



Lepage Associates
Solution-Based Psychological Services

HELPFUL HINTS *for common problems...* *Depression ... Anxiety ... Relationships ... Parenting ...*

RELATIONSHIPS: (1) All emotional exchange strengthens relationships, but sharing humor and the delight of play adds a unique restorative healing element. Mutual playfulness reduces stress, defuses anger, mends fences, and lifts spirits. (2) **Be sensitive to your partner's feelings - empathy is definitely not overrated.** Most of the problems with relationships are emotional in nature. Being sensitive to the needs and feelings of the other person in the relationship with you and this will allow for a marked improvement in your dealings with them. Knowing when you're stepping on someone's toes, or when a friend is "not in the mood" will keep you from the dreaded foot-in-mouth disease. (3) **It is give and take - don't be a martyr either.** The advice given above may seem to be telling you to be noble and self-sacrificing. This is farthest from the truth. We're all entitled to do things that help us take care of ourselves, this is not being selfish. There's nothing wrong with wanting to win, wanting to be happy and loved. Just remember that OTHER people want the same things you do, and you can work WITH them to help each other achieve your goals.

PARENTING: (1) **Use Genuine Encounter Moments (GEMS).** Your child's self-esteem is greatly influenced by the quality of time you spend with him-not the amount of time that you spend. It is important to pay attention to what your child is communicating, whether it's verbally or nonverbally. Focusing 100% on your interaction is the key to happy relations and reduces misbehavior. Negative attention in a child's mind is better than being ignored. (2) **Use natural consequences.** Ask yourself what would happen if I didn't interfere in this situation? If we interfere when we don't need to, we rob children of the chance to learn from the consequences of their actions. By allowing consequences to do the talking, we avoid disturbing our relationships by nagging or reminding too much. For example, if your child forgets her lunch, don't bring it to her. Allow her to find a solution and learn the importance of remembering. (3) **Parent with the end in mind.** Most of us parent with the mindset to get the situation under control as soon as possible. We are looking for the expedient solution. This often results in children who feel overpowered. If we parent in a way that keeps in mind how we want our child to be as an adult, we will be more thoughtful about how we parent. For example, if we spank our child, he may learn to use acts of aggression to get what he wants when he grows up.

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DEPRESSION: **(1) Cultivate supportive relationships.** Turn to trusted friends and family members. Share what you're going through with the people you love and trust. Ask for the help and support you need. You may have retreated from your most treasured relationships, but they can get you through this tough time. Try to keep up with social activities even if you don't feel like it. When you're depressed, it feels more comfortable to retreat into your shell. But being around other people will make you feel less depressed. Do the opposite of how you are feeling; instead of withdrawing and being introverted, become more social. Join a support group for depression. Being with others who are dealing with depression can go a long way towards reducing your sense of isolation. You can encourage each other, give, and receive advice on how to cope, and share your experiences. **(2) Take care of yourself.** In order to overcome depression, you have to nurture yourself. This includes making time for things you enjoy, asking for help from others, setting limits on what you're able to do, adopting healthy habits, and scheduling fun activities into your day. Simple things you can do to take care of yourself includes: going on a peaceful walk, taking a relaxing bath, or reading a favorite book. While you can't force yourself to have fun or experience pleasure, you can choose to do things that you used to enjoy. Pick up a former hobby or a sport you used to like. Express yourself creatively through music, art, or writing. Go out with friends. Take a day trip to a museum, the mountains, or the ballpark. **(3) Get regular exercise.** When you're depressed, exercising may be the last thing you feel like doing, but depression requires you to act the opposite of what you're feeling! Exercise is a powerful tool for dealing with depression. In fact, studies show that regular exercise can be as effective as antidepressant medication at increasing energy levels and decreasing feelings of fatigue. To get the most benefit, aim for 30 minutes of exercise per day. You can start small; short 10-minute bursts of activity can have a positive effect on your mood.

ANXIETY: **(1) Think Positively.** The best way to overcome anxiety is to always think positively. Negativity just feeds into anxiety and makes it worse. If you have a positive mindset you will be able to feel good about yourself, who you talk to, and how you feel. When you feel good about yourself and display optimism about yourself and your life, other individuals around you have no choice but to have the same feelings about you as well, increasing the possibilities of reducing anxiety. **(2) Practice public speaking in front of a mirror.** Anxiety can also occur when a person has to speak in public. One way to deal with anxiety when it comes to public speaking is to practice in front of a mirror. Practicing allows you to observe yourself as others will see you. You are able to pick up on behaviors that contribute to or indicate your anxiety such as fidgeting, excessive sweating, and other physical behaviors. After recognizing how and why you are anxious, you can work on ways to reduce your anxiety. For example, if you see yourself making a lot of hand movements or gestures then you may find that holding something in your hand may help with reducing your anxiety. This practice also helps you in the effort to 'avoid avoiding' and to be proactive in the coping and treatment of your anxiety. **(3) Utilize effective relaxation techniques.** A great way to release tension in the body is through muscle relaxation techniques. Some relaxation techniques include meditation, yoga, and progressive muscle relaxation. Another relaxation technique is proper breathing exercises. Anxiety symptoms can be triggered by rapid breathing or hyperventilating. When this occurs you have more oxygen coming into the body and a reduced amount of carbon dioxide in your blood. It's important to learn how to breathe properly through the diaphragm in order to stop hyperventilating.

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