



## TEEN DEPRESSION

Why? What can help?



## 3 COVER SUBJECT TEEN DEPRESSION —Why? What Can Help?

*According to reports, the number of teens being diagnosed with depression is increasing at an alarming rate.*

*What can be done about the problem?*

*This issue of “Awake!” discusses some suggestions for teens who suffer from depression and for their parents as well, to help them offer their children comfort and support.*

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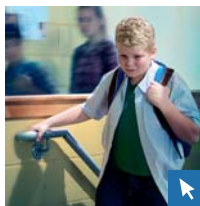
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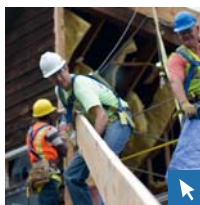


#### YOUNG PEOPLE ASK

### How Can I Deal With Anxiety?

The tips in this article can help you make anxiety work for you rather than against you.

(Look under BIBLE TEACHINGS > TEENAGERS, or use the Search function)



#### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Do Jehovah's Witnesses Assist With Disaster Relief?

Learn how Jehovah's Witnesses provide practical assistance to fellow believers and others.

(Look under ABOUT US > FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS)



## COVER SUBJECT

# Teen Depression —Why? What Can Help?

“WHEN I have a bout of depression,” says Anna,\* “I have no motivation to do anything, not even the things I usually love to do. All I want to do is sleep. I often feel that I am unlovable, worthless, and a burden to others.”

“I thought about suicide,” recalls Julia. “I didn’t really want to die. I just wanted to stop feeling this way. I’m normally a caring person, but when I’m depressed, I care little about anyone or anything.”

Anna and Julia were in their early teens when they first experienced depression.

\* Names have been changed.

While other young people might occasionally feel down, Anna and Julia had periods of depression that persisted for weeks or months at a time. “It’s like being stuck in a deep, dark hole with no way out,” Anna says. “You feel like you are losing your mind, losing who you are.”

Anna and Julia’s situation is not uncommon. The diagnosis of depression among the young appears to be increasing at an alarming rate, and depression is “the predominant cause of illness and disability for both boys and girls aged 10 to 19 years,” says the World Health Organization (WHO).

The symptoms of depression can appear during adolescence and may include changes in sleep patterns, appetite, and weight. Feelings of despair, hopelessness, sadness, and worthlessness may also appear. Other signs include social withdrawal, trouble concentrating or remembering, suicidal thoughts or actions, and medically unexplained symptoms. When mental-health professionals suspect depression, they usually look for groups of symptoms that persist for weeks and that disrupt a person's everyday life.

### POSSIBLE CAUSES OF TEEN DEPRESSION

According to WHO, "depression results from a complex interaction of social, psychological and biological factors." These may include the following.

**Physical factors.** As was true in Julia's case, depression often runs in families,

suggesting that genetics can play a role, perhaps affecting chemical activity in the brain. Other physical risk factors include cardiovascular disease and changing hormone levels, as well as ongoing substance abuse, which may intensify depression, if not give rise to it.\*

**Stress.** While a little stress can be healthy, chronic or excessive stress can be physically and psychologically harmful, sometimes to the point of plunging a susceptible, or biologically vulnerable, teen into depression. That said, the exact causes of depression remain unclear and may involve a combination of factors, as mentioned earlier.

Stress-related factors linked to depression may include parental divorce or separation, the death of a loved one, physical

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\* Hundreds of diseases, medications, and street drugs can affect a person's mood, underscoring the need for a proper medical diagnosis.

## What Parents Can Do

- Recognize that depressed teens may find it hard to express their feelings or may not understand what is happening to them. They may not even be aware of the symptoms of depression.
- Teens tend to express their depression in ways different from those of adults, so be alert to major changes in your child's behavior, eating habits, moods, sleep patterns, or social interactions—especially if the changes persist for weeks.
- Take seriously any comments or hints regarding suicide.
- If you suspect depression (not just the blues), consider getting a professional diagnosis.
- Help your teen adhere to the doctor's prescribed treatment, and consult the doctor if you see no improvement or observe unpleasant side effects.
- Have a stable family routine for eating, exercising, and sleeping.
- Maintain good communication with your teen, and help him or her to deal with any stigma associated with depression.
- Because depression can make one feel alone, ashamed, or worthless, regularly reassure your teen of your love.



or sexual abuse, a serious accident, illness, or a learning disability—especially if a child feels rejected as a result. A related factor may be unrealistically high parental expectations, perhaps in regard to scholastic achievement. Other possible causes are bullying, uncertainty about the future, emotional estrangement by a depressed parent, and parental unpredictability. If depression results, what may help a teen to cope?

### CARE FOR YOUR MIND AND BODY

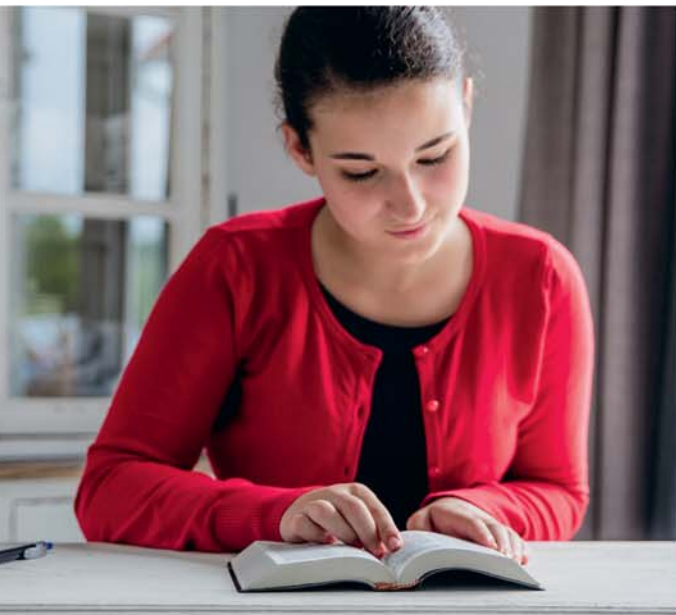
Moderate to severe depression is usually managed with medication and counseling by a mental-health professional.\* Jesus Christ said: “Those who are strong do not need a physician, but those who are ill do.” (Mark 2:17) And illness can affect any part of our body, including our brain! Lifestyle changes may also be advisable because our mind and body are closely connected.

If you suffer from depression, take reasonable measures to care for your physical and mental health. For instance, eat wholesome meals, get sufficient sleep, and exercise regularly. Exercise releases chemicals that can lift your mood, increase your energy, and improve your sleep. If possible, try to recognize triggers and early warning signs of a depressive mood and create a suitable plan of action. Confide in someone you trust. A supportive network of close family members and friends may help you to cope more effectively with your depression, possibly reducing symptoms. Record your thoughts

\* *Awake!* does not endorse any specific treatment or therapy.



Eat well, stay active, and get sufficient sleep



You can find comfort by satisfying your spiritual need

## Depression and Teenage Girls

The incidence of depression in teenage girls appears to be higher than that of boys. One factor may be the stress resulting from emotional, physical, or sexual harassment or abuse, which girls often have to cope with. “When a scary external world and a chaotic internal world collide,” wrote professional counselor Sharon Hersh, “the result is often overwhelming and confusing.” Girls may also be unduly influenced by media portrayals of the “ideal” body. A girl who sees herself as physically undesirable or who is overly concerned about peer approval may be more vulnerable to depression.\*

\* See “The Bible’s Viewpoint—Physical Beauty,” in *Awake!* No. 4 2016.

and feelings in a journal—a practice that helped Julia, quoted earlier. Above all, be sure to address your spiritual need. This can greatly improve your outlook on life. Jesus Christ said: “Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need.” —Matthew 5:3.

Both Anna and Julia attest to Jesus’ words. Anna says: “Spiritual activities make me focus on other people, not just on my own problems. That isn’t always easy, but I am much happier as a result.” Julia finds comfort in prayer and Bible reading. “Pouring out my heart to God in prayer calms me,” she says. “And the Bible helps me to see that I am valuable in God’s eyes and that he really cares about me. Bible reading also gives me a positive view of the future.”

As our Creator, Jehovah God fully understands how our upbringing, experiences in life, and genetic makeup influence our outlook and emotions. He is therefore able to supply needed support and comfort, perhaps doing so through compassionate and understanding fellow humans. Moreover, the time will come when God will heal us of all our illnesses, physical or mental. “No resident will say: ‘I am sick,’” says Isaiah 33:24.

Yes, the Bible promises that God “will wipe out every tear from [our] eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.” (Revelation 21:4) How comforting and reassuring that is! If you would like to learn more about God’s purpose for mankind and the earth, please visit us at [jw.org](http://jw.org). There you will find an excellent online Bible, as well as articles on a broad range of topics, including depression. ■



Contact information  
of people to call  
when you feel down

A journal containing  
your positive thoughts  
as well as positive  
experiences you have  
enjoyed

Mementos to remind you  
of people who love you

## Create a “First-Aid Kit” for Your Emotions

If you suffer from depression, a practical suggestion to help you control your thoughts and feelings is to create what has been called an emotional first-aid kit. The kit, which can be adjusted as you see fit, might include the items on this page.

Favorite songs  
that are positive  
and uplifting

A list of comforting and  
upbuilding sayings from the  
Bible, such as Psalm  
34:18; 51:17; 94:19;  
Philippians 4:6, 7

Inspirational sayings  
and encouraging  
articles



# Your Smile

## A Gift to Share

WHEN someone gives you a beaming smile, how do you respond? Most likely you smile back. And you probably feel happier too. Yes, genuine smiles—whether from friends or total strangers—are infectious, and they evoke good feelings. A woman named Magdalena commented: “Georg, my late husband, had a warm smile. When our eyes met, I felt relaxed and secure.”

A sincere smile indicates positive emotions, such as amusement, happiness, and pleasure. Indeed, “smiling . . . seems built into our nature,” noted an article in *Observer*, an online journal of the Association for Psychological Science. Even newborns, the article said, are able to

“interpret facial expressions with great precision.” The article also stated: “Not only do people deduce useful information from smiles, they also use this knowledge to direct their own behavior.”\*

Researchers at Harvard University in the United States studied a group of elderly patients and their responses to the facial expressions of health-care providers. When the caregivers’ facial expressions “were perceived as more warm, caring, concerned, and empathetic,” said the researchers, the patients felt more satisfied and their physical and mental well-being

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\* Using figurative language, the Bible even describes God as smiling. Psalm 119:135 states: “Make your face smile [approvingly] upon your servant.”—Footnote.





improved. The opposite was the case when the caregivers' nonverbal communications distanced them from patients.

When you smile you may also be doing *yourself* a favor. The benefits, studies suggest, include increased confidence and happiness and reduced feelings of stress. Frowning, by comparison, may have the opposite effect.

### SMILES “BOOSTED MY MORALE”

Magdalena, mentioned earlier, was one of Jehovah's Witnesses during World War II. She was sent with other family members to the Ravensbrück concentration camp in Germany for refusing to adopt Nazi ideology. “At times the guards stopped us from speaking with other prisoners,” she recalled. “But they had no control over our facial expressions. Just seeing my mother and sister smile boosted my morale and strengthened my resolve to endure.”

Perhaps you feel that life's anxieties give you little cause for smiling. Remember, though, that feelings are usually preceded by thoughts. (Proverbs 15:15; Philippians 4:8, 9) So, hard though it may be, why not try to dwell on positive, pleasant things whenever possible? \* Bible reading and prayer have helped many people to do just that. (Matthew 5:3; Philippians 4:6, 7) In fact, the words “happy” and “joy” and their derivatives occur hundreds of times in the Bible! Why not read a page or two each day? Who knows? You too may find yourself smiling more often.

Also, do not wait for others to smile at you. Take the initiative; add a little happiness to someone else's day. Yes, see your smile for what it really is—a divine gift that enriches you *and* the people who see it. ■

\* See the article “Do You Have ‘a Feast Constantly’?” in the November 2013 issue of *Awake!*



# ABORTION

Tens of millions of unborn babies are deliberately aborted each year—a number that exceeds the population of many countries.

## A personal choice or a question of morality?

**WHAT PEOPLE SAY** Women who have an abortion do so for various reasons, including economic hardship, relationship problems, the desire for freedom to pursue further education or a career, or not wanting to be a single mother. Others, however, view abortion as morally wrong—a violation of the trust that has been placed upon a pregnant woman.

**WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS** In God's eyes, life—especially human life—is sacred. (Genesis 9:6; Psalm 36:9) This principle applies to a baby growing in the womb, a place designed by God to be a safe haven for a developing child. “You kept me screened off in my mother’s womb,” said a Bible writer. He added: “Your eyes even saw me as an embryo; all its parts were written in your book regarding the days when they were formed.”—Psalm 139:13, 16.

God's view of the life of an unborn child is also reflected in his Law to the nation of Israel and in our God-given conscience. God's Law stated that a person who assaulted a pregnant woman and killed her unborn child was subject to the death penalty—the killer paying with his own life for the life he took. (Exodus 21:22, 23) Of course, the judges had to take into account motives and circumstances.—Numbers 35:22-24, 31.

Humans are also endowed with a conscience. When a woman heeds her conscience, or inner voice, by respecting the life of her unborn child, her conscience rewards her.\* If she violates her conscience, it may trouble her or even condemn her. (Romans 2:14, 15) Indeed, studies indicate that women who have an abortion also have an increased risk of anxiety and depression.

What, though, if the prospect of rearing a child seems daunting, especially when the pregnancy is not planned? Note God's reassuring promise to those who loyally live by his standards: “With someone loyal you act in loyalty; with the blameless man [or woman] you deal blamelessly.” (Psalm 18:25) We also read: “Jehovah loves justice, and he will not abandon his loyal ones.”—Psalm 37:28.

\* A *potential* health risk to mother or child would not justify inducing an abortion. If at childbirth a couple must choose between the life of the mother and that of the child, the couple must decide. That said, in many developed lands, medical advances have made such a situation very rare.

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*“Their conscience is bearing witness with them, and by their own thoughts they are being accused or even excused.”—Romans 2:15.*



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## What if you have had an abortion?

**WHAT PEOPLE SAY** Ruth, a single mother, said: “I already had three young children and felt unable to care for four. Yet, after having an abortion, I felt I had done something horrible.”\* But had she done something that God could not forgive?

**WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS** Jesus Christ reflected God’s mind on matters when he said: “I have come to call, not righteous people, but sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5: 32) Yes, when we feel genuine remorse for a wrong we have committed and we repent and ask God to forgive us, he willingly does so—even for serious sins. (Isaiah 1:18) “A heart broken and crushed, O God, you will not reject,” says Psalm 51:17.

Along with a cleansed conscience, God gives the contrite one peace of mind when

he or she humbly turns to him in prayer. “By prayer and supplication along with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God; and the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your mental powers,” says Philippians 4:6, 7.\* After studying the Bible and pouring out her heart to God, Ruth gained that inner peace. She learned that with God “there is true forgiveness.” —Psalm 130:4. ■

\* The resurrection hope can also contribute to a person’s inner peace. See “Questions From Readers” in the April 15, 2009, issue of *The Watchtower*, which discusses Bible principles relating to the possibility of a resurrection for an unborn baby that dies.

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*“[God] has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor has he repaid us what our errors deserve.”—Psalm 103:10.*

\* Name has been changed.



A wise woman respects her conscience



# “We Were Touched to See Such Love”

ON Saturday, April 25, 2015, a 7.8-magnitude earthquake rocked Nepal, a largely mountainous country north of India. The quake struck about 50 miles (80 km) northwest of the capital, Kathmandu. Tragically, more than 8,500 people died, making this Nepal’s deadliest natural disaster on record. More than half a million homes were destroyed. There are 2,200 of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Nepal, and most lived in the affected area. Sadly, one Witness and her two children died.

“The earthquake occurred when the congregations in the most devastated area were having their Christian meetings,” said a Witness named Michelle. “Had it occurred when many were at home, there would no doubt have been more casualties.” Why were those attending meetings spared? Kingdom Hall design was a big factor.

## **“NOW WE SEE THE BENEFITS!”**

Modern Kingdom Halls in Nepal are designed to be earthquake resistant. Man Bahadur, who is involved in Kingdom Hall construction, states: “We have often been asked why we lay such solid foundations for relatively small structures. Now we see the benefits!” After the earthquake, approval was given for Kingdom Halls to become shelters. Despite aftershocks, Jehovah’s Witnesses and their neighbors felt secure there.

Christian elders quickly began to search for congregation members who were unaccounted for. “The elders put the welfare of the congregation above their own,” said a Witness named Babita. “We were touched to see such love.” The day after the earthquake, the three members of the committee overseeing the work of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Nepal, in conjunction with traveling ministers, or circuit overseers, began visiting congregations to assess needs and support the local elders.

Six days after the earthquake, Gary Breaux, from the Witnesses’ world headquarters in the United States, came to Nepal with his wife, Ruby. “Because of the confusion in Kathmandu, as well as the aftershocks,” said Reuben, a member of the aforementioned committee, “we were unsure if Brother Breaux would be able to come. But he was determined to get here—and he did! The local Witnesses deeply appreciated his visit.”

## **‘WE FEEL CLOSER THAN EVER BEFORE’**

Silas, who works in the Witnesses’ office in Nepal, said: “As soon as our telephone service was restored, the phone began to ring day and night! Fellow Witnesses around the world were concerned about us. Although some spoke languages we couldn’t understand, we sensed their love for us and their eagerness to help.”



A medical team of Witnesses from Europe assisted victims



▲ Gary Breaux, from the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses, visited quake victims

◀ Jehovah's Witnesses and neighbors took refuge in Kingdom Halls

For several days after the quake, local Witnesses brought food to Kingdom Halls to share with those in need. Additionally, a Disaster Relief Committee was established, and soon supplies began to pour in, mainly from Bangladesh, India, and Japan. Within days, a medical team of Witnesses from Europe arrived and set up their base at one of the Kingdom Halls. They immediately got to work, not only checking the physical condition of quake

victims but also helping them deal with any emotional trauma.

Expressing the feelings of many, a woman named Uttara said: "The earthquake was horrible and scary. But afterward, we felt closer to our spiritual family than ever before." Yes, the quake did not weaken the love that Jehovah's people have for him and for one another. Instead, it strengthened that love. ■



# How to Show Appreciation



## THE CHALLENGE

Expressions of appreciation are essential to a successful marriage. Many husbands and wives, however, stop noticing their partner's good traits, much less expressing appreciation for them. In the book *Emotional Infidelity*, one counselor observes that many couples who see him "are much more concerned with what is *not* happening [in their marriage] than with what is. They're in my office to tell me what needs to change, not what needs to stay the same. The mistake every one of these couples makes is that they fail to show love through appreciation."

How can you and your spouse avoid that pitfall?

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

### **Expressions of appreciation can offset marital stress.**

When a husband and wife make an effort to notice and acknowledge each other's good qualities, their relationship typically improves. Even severe tension can be alleviated when spouses feel appreciated by each other.

**For wives.** "Many women tend to overlook the incredible pressure there is on men to provide for their families," says the aforementioned book, *Emotional Infidelity*. In some societies, that pressure may even exist in dual-income families.

**For husbands.** Men often underestimate a wife's efforts to support the household, whether through working, raising children, or homemaking. Fiona,\* who has been married for about three years, says: "We all make mistakes, and when I do, I feel bad about myself. So when my husband tells me I've done well at something around the house—for example, with chores—I realize that he still loves me despite my flaws. I also feel supported and happier about myself!"

In contrast, when a spouse feels taken for granted, it can threaten the very integrity of a marriage. "When you don't feel appreciated by your spouse," says a wife named Valerie, "it's easy to be drawn to someone who *does* make you feel appreciated."

\* Some names have been changed.





## WHAT YOU CAN DO

**Be observant.** During the coming week, notice positive traits that your spouse displays. Also, watch for things that he or she does to keep your household running smoothly—things that perhaps until now you have taken for granted. At the end of the week, make a list of (1) traits that you appreciate in your spouse and (2) things that he or she did for the benefit of your family.—*Bible principle: Philipians 4:8.*

Why is being observant necessary? “After you’ve been married for a few years,” says a wife named Erika, “you can start to take your spouse for granted. You stop noticing the good things he does and tend to focus more on what he *isn’t* doing.”

Ask yourself: ‘Do I take my spouse’s hard work for granted?’ For example, if your husband fixes things around the house, do you hold back from thanking him because you feel that it is his *duty* to take care of such chores? If you are a husband, do you feel that your wife’s efforts in child-rearing do not merit commendation because she is simply doing what is *expected* of her? Make it a goal to notice and be grateful for *all* the efforts—both large and small—that your spouse makes for the benefit of your family.—*Bible principle: Romans 12:10.*

**Give praise generously.** The Bible does not just say that we should be thankful but says: “Show yourselves thankful.” (Colossians 3:15) So try to get into the habit of thanking your spouse. A husband named James says, “When my wife expresses appreciation for the things I do, it makes me work harder to be a better husband and to increase the effort I put into the marriage.” —*Bible principle: Colossians 4:6.*

Husbands and wives who express appreciation for each other strengthen their relationship. “I believe that many marriages could be saved if spouses kept to the fore what they like about each other,” says a husband named Michael. “When problems arise, they’d be less inclined to end the marriage, because they have constantly been reminded of what a good thing they have.” ■

## KEY SCRIPTURES

“Whatever things are praiseworthy, continue considering these things.”—Philippians 4:8.

“In showing honor to one another, take the initiative.”—Romans 12:10, footnote.

“Let your words always be gracious.”—Colossians 4:6.

## ETHAN AND TIA

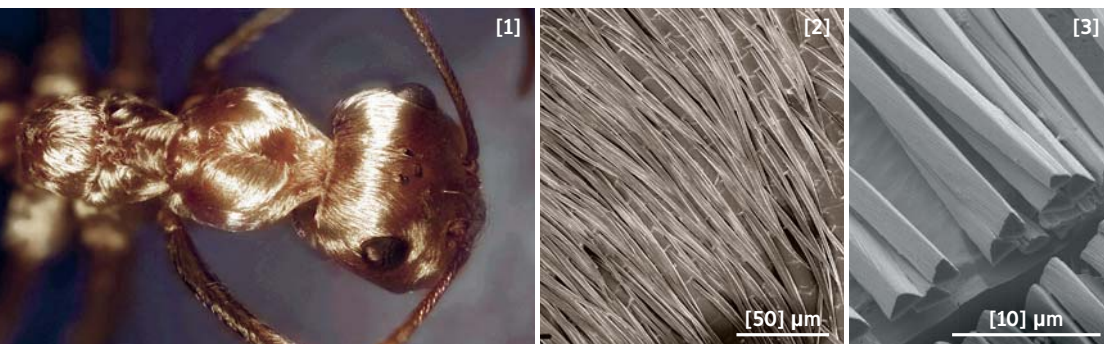
“Daily life is full of challenges that can sap me of physical and emotional energy. But Tia constantly tells me how much she appreciates my efforts as a husband. Her words of appreciation really help to recharge me.”

“I have a full schedule involving an emotionally taxing job. When Ethan tells me that he is proud of me for all I do—and when he demonstrates that appreciation by listening when I tell him about my day—I feel a wave of comfort. It reassures me of his love.”





# The Compound Heat Shield of the Saharan Silver Ant



All photos: Norman Nan Shi and Nanfang Yu

THE Saharan silver ant (*Cataglyphis bombycina*) is one of the most heat-tolerant land animals known. When the midday Saharan sun forces the ant's predators to seek shade, the ant makes brief forays from its burrow in search of food, which consists of other insects killed by the intense heat.

**Consider:** The silver ant's assets include a compound heat shield made up of a covering of special hairs on the top and sides of its body and a hairless underside. The hairs (1, 2), which give the ant a silvery sheen, are tiny tubes with a triangular cross section (3). Their two outward-facing surfaces have microscopic corrugations that run the length of the hair, while the inward-facing surface is smooth. This design serves two functions. First, it enables the hairs to reflect solar radiation in the visible and near-infrared ranges. Sec-

ond, it helps the ant to dissipate body heat absorbed from the environment. Meanwhile, the ant's hairless underside reflects radiation that is in the mid-infrared range and emanates from the desert floor.\*

The Saharan silver ant's compound heat shield helps the insect to keep its body temperature below the maximum it can tolerate—128.5 degrees Fahrenheit (53.6°C). Inspired by that tiny creature, researchers are working to develop special coatings that enhance passive cooling—that is, cooling without the aid of fans or other devices.

**What do you think?** Did the compound heat shield of the Saharan silver ant come about by evolution? Or was it designed? ■

\* The ant's other assets include special proteins in its body that are not easily broken down by intense heat, long legs that elevate it above the hot sand and enable it to run fast, and superb navigational skills, which help it to take the fastest route back to its burrow.

