

## When depression persists...

Marion, who is 53 and lives alone, has been part of your church for 20 years. And for all that time she has been 'depressed'. Her mood varies from low to very low. Social situations are always demanding for Marion, and she often avoids church. During her bad times she stays at home and avoids everyone. When her mood is particularly low, she gets input from a local mental health team but usually medical care is provided by her GP who offers general support and monitors her medication. Marion has tried many different drugs over many years – none have brought any long-lasting relief.

Marion was brought up in Yorkshire where her father did office work for a local coal mine and her mother worked part time in a primary school as a lunchtime supervisor. She was an only child. Marion was married in her 20's but it only lasted seven years and there were no children. She doesn't talk much about that period of her life.

She arrived at your church 20 years ago, about 5 years after the breakdown of her marriage, when she took an admin job with a local electronics firm. As her depression worsened during her late 30s, she had more time off work and several performance reviews before eventually losing her job. She has been on disability benefits ever since.

Marion's parents were believers and she has always professed faith. For a while she helped with your children's groups, but a period of depression brought that to an end. She's in a small group but attends less than 50% of the time and the leaders say that their group has run out of ideas (and energy) to support her.

Five years ago, Rebecca started at your church as a women's worker. She's done some training with BCUK and started weekly meetings with Marion. Initially, they seemed to help but the meetings tailed off and now things are the same as ever. Rebecca says she 'gave it her best shot and it didn't work'. Marion says 'she feels like a failure'.

## Why is persevering so hard?

- Depression is contagious
- Faith is required
- People are unique

## A mix of ideas

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### 1. Return to the beginning

- What might have been missed?
- Any false assumptions?
- Wrong emphasis all along?

*Deeper trust leading to greater honesty*

### 2. Explore the past

- Biblical counselling can be nervous of the past

- Better understanding of past struggles leading to better application of scripture

*Is Marion ashamed or is she angry?*

#### **Discussion #1**

- What's helpful?
- Any pitfalls to be aware of?

*Relate to Marion or to your own experience*

#### **3a. Persist in love**

- Nurture your own faith
- Words accompanied by love

#### **3b. Persist in love**

- Settle in for the long haul (marathon not sprint)
- Widen the circle
- Maintain one strategy (NB 'must try something new' mindset)

#### **Discussion #2**

- What's helpful?
- Any pitfalls to be aware of?

*Relate to Marion or to your own experience*

#### **4. Challenge and 'interrupt'**

- Take the initiative in structuring daily life
- Explore church involvement while depressed
- Dare to interrupt the stream of depressive thought – challenge with scripture
- Ask 'what would better look like' & 'do you *want* to get better?' (NB *speaking in love*)

#### **Discussion #3**

- What's helpful?
- Any pitfalls to be aware of?

*Relate to Marion or to your own experience*