

just ask questions from students

CMF dissects your dilemmas



low mood

'I've been feeling low for six months, and have lost enjoyment in meeting with others. I feel I'm a bad witness as Christians should be full of joy. I don't really want to get medical help but do you think I should see a doctor?'

First of all, let's debunk the myth that Christians are immune from suffering from low mood. We're all human with the vulnerabilities and tendencies of our human condition. And let's face it, life isn't always joyful. We face various challenges, genetic predispositions, and stressful circumstances that might trigger a depressive episode in our lives.

Jesus was described as a 'man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief'.¹

As healthcare students you will also at some stage face the realities of illness, chronic suffering and even death in your workplace. Doctors and nurses have to balance needing to be empathetic and relating to patients without becoming over-involved, which can be tricky.

Indeed, a 2016 *BMJ* study² concluded that doctors (especially juniors) are particularly vulnerable to stress and mental health issues owing to the demands of their jobs. The reasons are complex, ranging from long hours and sleep deprivation to bullying by more senior doctors.

We'll be limited long-term in how well we'll be able to help our patients if we don't properly care for ourselves.³

So, if you're struggling with low mood don't be slow at getting help and medical advice. It may be a case of just needing to rest more, to learn ways to de-stress, or to cut back on some of your extra-curricular activities for a time. Equally, you may benefit from counselling or anti-depressants. It also helps to confide in a trusted friend or church member, to rally support and prayer, and to have someone who keeps a loving eye on you.

Doctors and nurses have to balance needing to be empathetic and relating to patients without becoming over-involved, which can be tricky.

But whatever the way forward for you, remember that many Christians and many healthcare workers do suffer low mood at some stage of their lives.

It is nothing to be ashamed of, and help is there for you. If we're honest about our own struggles, it frees others to also open up. Maybe the Lord will even redeem this tough period to enable you in the future to better comfort others in their distress. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: 'the God of all comfort... comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.' ■

REFERENCES

1. Isaiah 53:3 (KJV)
2. Lenzler J. Physician Health Programmes Under Fire. *BMJ* 2016;353:i3568 bit.ly/2vBqSuB
3. Oaklander M. Doctors on Life Support. *Time* 27 August 2015 ti.me/2ulltoi0

If you have a burning question, why not email us: nucleus@cmf.org.uk. The best question each issue wins free student membership for a year.