

COLUMNISTS

Depressed friend lets go, gives problems to God

A friend said to me recently: "Everyone experiences some type of nervous breakdown in life." He said this happened to him when he had to change jobs and dramatically modify his lifestyle.

The kind of breakdown is not uncommon. Pressures of our post-modern era are causing many people to feel that they no longer can meet the demands of a day.

Insignificant tasks seem insurmountable. Panic attacks — those sinking, helpless feelings that create nerve-shattering jitters — paralyze them.

Some people lose their grip on life. They may become depressed.

They must force themselves to get out of bed, to eat, to go to work and to endure it. But thanks to new medicines and counseling assistance, people like my friend are able to get their lives back to normal.

Another fellow — I'll call him Frank — also became depressed. But he approached



BY FATHER EUGENE HEMRICK

the
human
side

his situation through self-help programs.

Frank was fortunate to have a friend who encouraged him to keep faith in himself and to go back to practices that have kept his life balanced. This timely advice gave him the strength to devise a program of prayer, exercise and positive thinking.

He now starts his day by asking God to help him let go of his life and to put it in God's hands. He tries to see that his life

was given to him by God, that most important is what God thinks. Each day he asks God for advice on life.

"Feeling alone and that my life's problems are only mine are at the heart of fear," Frank says. "You need to realize this is not true and to put your problems into the hands of God. If you don't let go, you'll never get at what's depressing you."

He adds, "This isn't easy, because depression turns you in on yourself and closes out everyone, especially God."

Frank is a runner, but finds that when panic attacks occur, he loses his taste for exercise. He now forces himself to take a leisurely run or a long walk every day.

"They get you into motion, and ... it has been scientifically proven that exercise produces good moods, Frank says.

Frank likewise learned that depression causes you to lose a taste for movies, reading and music. Now he looks to uplifting

movies, wholesome reading and energizing music to counter this.

"This helps restore the positive in my life," he points out. "Good reading, music and movies get you out of yourself and are great for countering negative feelings that build up inside."

These two scenarios represent millions of people coping with depression. Not everyone will be able to take Frank's approach. Many really do need professional help and should seek it immediately.

But for those who still have a little toehold on life, Frank's example may prove helpful. Try to devise a self-help program that utilizes the best wisdom you have, especially the wisdom that this is not our life alone, that God has a very big hand in it.

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Father Hemrick is director of diocesan relations at The Catholic University of America.

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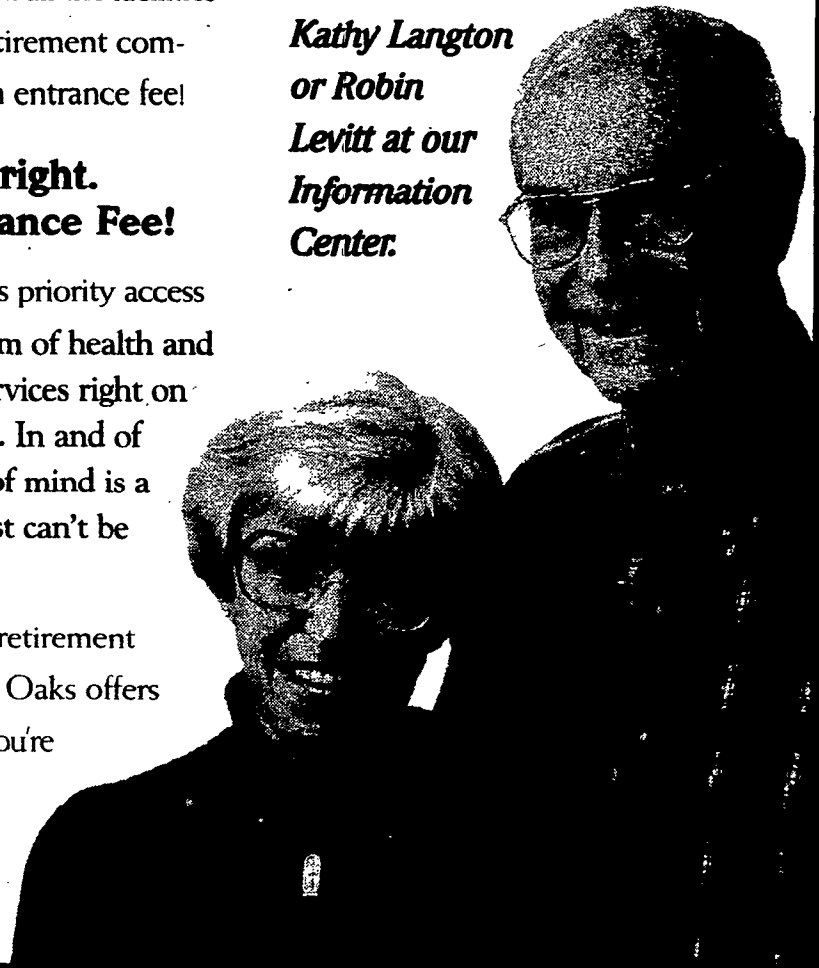
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