

LIGHTING A CANDLE IN THE DARK

PURPOSE: To explore the healing power of giving during mild depression.

LEADER'S NOTES:

You will need to be sensitive to the fact that many—and possibly most—depressions are so dark that giving to others is difficult, if not impossible. Many will at those times have trouble just looking after themselves. Stress that this strategy holds true for mild depressions only or for when depression is only beginning to set in.

A STORY:

(You can share this story with the group or a story of your own that illustrates the point. Think of a time when the darkness of your depression brightened by doing something for someone else.)

At a time when I was in the middle of a mild depression, I needed to do some shopping. I thought of a friend, someone who couldn't drive, wondering if I could pick something up for her while I was out. This was a small thing, but the thought of being able to do something for someone else lit a spark within me. My feelings brightened somewhat. I felt more energized. This spark lit a candle that kept burning for the rest of the day.

To escape my depression, I decided to continue lighting candles by thinking of things I could do for people or help them with making their life easier. Although I did not immediately escape the depression, I found that doing things for others helped bring brightness into the dark times. My depression became easier to bear.

DISCUSSION:

- What has helped you find brightness in the middle of a dark time?
- Can you think of some ways to light a candle in the dark?
- Doing things for others is one good way to light a spark within. But there are other things that will help you bring brightness into your life. What other strategies can you employ?

