

## UNDERSTANDING SADDNESS AND DEPRESSION:

**FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLE:** Live a Balanced Life

**PONDER:** How do I keep the daily demands of life in balance?

**Watch:** “Of Regrets and Resolutions,”

***DISCUSS:*** What can we learn from the Savior’s life to help us achieve a balanced life?

**READ:** The following scripture passages and statements by Church leaders:

- “See that all these things are done in wisdom and order; for it is not requisite that a man should run faster than he has strength” (Mosiah 4:27).
- “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee” (Isaiah 41:10).
- “Just do the very best you can each day. Do the basic things and, before you realize it, your life will be full of spiritual understanding that will confirm to you that your Heavenly Father loves you. When a person knows this, then life will be full of purpose and meaning, making balance easier to maintain” (M. Russell Ballard)
- “Balance in large measure is knowing the things that can be changed, putting them in proper perspective, and recognizing the things that will not change” (James E. Faust)

### ACTIVITY

**Step 1:** Read the quote by President Dallin H. Oaks: “The number of good things we can do far exceeds the time available to accomplish them. Some things are better than good, and these are the things that should command priority attention in our lives”

**Step 2:** On your own, think about how you live your life each week. Now imagine you are 25 years older and you are still living the same way. Complete the two statements below about your life:

I just didn’t spend enough time \_\_\_\_\_

I spend too much time \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 3:** To avoid future regrets, write one or two things you can do to bring more balance into your life.

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**COMMIT:** I will act on my idea to bring more balance to my life.

# UNDERSTANDING SADNESS AND DEPRESSION:

## 1. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SADNESS AND DEPRESSION

**READ:** Sadness and depression are described as feelings of sorrow, unhappiness, and grief, and they are a normal part of our experience here on earth. Sadness and depression can come through difficulties resulting from rejection, interpersonal relationships, disappointments, and other pains. They are difficult, yet essential, elements in our growth.

Major depressive disorder, or severe depression, is different. It is an emotional state or condition that affects our thinking, emotions, perceptions, and behaviors. Elder Jeffrey R. Holland discussed the difference between normal sadness and depression and major depressive disorder:

“When I speak of this, I am not speaking of bad hair days, (losing a soccer game), or other discouraging moments we all have. Everyone is going to be anxious or downhearted on occasion. . . . I am speaking of something more serious, of an affliction so severe that it significantly restricts a person’s ability to function fully”

Major depressive disorder can occur without a clear explanation for its cause, or it can result from unhealthy reactions to painful events. When we experience severe depression, we often feel numb or deadened to our emotions. We may have feelings of shame, self-blame, or self-hatred, all of which are likely to interfere with how we function every day. Severe depression also interferes with our ability to deal positively with challenges as they arise.

Additionally, sadness and depression can impact our ability to feel or understand the promptings of the Spirit.

**DISCUSS:** How are sadness and depression different?

## 2. FACTORS THAT CAN LEAD TO EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES

**READ:** Being aware of why we have these feelings can help us be more compassionate to ourselves and others. Feelings such as sadness or depression can be caused by several things, including many of the factors below:

Read and Discuss



### FACTORS THAT CAN LEAD TO EMOTIONAL CHALLENGES

<b>Biological</b> —Physical factors with our body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Genetics</li><li>○ Serious illness/injury</li><li>○ Diet and lack of physical activity</li><li>○ Misuse of illegal drugs or medication</li><li>○ Seasonal weather</li><li>○ Chemical or hormonal changes</li></ul>
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<b>Psychological</b> —Emotional events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Major events and life transitions</li> <li>○ Death or loss</li> <li>○ Abuse</li> </ul>
<b>Psychological</b> —Social interactions with others, creating strong emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Conflict</li> <li>○ Loneliness and isolation</li> <li>○ Social pressures</li> <li>○ Betrayal or broken trust</li> </ul>
<b>Spiritual</b> —Difficult events that test our faith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Consequences of choices</li> <li>○ Living in a troubled world</li> </ul>

**DISCUSS:** How can knowing where difficult feelings come from help us be more compassionate to ourselves and others?

### 3. SYMPTOMS OF MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER

**READ:** The following symptoms may be signs of major depressive disorder, or clinical depression. Most people will experience these symptoms at times throughout their lives, but if you experience multiple symptoms for a long time, it may mean that you are experiencing deeper issues. If three or more of these symptoms continue over a period of time, limit your ability to function, or are difficult to escape despite personal and family efforts, you should seek professional help.

#### **SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION**

- Constantly feeling sad, helpless, hopeless, or worthless
- Little energy and motivation
- Change in appetite and weight loss or gain
- Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or waking up
- Loss of interest in activities that used to be enjoyable
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Thoughts about death and suicide\*

### 4. WAYS TO GET HELP

**READ:** “It is normal to feel sad or worried once in a while. Sadness and anxiety are natural human emotions. However, if we are constantly sad and if our pain blocks our ability to feel the love of our Heavenly Father and His Son and the influence of the Holy Ghost, then we may be suffering from depression, anxiety, or another emotional condition” - Sister Reyna I. Aburto

#### **ACTIVITY**

**Step 1:** On your own, read through the list of ideas below.

**Step 2:** Circle two ideas you feel would be most helpful when you are in need of help.

## Ways to Connect and Find Support/Help

- Talk and listen to your Heavenly Father.
- Call a friend who is a great listener.
- Ask someone to check in with you or choose to check in with someone each day.
- Go for a walk, sit outside, or do something you love outdoors.
- Write down meaningful memories when you felt peace, joy, and love.
- Schedule a time to do something with friends or family members.
- Schedule an appointment with a licensed medical professional or mental health therapist.
- Talk with your parents or the Bishop.
- Reach out to someone else who may be going through a hard time.
- Reach out to a suicide prevention line (see [suicide.ChurchofJesusChrist.org](http://suicide.ChurchofJesusChrist.org)).

**Step 3:** In the space below, write down when and how you will put your ideas into action.

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## 4. GRIEF

**READ:** Almost everyone will experience grief at some point in their lifetime through the loss of a loved one or some other tragedy. Because of the gospel, our covenants, and the knowledge that we will see our loved ones again, we may feel that we shouldn't struggle with grief. However, this is not the case. Even the Savior wept when Lazarus died, because He loved him. President Russell M. Nelson taught: "Mourning is one of the deepest expressions of pure love. It is a natural response in complete accord with divine commandment: 'Thou shalt live together in love, insomuch that thou shalt weep for the loss of them that die'

Everyone will grieve differently and on a different timetable. While grieving, most people experience the emotions listed below, although there is no specific order or time frame in which to experience them.

**Denial:** We can't believe that this has happened. We might find ourselves in shock or pretend or forget this is happening for a time.

**Anger:** We may feel angry with ourselves, our loved ones, and even God. Anger is an expression of the value we place on what we have lost.

**Bargaining:** We may think we are in a bad dream and try to bargain with God to reverse things. We may ask "what if" questions, such as "What if I go to the temple every week?" in order to get a specific outcome.

**Sadness:** We experience profound sadness over our loss. This sadness can be powerful and overwhelming, but it is not necessarily clinical depression. It is a normal part of the grieving process.

**Acceptance:** Acceptance is accepting that the loss has happened. It does not mean that we are happy about the loss or that we are betraying the memory of what we have lost. We simply accept the reality of the loss so we can start to move on.

**DISCUSS:** How can understanding the common emotions of grief help us?

**ACTIVITY:** Together with the group read and discuss the following suggestions that may help you better understand and cope with grieving or allow you to help others who are grieving:

- Give yourself permission to feel, cry, and experience whatever you may or may not be feeling as part of the process.
- Take care of yourself. Eat healthy, get enough sleep, and try to exercise.
- Identify the feelings you are having, and acknowledge that they are normal and healthy.
- Set realistic expectations about how much time you may need, and take one step at a time.
- Recognize that feelings of happiness, joy, and peace are not disloyal to the memory of what you have lost.
- Express your thoughts and feelings by writing about your loss as well as your hope for the future.
- If these feelings become overwhelming, consider seeking help from a professional.

**Read:** You do not have to grieve alone and can turn to others in your time of need. You can find support from family, friends, Church leaders, and, most importantly, the Savior.

Sister Sharon Eubank: “When tragedies overtake us, when life hurts so much we can’t breathe, when we’ve taken a beating like the man on the road to Jericho and been left for dead, Jesus comes along and pours oil into our wounds, lifts us tenderly up, takes us to an inn, looks after us [see Luke 10:30–35]. To those of us in grief, He says, ‘I will . . . ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, . . . that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions’

**DISCUSS:** How might you help someone who is struggling emotionally?

“Though we may feel we are ‘like a broken vessel,’ . . . we must remember, that vessel is in the hands of the divine potter. Broken minds can be healed just the way broken bones and broken hearts are healed. While God is at work making those repairs, the rest of us can help by being merciful, nonjudgmental, and kind”

Jeffrey R. Holland