Joe had been feeling blue for several weeks. His wife noticed he didn’t have much energy and was waking early without being able to get back to sleep. She also observed that he wasn’t eating much and seemed to be losing weight. His boss noted that Joe wasn’t as productive as usual and his coworkers found him to be rather irritable. Joe confided in a friend that he’d been feeling “down.”

Joe was showing symptoms of depression, which include:
- changes in sleep patterns
- changes in eating patterns - weight loss or gain
- difficulty concentrating
- changes in mood; irritability
- lack of energy or pleasure
- sad, empty feelings
- helpless and hopeless feelings

As a first step, Joe should get a physical. An evaluation by a doctor can determine whether there is a physical basis for the symptoms. If there appears to be no physical cause, a counselor could help Joe sort out what is causing him to feel depressed. Depression is the “common cold” of mental health, with many different causes. It can stem from problems at work or in one's marriage, the death of a loved one or the transition to a new stage of life. It can also come from a lack of exercise or poor eating habits.

Through counseling, Joe can develop strategies to cope and feel better, such as:
- structure and routine
- exercise and eating healthy
- staying away from drugs and alcohol
- “self talk” - positive messages to himself

Joe could need medication to make it easier to function. After a time, the medication may no longer be necessary.

Joe may also need to overcome the embarrassment he feels about his depression. But depression is not a character flaw. It is a real illness, a quite common one, and can be successfully treated.

You and your family do not have to struggle alone. LCFS counselors help families generate hope and cope with life’s challenges. Most insurance plans accepted; sliding-scale fees are available on a case-by-case basis. For more information or to schedule an appointment, contact us at lcfs_info@lcfs.org or 800-363-LCFS (5237). Discover LCFS and the services we offer at www.lcfs.org and www.facebook.com/LCFSIL.
LCFS offers counseling at the following locations:

**Northern Illinois**
*Crown Point* at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Belvidere
Grace Lutheran School, River Forest

**Central Illinois**
Trinity Lutheran School, Bloomington
LCFS office, Decatur
Christ Lutheran Church, Normal
LCFS office, Springfield

**Southern Illinois**
LCFS office, Belleville
LCFS office, Mt. Vernon
LCFS office, Sparta

To schedule a first-time appointment, call 800-363-LCFS (5237) or visit www.lcfs.org for additional information.