

WHERE DO DOWN TIMES COME FROM?

WHAT CAUSES THE CRUDDY FEELINGS?

■ *Let's say first that there is a garden-variety depression.* Down times go with the territory of being human. Ups. Downs. All of us have them. Some more than others. Certain times in life we wrestle with down feelings more than other times. The mood swings may not feel comfortable, but they are OK. Up to a point.

Sometimes "down" gets "deep down." Or at least the down is prolonged. Lots of causes here:

■ *There are pill-bottle blues.* My way of saying, "What goes into your system may have uncomfortable effects." This is true of alcohol, drugs (including some prescription medications), even junk food. Certain mood swings can be minimized by laying off of weird substances, eating nutritious foods and getting adequate rest.

■ *There is also a bugs-in-the-system kind of depression.* There can be physical causes for the down times. Quirks in the body machine. This is

logical. Body changes take place on a regular month-to-month basis that trigger mood swings. But other physical factors can affect your emotions too. These can be minor. Or major. If depression hounds you, talk to your doctor about it.

■ *A bitter spirit can bring devastating blues.* More than mere "blues." Sometimes people harbor bitter feelings; they refuse to forgive someone and soon find this bitterness eating away at their emotions. The mind is a strange animal. It does not seem to be able to tolerate strong, unresolved conflict. Bitterness will eat away at your emotional and even your physical health.

■ *There is also a negative-thinking breed of depression.* Not necessarily linked to bitterness and forgiveness, but certainly linked to a bent and twisted view of life. Who knows where it gets started, but unchecked it snowballs. One negative thought on top of another. The world seems unfair. This depressed person has a hard time finding

anything good about himself or herself. The future looks bleak—a continuation of an awful today.

■ *Grief.* Actually, if you set aside the normal mood swings—the ups and downs brought on by being human and alive—and if you set aside the biological factors, the other feelings of depression probably start here: *grief.*

We say "grief" and think "death," but these strong feelings are really triggered by any loss. Someone close dies, your parents divorce, you move away from friends and familiar surroundings, your romance breaks up or you have a falling out with a friend; all these loses can spark depression.

We like to think of ourselves as independent from parents and family, but even this process of becoming independent often brings loss. "grief," depression. We might not say, "Hey, I'm mourning my loss of childhood," but most of us are. And it can bring with it these mysterious down times. A depression that seems at times overpowering.