

Depression: It's Not Just A Woman's Illness

(NAPS)—Police sergeant Eric Weaver is what people would call a tough cop. He walked the beat and even volunteered for SWAT duty. But, what many of his fellow officers did not know is that not a day went by that Eric did not contemplate suicide.

Weaver is not alone. In 2000, suicide was the third leading cause of death among young males, ages 10 to 24. Although more women live with clinical depression and attempt suicide more than men, men are four times as likely to complete the act.

While women may be more likely to say they feel depressed or sad, men are taught from childhood that talking about feelings is a sign of weakness. As a result, men may not be as likely to get the help they need if they feel depressed.

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) estimates that six million men in America are affected by depression each year and many go undiagnosed.

Men may not even recognize symptoms of the illness—they often experience symptoms of depression differently than woman and have different ways of coping.

They may report feeling tired and irritable, loss of interest in hobbies and difficulty sleeping rather than feelings of sadness, worthlessness and excessive guilt. Men also are more likely to self-medicate with drugs and alcohol or bury themselves in work.

“Men always think they need to put on a false bravado when they're not feeling well,” says Lydia Lewis, president of the Depression and Bipolar Support



Alliance (DBSA). “They think they can overcome symptoms through willpower, but they can't, any more than a man with asthma or hypertension can overcome his symptoms through willpower.”

Regardless of gender, depression is a serious medical illness that interferes with a person's ability to function. It isn't merely something someone can “snap out of.”

Fortunately, depression is treatable—as men become more educated that depression is an illness and not a character weakness, more may become willing to ask for help.

DBSA offers educational materials that are written for patients in easy-to-understand language. To obtain a booklet on men and depression or to find a support group near you, call 800-826-3632 or visit www.DBSAAlliance.org. The booklet on men and depression is made possible through an unrestricted education grant from the American Psychiatric Foundation.