FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Is He Depressed or What? What to Do When the Man You Love Is Irritable, Moody, and Withdrawn

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Not for women only, this book puts its subject, the depressed male, in the relationship context where a lot of good can be done for him and his loving helper. As with most illnesses and disabilities, emotional and relationship factors can be considered part of the solution even when they are not part of the problem. The author, a psychologist, respects the condition of depression: it is more than a chemical disturbance, and warrants more than a drug to treat it. He also empathizes with partners of depressed men. He is sensitive and articulate enough to help women communicate with men in lockdown status.

Pessimists and optimists look at life differently; depressed people carry burdens of sorrow, guilt, and emptiness along with scant hope for improvement. While such a person cannot "snap out of it" or be talked out of it, recent research indicates that mindset is a factor. The helper, Wexler makes clear, must begin with and maintain respect, affection, good will, and a positive definition and expectation of the suffering partner. His writing effectively combines reassurance with challenge to the reader, which is exactly what the helper needs to do in turn.

Wexler explains: "The man you love may not speak the same language that you do. He feels feelings, but may not always know what to call them. He … may have a different style or tolerance level for processing emotions. This is okay. Unless the disparity is extreme, talking about psychological states in the same language is not necessary for a successful relationship. If you pressure him to be like you, you will lose him further."

The book's chapters address typical and male-specific depression, how to connect and communicate, how not to be an enabler. Psychological and pharmacological help are described. Sexual issues, guilt, self-maintenance through the ordeal, and "Knowing When to Leave" round out the topics. There is a glossary, an outstanding resource guide, and a bibliography. Wexler makes use of examples from Terrance Real's *I Don't Want to Talk About It*, William Pollock's *Real Boys*, and Judith Viorst's *Necessary Losses*, among others, as well as films like *Good Will Hunting* and *About Schmidt*. Although he addresses the female partner of the depressed male,

his insights—including what *not* to say (e.g., “You shouldn’t feel that way”)—would be helpful to male partners, parents of young adults, and adult children of depressed fathers. Even therapists could learn a great deal from this excellent teacher.

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