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People believe the world is flat when they have depression but it's not. Recovery is about challenging those beliefs

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Coping with depression

- Speak to your GP or health professional
- Comply with treatment and remember medication and counselling can take time to work
- Access support services – keep helpline numbers close and consider attending a support group
- Exercise and get outdoors
- Eat a balanced diet – sugary foods can result in mood slumps
- Avoid alcohol – it is a depressant
- Get enough rest
- Write down how you feel – it's good therapy. Also keep a mood diary to see patterns
- Accept help from others – you are not alone

(www.aware.ie) for the past 18 months: “These allow people in an anonymous way to share how they feel. Many people find that easier. It's an organised chat room situation with two facilitators that goes on for a couple of hours.

“You read what others are saying and type in what you have to say as well. The facilitator will encourage everyone to

say something. I find that people often start off with online meetings then move on to face-to-face meetings.”

There are many lectures about depression which can be listened to or downloaded from the www.aware.ie website. New Life Skills programmes start in January 2013. For more information on locations, see www.aware.ie **CL**

Keeping love alive

If you and your partner are prone to criticising each other and being defensive, now could be the time to find a new way to interact, writes **Fiona Hoban**



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What was the first choice you made today? Think about it. Did you get out of bed, or did you choose to get out of bed? In the course of a day, we make many more choices than we realise. Very often, the language we use disguises the fact that we had a choice. We say: “I had to answer the telephone”, when we could have chosen to ignore it, put it on silent. Reality therapy is based on the notion that we always have a choice. Sometimes these choices are not easy or straightforward but, nonetheless, we always have a choice. And having a choice is key to raising self-esteem.

Another cornerstone of reality therapy is recognising that we cannot control others, only ourselves – and much of our pain emanates from our attempts to control others through various means, commonly known as the seven deadly sins – blaming, criticising, complaining, nagging, threatening, punishing and bribing.

These cause a disconnection with those around us and reality therapists argue that disconnection is the source of almost all human problems. The solution, therefore, lies in our ability to reconnect with the people we need. Instead of the deadly sins, we choose alternatives that include

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trusting, caring, listening, negotiating, befriending, encouraging and supporting.

John Gottman, a leading marriage researcher, says that within three minutes of observing married couples discuss a problem, he is able to predict with over 80% accuracy whether the marriage will last. He identifies four major communication and conflict-solving problems that predict marital breakdown. He refers to these as the “four horsemen of the apocalypse”.

CRITICISM

This involves attacking a partner's personality, rather than addressing the problem at hand. For instance, calling your partner lazy or careless because they failed to return a DVD is an attack on their character. Constructive criticism would simply be to address the specific task your partner has failed to complete.

CONTEMPT

This is a more harsh form of criticism which may involve gestures such as rolling your eyes in disapproval. Sometimes a partner may also use sarcasm or irony to express their bitterness. Contempt has the most damaging negative effect in a marriage because it conveys disgust.

DEFENSIVENESS

A partner who is being defensive during a conflict may engage in behaviours such as making excuses, overlooking the consequences of certain behaviours or failing to acknowledge that they are at fault.

STONEWALLING

A form of withdrawal or disengagement from a conflict. This form of deliberate avoidance is more common among husbands than wives.

Gottman says the constant presence of the horsemen predict marital breakdown by 82%. However, unsuccessful attempts to fix these problems increase the prediction to over 90%.

To maintain stability in a relationship you need five good interactions for each negative one. Your choice. **CL**

