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Parenting Well When You're Depressed: A Complete Resource for Maintaining a Healthy Family

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Depression renders even the simplest of daily tasks a potentially overwhelming burden. According to the U.S. Surgeon General's 1999 Report on Mental Health, depression sucks the energy and enjoyment of life from approximately one-fourth of American women and fifteen percent of American men. Many of these individuals are parents. Under the best of circumstances parenting can be a daunting task; for people suffering from depression, being a good parent may appear impossible. This book will serve as a major source of support.

Parenting Well anticipates virtually all of the depression-associated issues of parenting, and presents suggestions for dealing with these challenges in a supportive manner. Topics range from the mundane, like managing household finances and putting meals on the table, to the extremely serious, such as dealing with the legal system and foster parents in cases of loss of custody. The authors recognize that effective communication with individuals suffering from depression requires breaking tasks in to small, manageable parts and explaining each clearly and directly.

The book not only anticipates important topics, but presents them in a manner tailored to the altered cognitive processes that accompany depression. For example, one chapter addresses the issue of play and recreation. Depressed parents may not feel much like playing, but play is an important part of childhood. The authors break childhood into developmental stages (such as preschoolers and preteens) and offer age-appropriate suggestions for playing with children at each stage.

In another chapter the authors discuss how to make children's visits to a hospitalized, depressed parent pleasant and less traumatic by suggesting such specifics as having an activity

planned for the visit, like a book to read together.

Parenting Well is authored by a team from the University of Massachusetts Medical School, including clinical psychologists, mental health counselors, and occupational therapists who work together on the “Parenting Options Project.” Combined, they have more than fifty years of experience dealing with parents who suffer from depression, as is evident in this exhaustive, gentle volume. This book is a splendid addition to the resources available to parents suffering from depression, those who love them, and the professionals concerned with their treatment.

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