

## **ABRUPT NATURAL DISASTERS**

Natural disasters like famine, wildfire, hurricane katrina, landslides, floods, outbreaks of epidemics like Cholera, Ebola, Corona virus etc. that leave people stranded and locked down for weeks and months have negative impacts on humans. Such moments leave us weakened, paralyzed, and discouraged as we think of what next. These kinds of abrupt disasters paralyze all sectors of life which brings sadness, tearfulness, emptiness or hopelessness, angry outbursts, frustrations even over small matters etc. ending up with depression.

## **MARITAL OR RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS**

Many family settings are chaotic, abusive, fighting is the order of the day, abuse of all kinds and as a result of this, family members go into worrying for the future. Children grow up not being raised and feel burdened with the cares around them. Parents got raised in the same way in the same environment and the circle continues and it becomes a normal thing. Overtime the continuous feelings of sadness, tearfulness, emptiness or hopelessness, angry outbursts, frustrations even over small matters etc. become true manifestation of depression which if not helped end up with suicides, mental breakdown, chronic illnesses etc.



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## COMPARRISON WITH OTHERS

Sometimes many people compare themselves with their age mates, class mates, workmates in terms of what they have and what you don't have.

Have you ever met an OB or OG whom you used to help with class work, scholastic materials and the canteen bills at school after a longtime when they seem to live a life better than yours? May be drive a good car and you don't have a car yet, built a good house but you are still renting, married with beautiful children and you are still very single, having a good job better than yours according to you and for you everywhere you go you have been rejected? What was your initial reaction and feeling within you?

## POVERTY

Poverty in all its forms brings tension in the mind. Mostly people refer to poverty in relation to hunger, thirst, nakedness and need of everything which is brought about by only the economic state of a person but poverty is a wide thing. You can be poor financially, socially, mentally, emotionally, spiritually politically, etc. which brings many thoughts to the mind. The word "lack of" is a negative connotation to the mind. When you can't afford your basic needs and the people around you can't either afford it, it breeds the feelings of a sadness, tearfulness, emptiness or hopelessness.

## FAMILY BACKGROUND

Depression can actually be a family thing because it can run in family lines. it's likely that some people have a genetic susceptibility to depression. However, there is no single "depression" gene. And just because a close relative suffers from depression, it doesn't mean you will, too. Your lifestyle choices, relationships, and coping skills matter just as much as



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genetics. Many families have suffered depression and this has continued with the off springs. In our typical African context, we think it is because of a curse or witchcraft but when ideally it is not.

### **LACK AND LOSS OF A JOB**

Whether you've been laid off, downsized, forced to take early retirement, or seen contract work dry up, losing your employment is one of life's most stressful experiences. Aside from the obvious financial anguish it can cause, the stress of losing a job can also take a heavy toll on your mood, relationships, and overall mental and emotional health.

### **LOSS OF A CLOSE RELATIVE OR FRIEND**

Loss of a child, sibling, parent etc. has a big weight it puts on people. When you lose people who are close to you with whom you share intimately they leave a huge gap that can only be filled with tears, loneliness, hopelessness and this when continues for a long period of time leads to mental breakdown.

### **PROPERTY OR FINANCIAL LOSS**

Financial loss in all its forms can cause anxiety. Loss of finances in investments equally cause unrest to the mind. We all want to increase finances but the loss of it causes draw back that we do not need and when such happens, our minds do not rest.

No wonder we have sleepless nights just trying to figure out or worry about the loss and what to do next. Lack of finances can be a big blow for everyone. The lack and loss of it brings a lot of anxiety as you look left and right front and back to worry about what next. Wondering what you will eat, drink, put on etc., how you will meet your financial obligations of loans, debts, and other expenses. This unrest leads to the feeling of hopelessness





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and when such continues it can end up with feelings of sadness, tearfulness, emptiness or hopelessness, angry outbursts, frustrations even over small matters, total mental breakdown etc. when it is depression at work.

## **POOR HEALTH**

Unmanaged pain or being diagnosed with a serious illness, such as cancer, heart disease, or diabetes, can trigger feelings of hopelessness and even lead to depression for both the patient and the care giver. Poor health conditions can put a heavy burden on a person. Some of these can be chronic illnesses, blood condition, organ and system failures etc. can bring a lot of anxiety about the future. This poor health can be of a family who needs a lot of money to cater for weekly or monthly treatment. This brings a lot of feelings of despair and hopelessness for the future.

## **ROUTINE RESPONSIBILITIES**

Some corporates find themselves experiencing monotonous routine year in and year out and fail to see any progress in the field of work. No promotions even when they feel they are doing a lot. This monotonous routine responsibility at work without adding new experience makes life boring and loses meaning. This adds more weight especially when you meet your old school mates the ones you used to help with work in class and they are seemingly ahead of you in terms of position and assets. Definitely you will feel being left behind and not progressive enough. Another scenario is when a new junior staff joins and after a short while gets promoted because of their dynamic work they do leaving you with your routine responsibilities without any change of mere sitting position. This pushes you to the wall of worrying what must be wrong with you. This overtime manifests in the feelings of sadness, tearfulness, emptiness, hopelessness.



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## HOW TO DEAL WITH DEPRESSION.

- Seeking medical treatment from recognized medical facility.
- Narrative therapy:
- Use our gifts: music dance and drama, writing, networking, public speaking etc.
- Casting your burdens to the Lord because he cares
- Believing the word of God even when the promises of God in the Bible appear to be far opposite to my current life.
- Improving myself through self-help books etc.
- Forgiving myself for my mistakes and others who have offended me
- Minding those around me. (Association brings participation) does the association help me participate in things that help me heal, realize my potential and achieve my goals?
- Mind what you watch.
- Minding your language.
- Be in fellowship
- Always expecting the best.
- Listening to inspirational music and messages during my low moments
- Exercise
- Reaching out to others through phone calls or visits
- Mind your food. (local and traditional food vs processed take away food)
- Respond instead reacting.

**END.**

**THANK YOU**