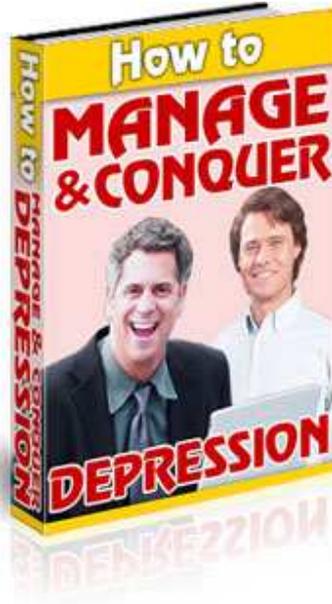


How to Manage and Conquer Depression

By Keith Cook, CC and Joy Bing Fleming, MBA, CC



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Introduction

Millions of people suffer from a depressive illness. They thought that depression is just a normal occurrence in their lives, which will go away after a short while. They just haven't realized how serious depression can be.

Did you know that words related to depression have been searched over 993,000 times on the Internet for May 2005 alone? Much attention has been centered to this international health problem as the rigorous challenges of modern times continue to devastate those who cannot cope with it. Extreme depression can ultimately lead to suicide.

No one is safe from being affected by depression because it affects everyone. It doesn't matter whether you're a male or female, rich or poor, educated or uneducated. Once a person starts becoming depressed, he or she usually behaves in a manner that intensifies the illness.

HOW DOES DEPRESSION AFFECT THE INDIVIDUAL'S BEHAVIOR?

Depressed people have some or more of the following characteristics:

- They lose interest on their love life, career, friends, and family.
- They experience loneliness, hopelessness, gloom, and indifference to their surroundings. It is a feeling of extreme despair.

- They seek to escape from problems and even from life itself. Thoughts of leaving home, running away or avoidance of others is common. They feel life is hopeless and worthless. Suicidal thoughts are lurking in their minds.
- There is a tendency to escape from the company of others because of an unexplained fear of being rejected. Their withdrawal consequently brings on some rejection by other people. They cancel scheduled activities, become uninterested to return phone calls, and seek ways to avoid talking with or seeing others.
- They are overly sensitive to what others say and do. They may misinterpret actions and suggestions in a negative way and become irritable because of those mistaken assumptions. They complain and cry a lot.
- They have a general loss of self-esteem. They feel more and more negative about life's events, and they even question their own personal worth. Their self-confidence level is extremely low.
- They experience negative changes in physical activities—appetite, sleeping and sex. Some lose interest in sexual activities. Some lose interest in food while others gorge themselves with all the stuffs they can eat. Some sleep constantly while others cannot get to sleep easily, or they wake up in the middle of the night and cannot go back to sleep again.

- There is usually an underlying feeling of guilt. They often feel overly responsible for other people's feelings.
- Depression often makes the depressed dependent upon other people. This further aggravates a feeling of helplessness, which makes them more upset.
- They have difficulty expressing and handling their feelings. Anger is especially difficult for them to control. Because of a sense of worthlessness and lack of knowledge in dealing with their situation, they get more enraged in themselves. This can be directed outward at others.

Above ninety-five percent of even the most depressed individuals can be totally cured if the condition is identified at the early stages. It is essential to know and take action when the early warning signs of depression are manifesting.

Dealing with depression requires first and foremost an understanding that it is a common and treatable illness. Its symptoms include the following:

MAJOR SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

- Miserable frame of mind over a period of time, sometimes in a number of weeks
- Expresses grief in activities and life in general, and fails to feel satisfaction
- Disheartened thinking - negative approach about oneself, the present and the future
- Difficulty in focusing and remembering
- Under the dilemma in making decisions - often even the more simple ones

- Feelings of unimportance and desperation
- Anxiety - a sense of being afraid - that something “dreadful” is going to happen
- Phobias or doubts about specific situations
- Loss of appetite and weight loss or, alternatively, increased appetite and weight gain
- Disrupted sleeping patterns - not much sleep or wanting to sleep all the time
- Feeling weary and lacking in energy and inspiration
- Loss of interest in sex
- Physical symptoms - aches and pains, gastrointestinal upsets, headaches
- Incapacity to do the usual everyday activities
- Thoughts of suicide

Various people do not try to find treatment in the early stage of depression as they started to observe such symptoms and thought that it will just pass away in a period of time, not noticing how severe the health problem can be.

UNOFFICIAL SYMPTOMS

People with depressive illness are:

- Indifferent, uncommunicative, silent
- Selfish, unaware or insensitive about the needs of others
- Dominant
- Irrational and unreasonable
- Outgoing and pleasant in public, the opposite at home
- Fickle-minded and unpredictable

- Makes unexplainable and sudden references to separation and divorce
- Cruel, belittling, and critical
- Take alcohol and drugs in excessive amounts

The unofficial list of symptoms demonstrate why depressive sickness threatens good relationships and disrupts families. Identifying, understanding, and learning how to cope with depression is the primary solution to end the sufferer's misery.

OFFICIAL SYMPTOMS

These official real-life symptoms are the ones doctors use to diagnose depression.

- A consistent sad, empty, or distressed mood
- Irritability, excessive crying
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Chronic aches and pains that don't respond to treatment
- Difficulty in remembering, focusing, and making decisions
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities previously enjoyed, including sex and sports
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts

Chapter 1 – The Causes of Depression

You must understand that depression is normal. It is a symptom of something upsetting the balance in your life. There are many causes for depression, as you will see in the list below. The causes may be physical, mental, emotional or spiritual.

MOST COMMON CAUSES

- The factor that contributes a lot to depression is a sense of deprivation, or simply a feeling of being lost. This sense of loss may be real or just in the mind.
- Common things like not getting enough rest or not eating properly can cause depression.
- Certain drugs can affect a person's moods. All drugs affect the body and the mental processes in some way. If a drug produces noxious results in the brain or nervous system, extreme depression could be the consequence. Toxic depression happens when a person takes too much of a drug or tranquilizer over a long period of time. This kind of depression and drug toxicity will clear up in a day or so after the drug is no longer in the system. You must remember that when you start feeling strange while taking a medication, consult your medical doctor.

PHYSICAL CAUSES

The following are some physical causes of depression:

- Hepatitis
- Hypoglycemia

- Infections
- Brain or nervous system disorders
- Glandular disorders
- Low thyroid
- Hyperthyroidism
- Excessive ovarian hormonal irregularities

MENTAL CAUSES

- Pessimistic and Defective Thinking

You've probably heard many times in your life that "It's all in the mind." This can never be truer. If you think that your life is in the dumps, then it probably is. If you think that the problems you face are exciting challenges that will lead you closer to success, instead of thinking of them as real unsolvable problems, then you probably won't feel depressed. It all depends on your attitude.

- Impractical Expectations Not Attained

If you're expecting to be promoted as manager, but someone else gets the job, then re-assess yourself if you really deserve to get the position. If you do not deserve, then work harder and don't get disappointed. If you are worthy for the job but your efforts are not being noticed, then forget about it. Shift your focus on other worthwhile goals. Life is too short to be spent on things beyond our control.

Poor people tend to be more depressed because the television, radio, and newspapers have informed them that there are so many things out there to buy and own, yet they don't have the money. They buy lottery tickets and sweepstakes in the hope of getting rich someday. They should stop making these unrealistic expectations and should just work hard and smart to attain their goals. They should be contented with what they already have, and should strive to improve their lives.

- **Reactive Depression or Grief Reaction**

This occurs after the loss of a loved one, job, or other important aspects of your life. This usually lessens as time goes by. The loss of a partner, close friend, or relative brings on this kind of emotional reaction. Just realize and accept the fact that everything in this world has an end.

- **Rage or Anger Held Back**

Experiencing anger is extremely dangerous to your health. It causes your adrenaline and blood pressure to rise up at above normal levels. Moreover, you could end up hurting someone or doing something that you will regret later on if you can't control it. But if you hold it back, it's very unhealthy and can cause serious depression.

- **Low Self-Esteem**

People with low self-esteem or self-confidence have a higher chance of being diagnosed with depression. One or more of these pessimistic thoughts listed below are always running in their minds:

1. Everything I do is wrong.
2. My efforts are always not enough.
3. No one ever recognizes what I've done for him or her.
4. Everything is always my fault.
5. I am nothing compared to other people.
6. My skill is worthless.
7. Everyone else is much better (much intelligent, much stronger) than me.

Sooner or later, they will accept this as true despite all evidence to the contrary. Interactions with depression sufferers suffering from low self-esteem range from difficult to intolerable. When you offer love and affection, they are not recognized and reciprocated. Despite exerting all efforts to help them, you are told you don't understand what is wrong. You receive complaints that the support you extend is not sufficient, or not the right kind.

- Stress

One of the most common yet deadliest enemies we face in this modern, demanding world is STRESS. And I have to stress that out because it is often ignored, yet it can really damage your health and your life. It can ultimately contribute to depression.

Probably the leading type of stress is job stress or work-related stress. It is not unusual for workers to be grumpy on Monday and happy on Friday night. Work-related stress has been the cause of many ailments such as extreme fatigue, headaches, anxiety, nervousness, respiratory illnesses, muscle pain, back pain, ulcers, insomnia, high blood pressure,

depression of course, and even obesity! If you've been so preoccupied with your work and you haven't got the time to take a short break, you'll be more likely to pig out on dinner or midnight snacks. And of course, job insecurity can lead to depression.

Other factors that contribute to stress are relationship problems, health problems, and money problems. Things like a fight with your sister, not being able to pay your debts on time, supporting a family on a meager income, having an incurable disease, can indeed bring about depression. Even positive events such as getting a job promotion or having more job responsibilities, getting married, or getting pregnant can also lead to tension, and depression.

EMOTIONAL CAUSES

- **Hormonal Changes After Childbirth**

Some women tend to have a depression illness after their baby is born. It is called Postpartum Depression, but many people call it the "baby blues." This type of depression is caused by hormonal changes upon pregnancy.

When the mother experiences depression before giving birth, there's a bigger chance that she will experience more depressive feelings after the child is born. Sometimes the mother will feel awful for having this kind of feeling, when she's supposed to be exhilarated with her baby.

There is nothing to be ashamed about. This is not the mother's fault. It's caused by the hormonal changes, and could be aggravated by the stress of waking up at night to feed the baby, work-related and travel-related stress, as well as an increase in the overall expenses.

This type of depression will disappear as time passes by, but getting support and medication could help in easing the current problem.

- **Getting Old Syndrome**

When people reach the age of 60 and above, they tend to feel left out. They retire and stay at home watching TV or doing nothing. This makes them feel lonely and depressed. Furthermore, they have been through many of life's challenges – passing away of loved ones, being left by sons and daughters, health problems, and others.

Look over the above list of depression causes and see if you can pick up anything that might be contributing to your depression. More often than not, it is a sign that your body needs rest and relaxation after a period of handling pressures and exhaustion. Observe this hint as you would a sign of hunger or pain.

Chapter 2 – Going Beyond Love

“No one is an island.” This maxim we used to hear is a proof that humans need to love and be loved. That is why love is considered as the most important human need in life. When someone is lacking in love, he or she may feel irritated and alone. Depression comes along as an aftermath. That is how love and depression are interconnected with one another.

INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN LOVE AND DEPRESSION

From the start, since birth, all of us need the unconditional love of our mother to make us feel that we are important and exceptional for them. During the pregnancy of a mother, her love is important to a child in her womb. Without it the child may undergo trauma, and the so-called thrive syndrome... that will lead to a depression.

Some people recognize that a child wouldn't live normally when love is denied. Thus, lack of love is considered as the leading factor of being depressed (It is the so-called depression caused by the history of the individual).

Not only the child on the mother's womb is affected by the lack of love. A person who grows up feeling unloved may develop depression within himself/herself. There comes a time that he /she will look for love even in “the wrong places”.

If you see yourself feeling this kind of deficiency, you can start striving for the best ways of coping with depression by trying the easy strategies as follows:

1. Think of it this way: There might be people around you that may not always express their love for you, but they will always be there when something goes wrong.
2. Believe that you may not hear the acceptance of people around you, but still you are important for them in such a way that they only understand.
3. You may not understand the way people reacts about you, they may not show their love for you the way you want them to. But still, you can show your love for them in the best way you can. This is the best way to feel good, to show how much you love and appreciate people around you!
4. Last, remember always that you can't reach that age of yours if no one loves you. There will always be someone who loves you from the start...you may not see Him but He loves you. God will always be there for you no matter what!

For you to conquer your depression, what you really need is information about it and street-smart advice from others. Learn to appreciate yourself the way you are. Listen to this. An idea of changing yourself may come on your mind when you are tired of trying to be loved the way you wanted to, but don't you realize that you might be appreciated the way you are and you just don't notice because you are asking for more than what the people around you can give? Be ready to accept them, and their ability to love you for what you are, and you will feel the unconditional love you're longing for.

Chapter 3 – Coping with Depression

Regardless of age, status in the society, or profession, depression may affect anyone. It may exist at times of puberty, after childbirth and/or at mid-life. Thus, this health problem occurs at a specific period of time wherein circumstances of life may influence your mood. Immediate depression may be caused by particular events and losses such as death of a person close to you or reduction of your income. There are also other aspects to be considered, such as inherited factors associated with depression (a history of family depression) or other physical factors (abridged levels of neurotransmitters in the brain).

At various phases of our lives, we have all experienced being “down and troubled.” It is due to the changes in our day-to-day living. It also affects our environment and interaction with others. Sometimes, events apparently cause us to be more upset and we become depressed for over a long period of time.

As everyday events influence our moods, some make the misconception of depression as temporary “blues” or sadness. It might be a normal grief caused by the death of your loved one. People with the “blues” and normal grief might experience short-term symptoms of depression.

MYTHS AND FALSE IMPRESSION

The term “depression” is used to express a depressed mood, simultaneously with other symptoms, that exist for a prolonged period of time. When depression is not cured, it may influence normal performance. It is important to recognize that depression is not a sign of frailty or a lack of

determination, and not something that you can easily escape from. It is a condition that can be cured through proper treatment.

Because of the link between grief and depression, some make false impressions to both.

Here are some myths that needs to be cleared up.

- Depressed People are Mentally Unstable and Inefficient.

As you might experience troubles in making decision and difficulty in concentration and memory, lack of knowledge and misinformation leads to the thought that depressed people are incompetent. This is certainly not true! Because depression is a treatable illness, it can be cured by your own determination and will power. It can be treated faster with the help of others.

- Someone Must Have Brought the Depression.

All of us used to admire others and set them as our role models. They might be our parents or other famous personalities. Some people have been mistaken and blamed by others for causing depression. You must understand that depression is a health problem that can only be caused by yourself and nobody is to blame .

- Depression is God's Way of Punishing for Some Wrong Act or Misbehavior.

This is a widespread belief in the midst of sufferers. If a person can't find the answer for his or her sufferings, then it might tend to make himself or herself more burdened by the depression, causing that person to find something wrong with himself or herself.

This piece of writing describes what depression is and looks at the common causes and symptoms, as well as some of the myths about depression.

No one should be ashamed of being depressed. It might seem so difficult and sometimes unbearable, to draw yourself out of a sinkhole of depression, but it is **THE MOST TREATABLE EMOTIONAL PROBLEM**. Always remember that you are not a terrible or hopeless person.

Particular self-help methods in this section will seem more suitable for you to use to cope up with your depression. You can try two or three and see if they work. If not, take a break on something else. In general, gaining some optimism about getting better, having a clear viewpoint, and getting family support, along with selected self-help methods, will lead to a better recovery from depression.

BASIC PRINCIPLES IN HANDLING DEPRESSION

- Free Yourself from Bitterness and Hatred Each Day.

Avoid going to bed with annoyed and irritable feelings against people you have a misunderstanding with. Eliminate hatred from your heart and mind. Release all anxieties, tension, and anger on a daily basis.

- Look for Something That You Can Bring About for a Particular Person

If possible, do a nice deed each day. Stretch out to anyone in need.

- Get in Touch Frequently with Our Creator.

You must realize that His love is unconditional. You will always feel happiness and contentment if you build an intimate relationship with Him.

- Worship God Everyday.

"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

- Get Something Done to Settle Family Misunderstandings.

Establish close and harmonious relationships with each member of your family. Encourage an open communication line with your spouse and children. You will feel much better inside when you share problems and secrets with people you are close with.

- Get Involved in A Small Group Religious Study or Share Group.

- Be Personally Involved in Something That You Enjoy Doing and That Will Benefit You for a Lifetime.

The known ways for coping with depression are as simple as follows: As the time comes in our lives when we most feel like doing nothing, you need to **DO SOMETHING!** When the future looks most bleak, you need to look forward to it with hope and courage. If you hate yourself because of a big boo-boo you have committed, you have to accept your mistakes, learn from them,

and move forward. Eventually, no matter which "cure" you take, you will have to help yourself; there is no easy, effortless, and magical cure.

CONTROL YOUR ANGER, CONTROL YOUR DEPRESSION

To completely release yourself from the sinkhole of depression, you must also be free from anger.

Here are 7 fabulous tips to help you manage and control your anger:

1. Relax and Visualize.

Calm yourself down. Take a deep breath. As you exhale, imagine all those bottled-up rage come out of your nose and mouth. Release it and be free. Repeat this step over and over until you feel peace inside. Then visualize being in a place where you feel most happy, calm, and relaxed. It may be a place like a beach, garden, scenic location, or anywhere else you might think of. Just imagine being there and inhaling the essence of your serene surroundings. By doing this, you will not find it hard to attain inner peace.

2. Pour Out Your Anger to Safe Outlets.

You had a big quarrel with your former friend. He betrayed your trust. You want vengeance and you're raving mad. You just have to let it out or you'll feel more and more depressed. But don't let it out on him. Try your best to get away from him as far as you can. You don't want to hurt anyone. Anger can possess your brain into doing something that you wouldn't dare do before. How do you then release your anger properly? Buy a punching bag, then pour out all your rage in it. Punch it, kick it, and strangle it. Imagine the punching bag as your enemy. When you're done, you will feel a sense of satisfaction.

You may even punch and kick through thin air if you desire. Another way to release it is "SHOUT!" Find a distant place where you can be alone - a place where no one can hear you. At the top of your voice, yell out loud "Aaaaaaaarrrrrrrrrggggggghhhhhhhh!!!!!"

You can choose any word you like as long as you release all those angry demons out of your chest.

3. Forgive and Forget.

Nothing could ease your mental and emotional pains better than by forgiving someone that has hurt you in the past. It is very unhealthy to burden yourself with unnecessary torture brought about by unpleasant memories of other people's demeaning acts.

Moreover, if they have taken something important away from you, would it make sense to also sacrifice your health and lifestyle, and feel much more depressed than ever?

Of course not!

4. Exercise.

Engaging in exercises increases your endorphins. Your angry mood could miraculously change to a happy one if you get involved in exercises that you enjoy doing.

5. Have a Circle of "Sponge" Friends.

Do you feel relieved when you voice out all your problems to close friends and relatives? That's the power of voicing out your inner feelings. Always have someone to talk to when you're down, when you're depressed, when you're mad, or in any other occasion when you feel you have to get the thorns out of your chest.

6. Listen to Soothing Music.

It calms your soul. A 20-minute session of listening to relaxing music while resting comfortably could soothe the upset spirit. Take deep breaths often.

7. Pray.

Deadly consequences arise when people could not hold back their fury. Ask for guidance that you will be able to control your temper. Prayers bring inner peace to those who ask for it.

REMARKABLE REMEDIES FOR SELF-ESTEEM

If you are suffering the mental crisis of low self-esteem, serious action should be taken to regain it.

So what can be done to revive self-esteem? Here are some remarkable remedies :

1. Satisfy or Indulge Yourself.

Eat whatever you want, play a sport you're most interested in, go to places that make you happy.

2. Get in Touch with Your Close Friends Often.

Their encouragement and company can boost your confidence level.

3. Whatever You Do Well, Do Often.

If you have a certain skill or talent that you're good at, develop it. If you see yourself becoming or performing better than others, that will really boost your self-esteem to greater heights.

4. Do whatever reminds you that you are a good, brilliant, capable, responsible, and caring person despite experiencing the opposite feeling.

5. Imagine yourself as being famous and successful if you feel that others are not paying attention to you.

6. Safeguard and maintain good health.

7. Set yourself attainable goals.

PRACTICAL METHODS TO COMBAT STRESS

A stress-free lifestyle could very well do wonders in eliminating depression. Here are some practical methods to combat stress:

1. Express Amusement And Be Happy.

Laugh hard and loud. If you don't have a sense of humor, find someone else who has. Laughter releases endorphins (happy chemicals) from the body, and it helps boost your immune system.

2. Take Control Over Your Time and Schedule.

You'll be much more able to deal with stress if you have a good handle on your job, relationships, and other activities. When you are in control, you are more inclined to stay focused and calm. Plan your time wisely.

Remember to leave room for unexpected events – both negative and positive. Be adaptable in rearranging your agenda. Get up 15 minutes early in the morning. Allow an extra 15 minutes to get to all appointments.

Avoid procrastinating on important or urgent tasks. Whatever needs doing, do it immediately. Do the unpleasant tasks early, so that you won't have to worry about them for the rest of the day. Keep an appointment or record book. Don't just rely on your memory.

Do your tasks one thing at a time at a time. Focus your attention on the present moment, whether it's the person talking to you or the job at hand. This helps you to avoid making errors - which lead to more tension and anxiety. Be patient in waiting. Anxiety caused by impatience can rise up your blood pressure.

Say “no” to requests that you cannot accomplish. Delegate trivial tasks. You must remember that you don’t have to do it all yourself. Crack a job into separate tasks and assign them to people with the suitable skills.

3. Work Out

Strive and get some habitual exercise such as brisk walking, swimming or whatever appeals to you. Play a sport you’re interested in. Aerobic exercises can considerably reduce the stress factor. Work out also improves sleep and gives you time to think and focus on other things. It also promotes the release of natural soothing chemicals in your body. Do not result to excessive exercise, however, as this may have an adverse effect and might cause more depression.

4. Search Out For A Support Group.

You’ll be able to manage stress much better if you have other people helping and supporting you. Did you know that married people and people who are outgoing (always meeting with friends), have considerably low levels of stress in their lives?

Choose positive friends who are not worriers. Friends who continually put you down or talk gloomily about life will increase your anxiety. Invite a good friend to help you talk out a problem and get it off your chest. A long-distance call to an old pal can be great therapy.

Pardon others instead of holding grudges. Slow down your standards – for yourself and others. Don’t expect too much. Perfectionism is not the means to happiness. Become

more flexible and adaptable to your environment. Communicate clearly with your co-workers and boss. Ask questions. Repeat instructions that you are given. Clarifying directions at the start of a project can save lots of time later rectifying out misunderstandings. Be honest in your dealings with others. Lying and cheating leads to stress.

5. Take Breaths Deeply and Slowly.

Calm down your muscles, escalating your stomach and chest. Exhale slowly. Do it again several times. Follow your breath as it flows in and out. Do not try to have power over it. This is a good way to relax in the midst of any activity. This practice allows you to find a breathing pattern that is natural and relaxing to you.

Make use of this yoga technique: Inhale slowly, counting to eight. Exhale through your mouth, even more slowly, counting to sixteen. Make a sighing sound as you exhale, and feel tension dissolve. Do it again 10 times.

6. Consume Healthy Foods at the Appropriate Time.

Never skip meals, especially breakfast. Get time out to eat heartily no matter how busy you are. Take nutritious snacks to the office, or even the shopping mall. A nutritionally balanced diet is essential to your health and lifestyle. For example, researchers have found that even small deficiencies of thiamin, a B-complex vitamin, can cause anxiety symptoms. Pantothenic acid, another B-complex vitamin, is critical during times of stress. Avoid caffeine, alcohol, and large amounts of sweets, which can worsen symptoms of stress.

7. Live Optimistically.

Count your blessings, particularly when everything seems to go wrong. Believe that many other people are living in worse conditions than you are. Don't exaggerate the complexity of your problems. Every problem has a solution. All you need to do is find that solution. Learn to be happy and to enjoy life's blessings. Live one day at a time.

8. Put Off Problems Earlier Than They Occur.

This takes some preparation. If you are going to another city for an valuable meeting, carry your presentation materials and dress suit on board the plane.

Acquire gas for the car before the tank is unfilled. Get usual oil changes and checkups. Keep food ready anytime at your house so you can fix a fast meal without going to the store. Keep food, medicine, and toiletries on hand so you never have to feel tensed when they run out.

9. Enjoy The Good Things That Life Has to Offer.

Grant yourself some physical pleasure and enjoyment to help your stress slip away. Indulge yourself to a professional massage, or trade massages with a loved one. Give yourself consent to enjoy a movie, watch a concert or sports event, listen to music, or read a book. Take pleasure in a soothing cup of chamomile herb tea with a little bit of honey. Chamomile has long been used to relieve nervous tension.

Arrange a day of beauty with a friend. Do each other's hair, or paint your nails and chat.

Make a simple steam facial at home by boiling water. Remove the pan from the stove. Cover your head with a large towel so that it creates a tent over the pot. Steam your face for five or 10 minutes. Add aromatic herbs to the water for a sensual touch. Center your attention on any of the senses – hearing, seeing, eating or body movements – for a few minutes. Even washing your hands can become a sensual experience.

10. Possess a Definite Goal or Purpose in Life, and Strive for it..

Plan ahead to meet your most desired goals in life. You should always wake up with a sense of purpose.

Time management experts highlight the importance of writing down your important goals. Break big projects down into a series of small steps that you can work on every day. Want to change jobs? Contact one prospective employer today. Is writing a book your dream? Commit to writing one page a day. Inch by inch, slowly but surely, you will get to your ultimate destination.

Knowing that you are striving toward your dreams relieves frustrations that mount when you feel stuck in a situation that seem to have no direction.

11. Move Away to Recharge Your Spirit.

Make a schedule for a private time alone every day. You deserve it. Unplug the telephone and enjoy a quiet evening alone or with your family, or even 15 continuous minutes in the

shower or bathtub. You may want to spend a few minutes writing your feelings out in a journal. It can help you find a new viewpoint in life and relieve internal conflicts.

More Tips to Recharge Your Spirit

- Have on earplugs for instant peace anytime, anyplace.
- Be taught of a meditation technique. Two methods: Observe your thoughts as they pass through your mind. Or, repeat a word or phrase with an uplifting meaning.
- Put into practice progressive relaxation for 20 minutes twice a day to relieve high blood pressure and other physiological responses to stress. Make tighter and release each muscle group in turn, starting with the soles of the feet and slowly working up to the scalp.
- Schedule a weekend activity that is a change of your usual routine. If your week is a lot scheduled, relax and enjoy noncompetitive activities. If you are never able to finish anything during the week, choose a project that you can complete in a few hours on weekends.
- Take time out for a little entertainment in the middle of your workday. When the pressures of completing a project are too great, your productivity can drop. Take a walk or eat lunch outside the office.

12. Use Visualization and Affirmation Techniques.

You can conquer a circumstance you fear by going over the event in your mind. Imagine the scene in clear detail and visualize the best possible result that may happen.

You can also reduce an imagined fear down to size by picturing the worst possible outcome. Visualize describing this worst case to your best friend the next day and the sympathy you receive. Imagine telling a group of friends the next month, who contribute to their similar experiences. Finally, imagine joking about your unpleasant experience with a complete stranger a month later. If you carry this exercise through to the end, your stress will become something to laugh about.

Replace negative self-talk with affirmations. Don't let your mind be filled with gloom: You're too ugly. . . you're too old. . .you'll never achieve anything. And things like: What if I fail the exam? What if she doesn't like my gift? What if we get lost? These things haven't even occurred yet. Nourish your mind with a constant stream of "I can; therefore, I will."

13. Get Sufficient Sleep.

Settle on how much sleep you require for best possible performance. Lack of sleep worsens the body's responses to stress and lowers the immune system.

14. Don't Be Self-Centered.

Always remember that you don't have to attain all the money, fame, and success in the world. Today's society forces us to build up as much accomplishments as we can, while trying to balance our own personal and family life. There's just not enough time to do all these things. Start from the most important task and focus on one thing at a time.

Chapter 4 – Handling Depression With The Help of Others

Some depression might seem very serious, but you don't have to be afraid that it can't be treated. There are factors that must be considered in seeking for the help of others – this might be in the form of therapy, medicine, family counseling, and/or religious faith.

It is necessary to find someone to talk to - someone compassionate, encouraging, and supportive who will listen to you. Talking about your depression can relieve some of the pain and distress and can actually be your initial move in accessing the help you need. It can indicate the first step to recovery.

There are various numbers of very effective treatments for depression. The counseling and psychiatric therapy can be very advantageous. One factor that serves as a proof that you already need professional help is when you feel that your depression is very serious and you are relating the answer to your sufferings with suicide. Serious depression seems to have genetic, hormonal, and/or chemical aspects that are activated by stress and distressing life events and thoughts. Thus, when the depression is serious, have to be evaluated by a trusted psychotherapy.

WILL PSYCHOTHERAPY CURE YOUR DEPRESSION ILLNESS?

Some has misconception that those under the help of psychotherapists are at the stage of unstable life. This is nonsense! You must realize that people with serious depression must be treated with their help. In making a decision whether to ask or be against the help of psychotherapist, you must understand several factors that are express in details.

WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING FOR OR AGAINST THERAPY

- Around 50% of most depressions fade away in 6 to 12 months without any treatment at all. If you are coping with mild depression and you can tolerate it, just being patient in waiting it out is a good option. The guiding idea for you should be whether or not the illness is adequately impairing you to cause problems in your personal life and relationships.
- If your depression has noticeably been triggered by a specific life event (death of a loved one, loss of a job, etc.), therapy may speed up your healing process, but "reactive" depressions often accumulate force and can become serious depressions. If this occurs to you, medication is needed.
- Medication is recommended for victims of frequent depression. Most depressives might find talk therapy to be an effective cure. Communicating and sharing problems with other people can release some of the tensions building up within the depressed.
- Your time, money, goals and especially health insurance are all important factors to be considered.

When you are feeling the signs of serious depression you can immediately ask for the help of a therapist. If you are in a therapy or a group, you must make it sure to tell your therapist how much you are hurting. Call a therapist or your mental health center. Do not delay by trying to treat yourself or by hoping you'll get better.

Medication may be suitable when symptoms have been aggravated and have negatively affected the social life, work activities, relationships, and character of the depressed. There may be some unwillingness to consider medication. While it should not be seen as an absolute treatment on its own, there are times when medication is inappropriate and unnecessary. It is important to know that there have been significant advances in the chemical treatment of depression. Many of the previous medications and their side effects no longer apply. It is important to discuss any concerns with your doctor.

If your depression is primarily chemical, psychological coping techniques are helpful but not that adequate. Likewise, if your depression has psychological causes, drugs may be useful but not sufficient. There is usually no way to tell if your depression is chemical or psychological, so consider both.

THE USE OF ANTI-DEPRESSANTS

Anti-depressants have played a major part in the field of psychiatry. Giving pills has become an alternative solution to talking.

Millions have started taking anti-depressants of different kinds, and many have been satisfied. Nevertheless, you must generally recognize that anti-depressants take around 30 days to work and around 30% of depressed patients get little benefit from them. You must consider these important factors when you are deciding to take anti-depressants.

Most people do not realize how few training and experience primary care doctors, in general, have in dealing with serious psychological disorders, including depression. Depression is a very intricate illness. It isn't something to be diagnosed in a few minutes. And since anti-depressants take 30 days before results can be seen, you need repeated and careful supervision immediately and during the first several weeks.

You must know that the treating physician needs to have a well-informed mental health history (mental problems or illness often accompany depression) and he or she should strongly encourage the patient to also get psychotherapy as well as drugs. Depression is not an easily treated disorder when it becomes serious. When you are suffering serious depression and decide to have your own doctor/therapist for treatment, you should expect him or her to maintain long-term contacts with you as the patient, at least every week for a few months and maybe much longer because depression frequently comes back.

A severe issue that you might not be able to notice is the obvious connection between depression and suicide. You often don't expect suicide as being an integral part of depression. But in many cases, suicide has been the outcome for victims of serious depression. It is the third leading cause in 15 to 24-year-olds and the fourth most common cause of death between ages 10 and 14. This seems to be very serious because 60% of high school students have had thoughts about killing themselves, 9% have even tried. Thus, at every age, depression must not be ignored.

Average or serious depression carries with it a danger of self-injury. This may require special safety measures. For you to decide whether or not to take an anti-depressant, you must carefully consider important factors that may affect your situation. The drugs may slightly increase the risk of irritability and anxiety. In worst scenarios, suicide may cross your mind. This treatment plan must involve your trusted family doctor, the collaborating psychotherapist, your parents or trusted relatives/friends, and you.

Chapter 5 – Psychological Methods To Beat Depression

SELF-CONTROL TREATMENT

A powerful self-control treatment program consists of the following important components:

- Observing Yourself

In the viewpoint of a depressed person, depression usually seems to come for no apparent reason and from nowhere at all. Research has been clearly presented that positive events or activities lead to positive moods, while negative events lead to depression. The depressed person must accept the fact that this is so, amidst having thoughts that the depressed feeling sprung out from nowhere. So rate your mood on a 1 to 10 degree and keep a record every day of positive events and circumstances. It is likely that your mood will mirror what is happening in your life.

We have seen that depressed people focus more on negative events of their lives and neglect or overlook positive ones. They're not wary of this situation and don't know they are doing this. So, it is for your advantage to know the importance of making careful records and try to analyze what is happening in your life everyday. To do this, you must look for and record all gratifying events and activities, even little, trivial pleasant events. It is very important for you to learn again and see the greatness this world has to offer. Feel the invigorating atmosphere and smell the flowers. Don't forget usual things like sipping a cup of coffee, assisting someone, taking a walk, watching a bird, reading a book, taking kids to school, watching your favorite program, reading an advice column, going shopping, listening to music, making yourself attractive, visiting a friend, completing a chore,

daydreaming, playing with children, playing sports, expressing an opinion, getting a long kiss, getting or giving a compliment, and the act of smiling. Jot this in your record book or so-called diary with a brief description of these pleasant events.

As that week of jotting down had passed, make a graph of your daily mood rating and number of pleasant events for that same day. This must be done in the same graph. Then observe if your disposition doesn't go up and down according to how many pleasant events occurred that day. If so, this is a motivating push to increase the number of pleasant events in your life and to appreciate the nice things that happen.

Using this advice, you can have your simplified version of a "behavioral analysis" in which you would look for the previous situations and consequences of good and bad moods. Your objective in doing this is to find cause and affect relationships that can be used to boost your spirits and reduce depression.

- Taking One Small Step at a Time

Some depressed people get disappointed when their desire for a better outcome results to disappointments. One main reason is because their expectations overshadow the essential details of how to get there. Impractical anticipations, like having your grade as all A's, may also lead to frustration and a low self-esteem. Thus, it is important to learn to have a well-defined plan, to set realistic goals and expectations, and to have some success experiences. It is valuable to be satisfied with small rewards and blessings. Thus, you must make a decision on some practical, possible, important self-help project that will boost

your confidence and vitality, such as working out to have a stunning body figure, increased exposure to people, learning to play basketball, spending more time alone with your spouse, or anything for that matter. Then, for each project goal set many clear and reachable sub-goals (small steps), perhaps things you could do every day. Schedule your time, prioritize your tasks, and do all your best to become successful. Jot down your progress in a diary or record book, along with the positive outcomes.

- Evaluating Yourself

As you know, depressed people feel that they are to be blamed when things go bad and they're "just at the right place and at the right time" when things go well. Here's an exercise to help you realize your value and reduce your accountability for negative events.

1. Think of a recent memorable event. Describe it.
2. List the means on what and how the contributions of other people, as well as things beyond human control, were responsible for this situation.
3. List the ways in which your efforts, talents, skills, experience, appearance, etc. were accountable for this event.
4. What rate or percentage of the responsibility/ accountability for this event was attributable to you?

You can try to do this for several events, including both positive and negative ones. You have almost always worked for positive events and against depressing events. So, if you do not think you are really the cause for more than half of the pleasant events, re-evaluate your

explanation of those events and decide if you aren't causing more positive things than you thought. It is a known fact that depressed people belittle their own abilities.

After you have done the re-evaluation, if you can picture yourself as responsible for negative events - over half of the time - see if others aren't more accountable. You will come to realize that your abilities, traits, and contributions can cause good things to happen and that external factors beyond human control are accountable for the negative consequences.

- Focusing on Future Events

When we are depressed, we have the tendency to concentrate on the past or to see initially the immediate consequences, and not the long-term positive results of what we are doing now. The trauma of sufferings in the past can make the depressed people focus their efforts on quick relief, and ignore circumstances that might be cumbersome but very critical or rewarding to their future. Become aware of the effects of your activities by analyzing the outcome of some activity each day.

Your outcome analysis is used to know the advantages and disadvantages of certain tasks, to accept challenges that have big potential, and to give emphasis on practical, long-term planning. This is important for us to do, but it is even more essential and difficult for you if you are a pessimistic person with low self-esteem.

- Reinforcing Yourself

Some depressed people feel that indulging themselves over rewards for any accomplishment is being egotistic. This feeling or behavior becomes an obstacle in using some of the most powerful self-control tools, such as self-reinforcement and self-praise. It is normal to pat yourself in the back once in a while.

Research has shown that whenever we feel down and troubled we tend to do less pleasant activities, but just doing more enjoyable things is not an assurance to beating your depression. However, actions do change feelings. You can increase your activity level, get out of your house then find something exciting and worthwhile to engage in. Start with easier tasks, and work up to more difficult ones. Track and reward yourself as you accomplish each task for motivation.

Research also purports that an aerobic exercise program for at least 30 minutes 3 times a week lessen major depression as much or more than medication. Exercise would be good for you in many ways, not just with depression. Thus, seriously consider this:

Some studies shows that exercise alone three or five times a week for 30 minutes reduces depression by about 50%. That is as good as taking antidepressants or getting psychotherapy treatment.

Take a break from it all. Get lots of rest, relaxation, and sleep always. Our interpersonal situation greatly influences your happiness and depression. It has been found that

bashfulness, loneliness, dependency, and marital problems often precede the scene of depression. You should avoid these conditions as much as you can.

Try to change your depressing surrounding - working conditions, family relationships, stressful situations, and the like. Our mood reflects our environment.

Reduce the pessimistic and self-criticizing thoughts that characterize depressed people such as:

“I am always a failure.”

“This is a hopeless case.”

“I’m messing up again.”

“It will only get worse.”

To control these depressing thoughts, try restricting sad thoughts to specific times or places. Then reward yourself upon eliminating negative thoughts, and replace them with positive visions.

Try your best to have a lot more positive thoughts. Think that living is a gift, and you are very fortunate to have life until now. Be thoughtful – then you will feel that your friends appreciate your efforts. Realize that nothing in this world is permanent and that every problem has an end. Know that you have the ability and talent to outshine others. Even if you don't feel like having these things every hour, feel them anyway. They will become part of your subconscious.

Be happy. Feeling self-satisfaction may help you swing your mood from sad to pretty well. You can practice smiling more, acting in a more confident manner, dressing up more attractively, expressing compliments, and acting as though the future will be better. Acting happier can change your mood.

PREPARATORY ACTION STEPS AGAINST DEPRESSION

If you anticipate a depressing event to occur, advanced planning could be used to reduce the negative outcome. Assume you have an idea that you are about to fail in your exams. Finding alternative solutions and seeking help on how to handle the situation could help.

Emotionally working through an undesirable outcome in advance is usually a lot better way of handling the situation than pretending the event is not going to happen.

When the depressing event does occur, you should try your best to get the feeling of sadness off your chest to reduce depression. A good cry can sometimes relieve sadness. Punching through thin air or beating a pillow can release anger from your body.

After going through a horrendous experience, try your best to start anew. There's so many things you can do to bring back joy and vitality into your life. Here are some suggestions:

- Set goals that you're interested in pursuing and work hard on it.
- Do something you enjoy.
- Help others in attaining their ambitions.

- Plan to do exciting, interesting activities.
- Bond and spend lots of quality time with your loved ones
- Have lots of great experiences, not just big achievements.

The above list isn't just the advice of therapists. Many people who have overcome depression say that things such as enjoying time with the family, finding new career or hobby interests, playing their favorite sports, and getting involved in community service have done wonders in reducing their depression. Many experts believe full recovery from depression would come quicker if you set about setting up and trying to learn how to re-capture the joys of living. It could be a much better alternative than taking anti-depressant pills.

DEVELOPING YOUR SOCIAL SKILLS

Different individuals require different social skills. The response of each individual to a certain situation varies greatly. Review your social skills and weaknesses, and improve on those deficiencies that you think are causing your depression.

Instinctively, having social skills ought to help with sadness, low self-esteem, and indifference to life. Improved communication skills and counseling should also help with relationship problems.

Social skill training improves your ability in meeting people, talking, sharing life experiences and stories, selecting a friend or partner, and having a good time. Social skills don't come naturally to everybody; many of us have to learn and practice good communication skills. Some individuals

are meticulous in choosing the people they interact with. It has been discovered that having good support and close contact with family and friends is beneficial in honing your social skills.

Sometimes, a person's naturally-possessed attitude may be contrary to everyone else's desires or moral standards. The inability to cope with the behavior of others can lead to depression.

Read Michelle's Story:

“My co-workers in the office would always go out after work to play sports or to watch a movie, but I never wanted to do those things. All I want to do is just read my novels about romantic adventures. So every time they go out, I would go to the comfort room and hide away from them so they wouldn't invite me anymore. As time goes on, even though they know I'm in my cubicle, they would just pass me by. They wouldn't invite me anymore, which is what I want. But somehow I feel awful. Because in a sense, I don't want to be left out. I feel like I have no friends and that no one would like to talk to me anymore. Every time they rave about how exciting their game was or how nice the movie was, I just cringe in my chair because I feel awkwardly out of place. I feel really, really bad.”

Does this scene look somewhat familiar? Have you ever been in a similar situation?

If you're Michelle, your depression can be solved by doing any of the following:

- Find co-workers who have similar interests. Birds of the same feather flock together. People are genuinely interested on other people who have the same likes and dislikes as them.

- Ask one of the co-workers (that you're hiding from) if you can join with them in their sports or movie escapade. Hey, if you can't beat them, join them. Who knows, you might not know all along that you are destined to be a great athlete. Just give it a try.
- Find a common link. There must be something that both of you are in agreement with. If your co-worker does charity work and you are also thinking of becoming a volunteer, then by all means go ahead. It will establish a closer bond between the two of you amidst being incompatible in many other ways.

Having good social skills is an important factor in eliminating depression. In this case, being assertive is crucial. Assertiveness is definitely different from fighting or quarreling. It involves expressing inner feelings emotions, like personal needs and positive feelings.

Knowledge and application of good communication skills, fair fighting, quick conflict resolutions, and self-expression could result to much better relationships. Develop your bond and closeness by constant sharing of life experiences, opinions, feelings, and ambitions. This could positively affect your viewpoint in life

EFFICIENT PLANNING AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Poor or no planning, and the inability to manage time, has caused a lot of people to become depressed. Some people thought that it is time-consuming to plan things out. What they didn't know is that going through daily activities without direction and making rash decisions can cause undesirable results, resulting to more time being wasted.

The planning phase is very important in organizing your thoughts to carry out the desired effects. You might say that this is boring stuff, but you should never underestimate this process. This is like a guideline to steer you into the right direction.

Your plan will be your road map. Spend enough time to ponder through the different approaches and choose the best one to implement. It will be best if you choose a quiet place to make your plan. Your mind can focus and think more clearly this way.

Evaluate all the pros & cons. Assess how much time, money, & other resources you have to impart or sacrifice in order to fulfill your desires. Let your goal guide you to choose the best plan to implement. Let the image of your visualization inspire & motivate you to make a plan that will produce the desired results.

Every individual has his own unique perception of a well-made plan. There are no specific rules in making it. But in case you're in a tight situation, let me give you some tips:

- 1) Write down your objective. This is a precise definition of your target.
- 2) Brainstorm the strategies you will employ to achieve your objective.
- 3) Assess the advantages & disadvantages of carrying out those strategies and choose those tactics where the pros outweigh the cons.
- 4) Set a timeline or deadline in completing your mission.
- 5) Make modifications & back-up plans in case Plan A doesn't work.
- 6) As your plan evolves, you will gain experience. Learn from your mistakes.

Hey, to make this more fun, you could imagine being a top secret agent with "an impossible mission." In everything you do, try to mix up some fun & excitement to motivate you further.

Final Words of Advice

Depression is a serious issue that requires much attention. You can try different methods discussed in each chapter of this book to help you cope and cure your depression. You may choose from among the self-help methods, or those techniques that involve the use of anti-depressant pills, or treatment with the help of others such as psychotherapists or psychiatrists.

You must remember just reading will not cure your depression; you must **DO SOMETHING** with the ideas you have already read! You must change how you act and think. Find two or three methods that seem practical to you and give them an honest try. If your first attempts don't work, try something else until you feel less depressed.

Don't be assured that one of the methods above will instantly change or overcome the way in which you act, feel, or think for a long time. You can't just make a plan of one active, fun weekend and then, expect the depression to lift forever. You can't just try stopping depressing thoughts for two or three hours and then, expect these hurtful and distressing ideas to stop forever. You can't just try for an hour to think of positive things about yourself and then, wait for everything to be perfect about yourself ever after. The knowledge and power to beat depression is in your hands, but it requires effort on your part.

You must also take note that if you are suffering from serious depression, you must immediately get professional help. Even if your depression is not serious but a support group and/or your self-help efforts are not helping, get individual therapy from two experienced professionals, such

as psychotherapists. If several sessions of psychotherapy have not helped, get medication from a trusted medical doctor and consider getting second opinion from another trusted psychotherapist.

Anti-depressive medication can be an important source of help, but a placebo pill can be just as effective for some. Oddly, many studies have shown that 30%-40% of depressed people improved when given a sugar pill for the depression, while about 50%-65% improved on an anti-depressant.

You must not overlook the effectiveness of psychological treatment. Many extensive studies and investigations conclude that psychological treatment, such as improving social skills, increasing enjoyable activities, and correcting negative thoughts, can produce better long-term outcomes than drugs. So, don't think that psychology is just a cheap, second-rate source of help for depression; intent research states that psychotherapy is the best treatment you can find but, like drugs, psychotherapy doesn't work for everybody.

Depressed people are often deprived individuals, steadily seeking some accomplishments to make them feel good. They may be strongly dependent on others for back-up and support. The depressed person especially needs others to feel positive about himself/ herself.

It is vitally important that parents give much support and attention to their children. Otherwise, their kids will feel alone and vulnerable, and this can trigger the onset of depression. Parents have the main responsibility to make sure that their children grow up happy, secured, and loved. When this happens, there is more assurance that depression has been prevented right from the very start.

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