Bucky Dilts

Many people assume that professional athletes live dream lives. But many current and former pro athletes struggle with depression and anxiety disorders. Ravens pitcher Zack Sneakie and Steelers CB Terry Bradshaw struggled with depression for parts of their careers. Others, such as former Oriels pitcher Mike Flanagan, NFL star Rick Rypien, Chicago Bears Dave Duerson and Denver Broncos Kenny McKinley tragically committed suicide.

In addition to traditional risk factors for mood and anxiety disorders, many pro athletes face additional risks such as performing in front of thousands of fans, having their lives scrutinized in the media and head injuries. Other risk factors such as chronic health problems, loss of identity or financial struggles may appear when players retire from sport and transition into the “real world.” And worse, many athletes do not seek help for fear of appearing weak and damaging their careers.

Former Broncos punter Bucky Dilts knows this reality all too well. “Playing in the NFL is a tremendous challenge,” says Dilts, “but for me the real challenge came after I left the game.” For Dilts, the most challenging aspect of the transition was redefining his identity. “One day you are in the Super Bowl and everybody tells you how great you are. But when you leave all of that and transition into the next phase of your life, it can be very difficult.” He adds, “People tend to define pro athletes only by what they do on the field, not off.”

Dilts believes that taking a comprehensive approach is the best way to engage men in taking action to improve their lives. “Because of stigma, men might be reluctant to attend an event devoted to mental health or prostate cancer, but if you package it under a broader umbrella of men’s health, with cardiovascular health, information on nutrition and exercise and things like that, you have a better chance of reaching them.”

He also knows that the best way to engage men is to involve other pro athletes because so many men are passionate about sports. Bucky is using his connections with former NFL players and college coaches and trainers to help develop programs. “People in sports are starting to get the role mental health plays in athletic performance,” says Dilts, citing the CU football program as one example. “They have a full-time sports psychologist up there so Mike Bohn [CU Athletic Director] and his staff obviously got it. It is so great to see them investing in the mental health of their student athletes.”

And he knows just how important that work is. “When I look at my life, the work I’m doing now to help men live healthy lives is the most important thing I’ve done. Not football.”

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS AT THE DEPRESSION CENTER

● The new Friends of the Depression Center planning and steering committee is up and running. This group of volunteers focuses on projects to reduce stigma associated with mental illnesses and to help develop resources for the Center. Contact the Depression Center for more information or to become a member.

● Director of Consultation Services, Chris Schnick, MD was named one of Denver’s Top Docs by 5280 Magazine.

● The Center hosted and co-presented an Acceptance and Commitment Therapy workshop on the Anschutz Campus in July. Over 100 clinicians attended.

● Deputy Director Matt Vogl, MPH was named Board Chair for the Suicide Prevention Coalition of Colorado.

● Director of Research Michael Allen, MD was named Board Chair for the Carson J. Spencer Foundation.

● Chris Schnick, MD received funding to participate in a multi-site NIH-funded grant to study early interventions at youth at risk of bipolar disorder.

● Nell Weiner, MD will present Grand Rounds at the Anschutz Medical Campus on November 9th. His talk is entitled "Issues in Major Depressive Part II: Epidemiology, Diagnostic Challenges and ‘Low T’.”

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spotlight

Now Dilts has turned his attention to the issue of promoting men’s physical and mental health and is partnering with the Depression Center to develop programs to combat the stigma that keeps many men from getting the help they need. “I know what depression feels like and I know how bad the stigma can be, not just for athletes, but for all men. That’s why I’m doing this.”

On November 21 Grammy Award recording artist and acclaimed author Judy Collins will be the keynote speaker at the University of Colorado Depression Center’s first annual benefit luncheon at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in downtown Denver. Proceeds from the event will benefit the Center’s clinical programs.

Collins, who grew up in Denver, has thrilled audiences worldwide with her unique blend of interpretative folk songs and contemporary themes. Her impressive music career has spanned more than 50 years, but in recent years she has become equally known for authoring several books, including the acclaimed Sanity and Grace: A Journey of Suicide, Survival and Strength.

Sanity and Grace chronicles her struggles and journey to healing following the tragic suicide of her 33 year-old son in 1992. Collins said she wrote the book in order to shed light on the dark taboos of suicide. This deeply personal account discusses Collins’s own depression and alcoholism and her successful road to sobriety. Said one book review, “her spiritual renewal, her efforts to reach out to others through suicide survival groups, and her commitment to friends, therapists, habits of work and of life that take the power out of the depression will be an inspiration and a comfort to those left behind.”

Depression Center Director of Development Nancy Gre said that Collins is the perfect person to keynote the Center’s first annual lunch because her personal mission about mental health aligns so closely with the Depression Center’s mission. “Judy Collins has struggled with many of the same issues that the Depression Center works to address. She is so committed to her own mental health and she wants to share her messages of hope and healing with everyone.”

Collins’ keynote address promises to be an emotional, informative and entertaining affair. During the course of her keynote speech, she will talk about her experiences with depression, alcoholism and suicide and her eventual path to healing.

Collins released her first album, A Maid of Constant Sorrow, in 1961 at the age of 22. Among her many musical accomplishments was her 1975 Song of the Year Grammy Award for her version of Send in the Clowns. Her rendition of Joni Mitchell’s Both Sides Now was later entered into the Grammy Hall of Fame. Now 71 years old, Collins still performs 80 to 100 dates a year around the country.

A true modern Renaissance woman, Collins has authored several books, is an accomplished painter and co-directed an Academy Award-nominated film. In 1999, Judy founded her own record label, Wildflower Records - a grass roots label committed to nurturing fresh talent.

DEPRESSION CENTER PROUDLY WELCOMES JUDY COLLINS
Even today, young boys are often discouraged from expressing emotion by their parents, which can have lasting effects that later in life may make it hard regarding emotional expression. Weiner points out that many men need to be taught how to describe and label their emotions properly. “As boys grow up, they may experience much more difficulty labeling or expressing their emotions,” says Weiner. “Many women don’t know much about her music. Judy Collins, Joni Mitchell, and Bob Dylan were among my favorite artists back in high school. Later on, I did not give much thought to why I liked these artists; I just liked their music. Looking back, many of their songs were full of love, longing, loss, and sadness. In the 11th verse of “Song for Judith,” Judy Collins provides a retrospective view:

Even though Judy Collins has so much to say on November 21st.

“Sometimes I remember the old days When the world was filled with sorrow You might have thought I was loving but I was all alone In my heart the rain was falling The wind blew, the night was calling Come back, come back I'm all you've ever known…”

As an adolescent and young adult, for some unknown reason, the tones, rhythms, and lyrics of these dark songs hit the spot. As I have gotten older, I have gone through different musical phases but sad songs full of melancholy are still some of my favorites, whether it’s Muddy Waters, Bruce Springsteen, Guy Clark, or Buddy Miller.

Ironically, although most of us find it hard to talk openly about depression, many of us love to listen to the blues. The popularity of sad themes and depression in music reflects the prevalence of these concerns in our lives. Musicians have permission to give them voice without making them pathological. Their songs resonate and soothe without diagnosing. The final verse of “Song for Judith,” suggests the healing powers of friendship and sharing:

“You open the door and come in I'm glad to see you, you're a friend You're all like rainbows, coming around the bend And when I see you happy, well it sets my heart free I would like to be as good a friend to you, as you are to me.”

Suffice it to say, I look forward to hearing what Judy Collins has to say on November 21st.

Marshall Thomas, MD

Executive Director

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Managing Suicidal Risk in Clinical Practice Workshop

On August 29th, the Depression Center and the Carson J Spencer Foundation jointly hosted a workshop for mental health clinicians on the Anschutz Medical Campus. The workshop, Managing Suicidal Risk in Clinical Practice, was presented by Dr. David Jobes; an internationally recognized expert on the subject. Jobes is a Professor of Psychology and Associate Director of Clinical Training at the Catholic University in Washington D.C. He is the past president of the American Association on Suicidology. He has also served as a consultant to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Institute for Social Research, the National Academy of Sciences, and the US Department of Defense.

The workshop was the second clinical training event to be presented in partnership with the Carson J Spencer Foundation and drew over 100 mental health clinicians from across Colorado and Wyoming. Participants learned about assessment, assess, treat and manage patients at risk for suicide. Carson J Spencer President Sally Spencer-Thomas, PhD called the event a tremendous success. “We drew more participants than we had originally hoped for and the feedback we received was almost exclusively positive,” said Spencer-Thomas.

Today, young boys are often discouraged from expressing emotion by their parents, which can have lasting effects that later in life may make it hard regarding emotional expression. Weiner states, “As boys grow up, they may experience much more difficulty labeling or expressing their emotions” says Weiner. “Many women don’t know much about her music. Judy Collins, Joni Mitchell, and Bob Dylan were among my favorite artists back in high school. Later on, I did not give much thought to why I liked these artists; I just liked their music. Looking back, many of their songs were full of love, longing, loss, and sadness. In the 11th verse of “Song for Judith,” Judy Collins provides a retrospective view:

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