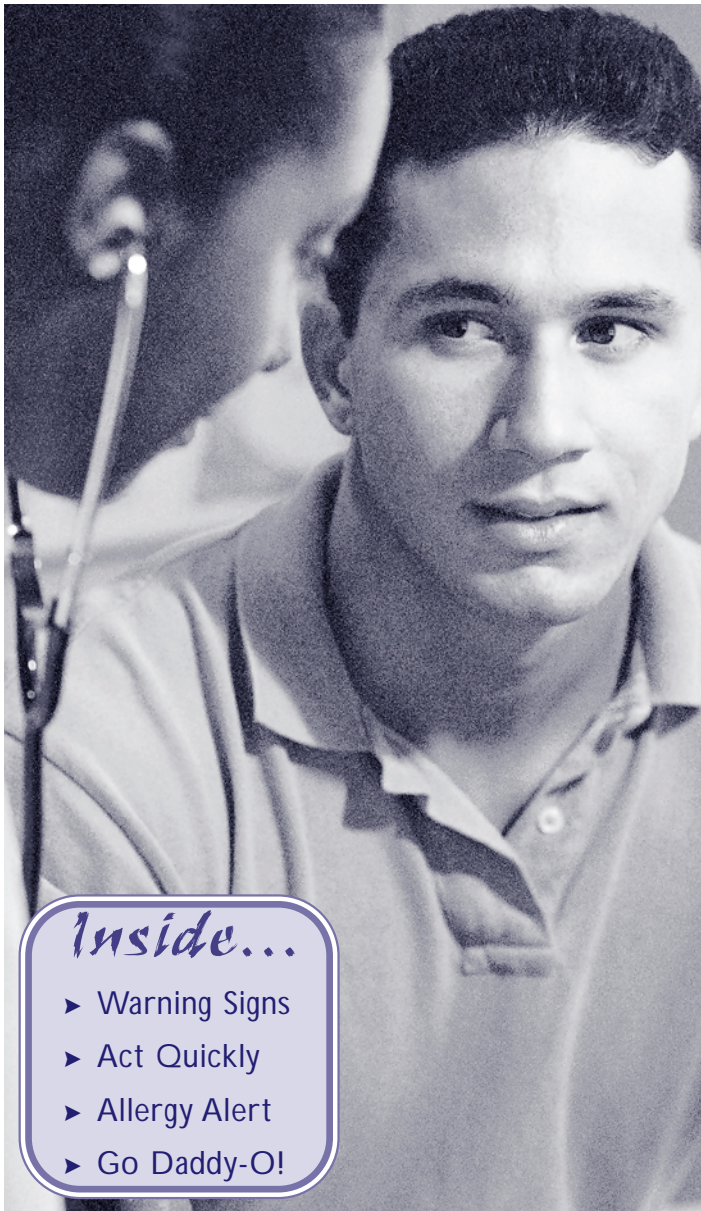


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DEPRESSION: *THE ENEMY WITHIN*

Jackie Beauvirage didn't see the enemy coming. When it attacked, suddenly and ruthlessly, she and her husband found themselves in a life and death struggle for their son's life. But they barely survived the first battle.



The enemy was depression. The battlefield was their 17-year-old son, Jonathon.

OUT OF THE BLUE

Two years ago, Jackie and her husband Keith were up north when they received a call at two o'clock in the morning from one of Jonathon's friends. He'd been chatting to Jonathon on-line and had the feeling that Jonathon was saying goodbye and was about to commit suicide.

The Beauvirage's knew Jonathon was depressed and had in fact just started to take medication for his depression. They had no idea just how ill their son was, however. Knowing that every suicide threat should be taken seriously, Jackie and Keith immediately mobilized. Keith called the police. Jackie called her son. After five rings, Jonathon picked up.

"I vividly recall trying to convince him that life was precious, that there was hope for the future," she says.

But Jonathon's depression was too deep and dark. "I usually believe you Mum," he told her, "but I can't anymore. When a dog or cat suffers like this, they put it down. I just want to put myself down. I'm tired and don't want to deal with this pain anymore."

Jackie was horrified.

"Can you imagine having this conversation with your child and you're far away and you can't grab hold of him," she says.

She kept Jonathon on the phone until the police arrived then insisted he put an officer on the line. She knew Jonathon would try and convince the police that nothing was wrong and that his mother was hysterical and overreacting - which he later did. Fortunately Jonathon was under 18 and the police were compelled by law to honour Jackie's request to have her son taken to the hospital. It was later discovered that Jonathon had cut his wrists, luckily not deeply, and written his goodbye letter.

But if Jackie thought the worst was over, she was wrong. The war had just begun.

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Call FGI's EAP for more information and counselling services. Specialists are available to work with you on a wide range of issues including depression, marital and family issues, addiction, work-related problems, personal issues and worklife issues...

This service is available at no cost to you and is paid for by your employer.

Call 1-800-268-5211

DEPRESSION: *THE ENEMY WITHIN*

CONTINUED

THE BATTLE COMMENCES

The next three months Jackie endured Jonathon's wrath. He directed all his rage at his mother, blaming her for his pain, for everything wrong in the world. But she was able to separate the disease from the child she loved.

That's because Jackie, a senior vice president with the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, had begun a campaign to learn as much as she could about what she considered an enemy trying to steal her son and destroy her family.

"I needed to understand the enemy," she says. "It needed to be faced and conquered, and to do that we needed a battle plan."

That battle plan consisted of five components: medication, therapy, nutrition, exercise and social support. Jackie and Keith worked closely with the medical team with respect to Jonathon's medication. With Jonathon's input, more attention was paid to nutrition and exercise, because, like any typical 17-year-old, Jonathon had questionable eating habits and spent much of his free time playing video games. He was also encouraged to rebuild the social life and support system from which he had so completely withdrawn.

At first, therapy posed a problem. Jonathon refused to participate in any counselling, but Jackie and Keith were persuaded they might need someone to talk to about parenting a child with a major depressive disorder.

"It was the smartest thing we did," says Jackie. "The counsellor helped us understand how to deal with Jonathon's behaviour and how to change and adjust our parenting in dealing with those behaviours."

After seeing how counselling helped his parents deal with the situation, Jonathon decided he would give it a try.

Slowly, the Beauvirage's saw the illness retreat. After six months, Jonathon was winning the war. Today, at 19, he's attending university in Phoenix, Arizona, and speaking out on the dangers of depression. He regularly talks to high school groups, has appeared in a Time magazine article, and made a video about his battle. His parents were at first surprised by his openness.

"If I don't speak out, who will?" he said.

"HE'S MY HERO!"

THE WAR IS WON

From despair to rage to a courageous struggle to let light back in his soul, Jonathon Beauvirage has triumphed over depression. He's still on medication, still receiving counselling and still careful of his diet and exercise regimen, knowing the enemy could regroup to attack his hard-won, but fragile, mental health. Jackie Beauvirage is proud of her family's victorious campaign, but prouder still of her son's long, traumatic and frightening struggle to live and his dedication to educating others on mental health issues.

"He's my hero," she says.



WARNING SIGNS

If your teenager appears to be depressed, watch for the following signs. They may indicate thoughts of suicide:

- Dramatic personality change
- Unexplained and severe rebellious behaviour
- Trouble with a girlfriend or boyfriend
- Difficulty getting along with other friends or with parents
- Withdrawing from family, friends and social events
- Drop in quality of schoolwork or grades
- Trouble concentrating
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse
- Complaints of headaches, stomachaches, etc., that may or may not be real
- Change in eating or sleeping habits
- Change in appearance (for the worse)
- Giving prized possessions away
- Poems or notes about death
- Threats of, or jokes about, suicide. Statements such as "That's the last straw," "I can't take it anymore," or "Nobody cares about me." (Threatening to kill oneself precedes four out of five suicidal deaths.)



ACT QUICKLY

If you suspect that your teen might be contemplating suicide, act quickly. **Suicide is preventable.**

- Ask your teen about what's going on. Don't be afraid to say the word "suicide." Getting the word out in the open may help your child realize someone has heard his or her cries for help.
- Reassure your teen of your love. Remind your child that no matter how awful the problems seem, they can be worked out, and you are willing to help.
- Listen carefully. Do not dismiss the problems or get angry.
- Remove all potential weapons from your home, including guns, pills, kitchen utensils and ropes.
- Seek professional help. Ask your doctor or EAP for guidance. A variety of outpatient and hospital-based treatment programs are available.

Allergy Alert

Two out of 10 Canadians have allergies. While some allergic reactions can be life threatening, such as to peanuts or shellfish, most of us suffer mild, but irritating symptoms that include congestion, watery eyes, hives or tummy upsets. Even though most symptoms are deemed mild, they can interfere with one's quality of life and cost money in over-the-counter medications.

If you're tired of sniffing, itching and wheezing and want to investigate other ways to deal with your allergies, you can contact a Naturopathic Doctor through your EAP. It's easy – just call 1-800-268-5211.

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Go Daddy-O!

Research has shown again and again that a father's role is as important as a mother's in raising healthy, compassionate and confident children. From newborns to college students, a father's role cannot be underestimated.



While there is an abundance of resources aimed specifically at mothers on how to raise children of all ages, there is a shortage of similar materials targeting fathers. As such, men often feel left out and searching in vain for advice, information and support in parenting children. It is important for fathers to be able to have the answers to some key parenting questions including: What makes a good dad? What makes a great dad? How do you parent stepchildren? What is the number one thing that children want from dads?

Whether it's the arrival of new baby, helping your child reach all their milestones, surviving the adolescent years or supporting your college-bound son or daughter on an appropriate career path, fatherhood means understanding all phases and aspects of child development. Parenting children is the most challenging job of all, one that takes preparation, commitment, communication, caring and confidence.

Introducing Help for Dads

If you're about to become a father, just want to become a better one or need support or information about parenting, contact us for a consultation and our new and customized "**Daddy Pack**." This innovative resource has been designed to educate, support and advise fathers to be the best they can be. It can address topics such as:

- Preparing for childbirth
- How to comfort and respond to your baby
- Balancing work and family
- Taking care of a sick child
- Communicating with small children
- Playing and having fun
- Handling the additional financial obligations
- Teaching and role modelling
- Parenting a teenager
- Becoming a stepfather
- Fathers and daughters
- Fathers and sons
- Discipline
- Communicating standards
- Teaching respect for others
- Conveying rules and expectations

For more information or assistance with any counselling or WorkLife balance needs, call your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). It's a free, confidential service for you and your family.

Call **1-800-268-5211**
(in English)

1-800-363-3872
(en français)

You can also visit our website at www.fgiworldmembers.com for more information and resources.

We welcome any suggestions you may have about topics you'd like to see covered in LivingWell. Please contact **Barbara Jaworski**, Director, WorkLife Solutions & Well Being, by e-mailing bjaworski@fgiworld.com, writing to the address below, or calling her at FGI at: **1-800-263-4533**

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