

Dealing With Depression

Defining Symptoms

Depression is an experience that can have a very wide range of symptoms from mild feelings of disappointment, sadness and tiredness to dark feelings of hopelessness, despair and sometimes suicide. It might be helpful to understand depression as “REPRESSION,” a pressing down and damming up of anger, emotions, energy and action. Like a river cut off from fresh water, without new energy flowing through us, we are led eventually into feelings of stagnation and deadness.

Causal Factors

Depression usually follows some kind of change, trauma or loss experience. This might include the loss of someone close, a job, our home, a relationship, belief system, or any way of life that we have relied on for our security and support in the past. In my experience, people who struggle with depression find it hard to accept change and give up control, from a fear of the unknown I suspect. Any trauma, loss or change we experience shakes and threatens our control and security. Then we struggle even harder holding on and holding back to regain control or resist the change. This is what drains energy and causes much of the tiredness felt during depression. Over time, this “fear response” and “energy drain” changes body and brain chemistry, causing the darkening of emotions. If this drain extends over a long period, an “energy crisis” and the compromise of our immunity system may follow that will lead to more serious physical or emotional break down and disease. Gestalt Therapy looks at depression as fear-based anger turned and held within. When working with a depressed client, Fritz Perls, the founder of Gestalt Therapy, would confront them with the simple question. “Who are you angry at?” Understanding that negative feelings most often follow blocked energy, getting his clients to express anger was Fritz Perls’ attempt to help his clients to “EXPRESS” rather than “REPRESS” their feelings and open the door to release the more frightening and painful emotions hidden beneath the anger. As soon as we begin to appreciate depression as a form of REPRESSED ANGER, we can then begin to search for the HIDDEN PAIN AND FEAR that activated this defensive response in the first place. Then, if we are ready, we can deal more constructively with them. Anger is best understood as an attempt to defend or gain control in a situation where we feel “NOT IN CONTROL,” helpless and FRIGHTENED. Depression, on the other hand, can best be understood as the destructive consequence resulting from holding on or holding back to resist and repress emotions, action, energy and change, fearing their unknown consequences.

In addition to the more traumatic changes already mentioned, at some point, many of us begin to wake up and realize the disillusionment of life itself. We have been led to believe happiness, security and peace will eventually be found in this world through our relationships, education, career, success and money. Through life experience, we begin to realize this is not true. By their nature, people and situations in this fast-paced world are often threatening and constantly changing leaving us disappointed, lost, anxious, angry and depressed. Some can avoid facing this realization longer than others distracted by family, raising children, career goals, relationship changes, travel and hobbies. Eventually, however, we all face the fact that the long-term security, happiness and peace we seek cannot be found in this world of change, loss and separation. Facing this cannot help but lead us to feel deep loss, **depression** and despair. We would be insane, if we did not. Although threatening and painful at first, this is what eventually presses us to search for a different way and path to peace and security. The less distracted, more sane and ready we are, the sooner we will begin to search for our peace, security and love in other places and in different ways. “When the learner is ready, the teacher will appear.”

Summary Of Cause

Since we live in a world of constant change, this inevitably forces us into unexpected situations with unknown consequences we cannot see or control. Some are gifted with an ability to handle these changes; others are not. For those of us who find change more threatening, anger and depression become real and difficult hurdles to overcome. We tend to live our lives anxious and frightened about the future, constantly trying to avoid its possible pain through worry, planning, painful procrastination and control that will eventually lead to anger or depression. Faced with any threatening experience, the “Fight, Flight, Freeze,” fear or adrenaline response is activated within us to help us survive. Anger is part of the “Fight Response,” an active attempt to establish control through intimidation. Flight or retreat is another active response to threat. Both use and release energy, muscle tension and adrenaline to fulfill their defensive function and thus release some of the tension. Depression, on the other hand, is part of the “Freeze Response” to fear and results from the resistance and repression of any emotion or action that might lead to change. All three are ways we attempt to defend against our fear of the unknown, a fear we will be hurt by unknown forces within or without in some future situation we may not be able to control or survive.

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Depending on an individual’s fear, readiness and depth of disease, depression must be dealt with at different levels and in different ways. What will help to dissolve depression for one person, another may not be ready to understand, explore or use. How we deal with depression is limited by our belief systems and readiness to take personal responsibility for the healing of our disease.

A. For Those With These Beliefs

- *The people and situations I encounter in the world are responsible for most of my pain and fear.
- *I contract pain, fear, illness and disease from others and thus need to protect myself from them.
- *My illness and disease are not connected to the pain and fear I experience in my relationships.
- *My thoughts and feelings do not influence the people and situations I experience in the world.
- *My thoughts do not affect my feelings or emotions.
- *My thoughts, emotions and feelings about myself do not influence how people treat me.
- *I do not have much ability to affect the people and situations I encounter in the world.
- *I am largely at the mercy of the world and often feel unfairly treated by it.
- *Doctors and medicine are responsible for healing my illness and disease, physical or mental.
- *It is impossible for me to relax or be happy unless I am busy or have something to look forward to.
- *It is impossible for me to relax, quiet my thoughts and have fun without drugs or alcohol.
- *My mind and emotions do not affect my body and my body does not affect my mind and emotions.
- *I do not believe there is Healing Energy within me or outside that will guide and help me if I ask.
- *If I do not carefully plan, control and protect myself, I will end up hurt, alone or a failure.
- *My happiness depends on job and relationship security, friends, acceptance and success.

If you agree with the majority of these statements of belief, then you may find one or more of the following methods helpful in reducing the symptoms of depression you experience. Even if you do not agree with these beliefs, you will still find some of the following methods helpful.

A. Methods For Dealing With Depression

1. In the beginning, as a form of crisis intervention, anti-depressant drug therapy may prove necessary and helpful. This seems to be more successful for some than others and rarely the long-term answer for a number of reasons, side effects, some dangerous, and possible dependency being two of the more obvious ones.
2. Since long-term depression changes body chemistry, many individuals find natural replacement products like 5-HTP that replaces serotonin, helpful in dealing with depression. There are many natural replacement products available and results seem to vary. Unless an individual is willing to do the work necessary to deal more constructively with the underlying pain and fear, it is likely the depression will return no matter what the product or level of initial success.
3. The stress of long-term depression seems to deplete enzyme production and immunity leading to various forms of food and environmental allergies. You can find the foods you are not metabolizing through muscle testing methods, sometimes known as applied kinesiology. (Google) Eliminating the foods you are not fully digesting will reduce the toxins in your system elevating your energy level and often improve your feelings of well-being.
4. Some physicians use hormone replacement therapy when dealing with depression, especially when associated with menopause or hysterectomies. Dr. Christine Northrop, a long-term expert in the field of women's health issues, has concluded that synthetic hormones are not as effective as non-synthetic ones when dealing with menopausal health issues and can even prove dangerous. She also concludes that meditation (relaxation training) is the one activity she has found that most consistently reduces the more difficult symptoms associated with menopause.
5. Research suggests that physical exercise leads to the release of endorphins that create positive feelings of well-being. Most people lost in a state of depression, however, have little if any desire to move or change in any way, for any reason. Forcing myself to exercise in the form of running and swimming when overcome with deep depression had a significant and positive effect in helping me survive the times of dark and desperate depression I have experienced in my life. Most often these experiences were activated through unexpected change and loss. Very simply, cardio vascular exercise relaxes muscle tension and forces increased oxygen intake and blood circulation to the entire body. It also helps to release endorphins that cause more positive feelings, as mentioned above. As a temporary measure, exercise will help to counteract the shut down, lack of energy and negative feelings experienced with change, loss, fear and depression.
6. Because depression has links to future fear and the attempted control of its possible painful experiences, activities that force us to focus on the present can prove very helpful, especially when combined with physical exercise. Ti Chi and Yoga have proven very successful in reducing many of the symptoms that accompany depression. Sports like archery, golf, playing or listening to music, even fishing, can have similar, positive results because of their need for here and now focus. The biggest block to their success is the need for action when a depressed person has little energy.
7. In a CBC documentary titled "Urban By Nature," Roberta Walker presents research done by Esther Sternberg from her latest book, "Healing Spaces, The Science Of Place And Well-being." This research demonstrates the powerful affect Nature has on changing brain chemistry by stimulating endorphins. This change in brain chemistry results in positive feelings of well-being which help to reduce anxiety and depression. This research suggests that regular walks in green spaces or nature of any kind will help to counteract the stress, anxiety & depression found in our fast-paced urban life.

8. Deep relaxation training is another method I have used both personally and professionally with significant, positive results. Lee Pulos, PhD, has a “Self Healing” relaxation training C.D. that can prove very effective if an individual is ready to entertain this kind of approach. I also have a similar “Peak Recovery” meditation on “The Zone” page of my “Peak Recovery” web site. <http://www.peakrecovery.com/> This method leads a person into the “Relaxation Response,” a response that counteracts the “Fear Response.” There has been a great deal of research done on this “Alpha Wave” or “Relaxation Response” that demonstrates significant recovery from many forms of stress-related disease, including depression. Sometimes muscle relaxation will bring to the surface stored emotions that will need to be released before the full benefit of this method can be experienced. I will, in the next section, outline a method for releasing these painful emotions.
9. Taking care of plants, pets or young children, forming any non-threatening relationship where you can relax your mind, body, emotion, defenses and allow the healing energies of love flow from your heart more freely will have a very powerful effect in dissolving the feeling of depression within you. It is by giving the healing energy of unconditional love to others that we receive healing and love for ourselves. Of all the healing methods suggested so far, this is the most powerful and effective.

Summary

Anything that reduces the pain, fear, tension and control associated with depression will be helpful. The methods that reduce muscle tension and demand present focus will probably prove most beneficial in the long term. Although every one of these methods can help reduce the painful symptoms associated with depression, in the long run, deep relaxation training, together with healing visualization, will more significantly help to reduce the pain, fear and ego defenses that drain energy and cause depression. If you are able to practice healing meditation or deep relaxation training, in **addition** to physical exercise, I urge you to do so. Forming non-threatening relationships where you can relax defenses and allow the healing energy of unconditional love to flow more freely from your heart will ultimately return to you and heal your depression **most effectively**. For more lasting peace and joy, you must begin to move this “**defenseless**” stance out into more threatening relationships continuing to express this same **unconditional love** to others crying for love and healing through their anger, depression and sometimes hatred. This is our ultimate challenge and function here, to offer unconditional healing love to others lost in the illusion of their pain and fear. The healing energy we send forth will eventually help them dissolve the illusion of their pain and fear and they will then awaken into the peace power, joy and love within them. The healing and love we give to others will return to us through the “Law Of Karma” and we then awaken more fully to the love and peace within.

B. For Those With These Beliefs

- *When I get tired or run down, I more easily become ill or have an accident.
- *My illness and disease are connected to the pain and fear I experience in my relationships.
- *My thoughts and feelings do influence the people and situations I experience in the world.
- *My thoughts do affect my feelings or emotions.
- *My thoughts, emotions and feelings about myself influence how people treat me.
- *I have the ability to affect the people and situations I encounter in the world.
- *I do not feel I am at the mercy of the world and rarely feel unfairly treated by it.
- *I have a large responsible for preventing and healing my illness and disease.
- *It is difficult for me to relax or be happy unless I am busy or have something to look forward to.
- *I am able to relax, quiet my thoughts and have fun without drugs or alcohol.
- *My mind and emotions do affect my body and my body does affect my mind and emotions.
- *I believe there is Healing Energy that will guide and help me if I ask.
- *There is a plan or destiny I do not consciously control that seems to guide me.
- *I am most happy when I can be helpful.

If you agree with the majority of these beliefs, then there is a good chance you will be able to add the following methods to the ones already suggested to further assist your healing process.

B. Curing Depression

Introduction

We all carry an unconscious body of pain and fear within us that will eventually draw us into situations and relationships that will activate or reflect them to us for healing. When this happens, it looks and feels like other people or the circumstances we face have caused the fear and pain we experience. Then we usually fight, flee or freeze and demonstrate the fear response that underlies anger, depression and disease. We project this world of duality from within our own consciousness. This allows us to see, feel and release the pain and fear within us that blocks our inner joy and peace, when we are ready. That is what this world is best used for, a mirror to hidden parts of our unconscious mind that need to be revealed and healed. It is a gift if we can use it effectively to release this pain and fear within us and find peace. On the other hand, if we become frightened, defend and attack, it becomes a curse. In this world, which is a projected reflection of our own consciousness, "All that I give I give to myself." (ACIM) This means that if I attack, I will be attacked and the cycle of pain and fear I experience will continue to escalate. Look at the Middle East. To stop this destructive and useless cycle, we need to recognize we are fighting with shadows that are ourselves and then be prepared to give up our attacks and defenses. This terrifies the ego, which fears its death. "We are not the victims of the world we see. We are the creators." (A.C.I.M.) When we suffer enough and finally gain the readiness to accept the truth of this statement, we will then learn more constructive ways to feel and release our inner pain and fear, ways that will awaken or release the creative and healing energy of peace, joy and love that has been dammed up and hidden within us. This will cure the cause of our depression, not just suspend the symptoms. The following methods will help to accomplish this goal with your readiness to patiently practice them.

1. Always find the pain and fear beneath your anger or depression. Sometimes this is difficult, especially when deeply buried under anger and deadness. Look for feelings like sadness, emptiness, failure, loss, helplessness, deadness, lostness, separateness and despair.

2. Next locate the experience of this pain or fear somewhere in your body if you can, usually in your heart or abdomen area.

3. Then take a slow, deep breath and as you breathe out, let go and relax into the place within your body where you experience the pain and fear. Be patient and take time to relax more and more deeply into the pain of this experience on every out breath until you begin to lose your fear and calm somewhat. This could take a number of minutes if you are very upset.

4. Speak directly to this experience using this statement that reflects the fact you are facing your own projections. "You are an appearance only, not the truth. You are an **effect** caused by my own feelings, fears and thoughts. You **cannot be a cause**. I give you no power over me." ("The Infinite Way," Joel Goldsmith)

5. You cannot heal yourself. When you break a bone, apart from setting and placing it to rest in a cast, a doctor does not mend it. The healing energy within you does. This applies to your emotional body as well. For this reason, make this sincere request to the Healing Energy within you, "Healing Spirit, I willingly give You this appearance of pain and fear within me, not of love (fear) and ask you to dissolve it into the nothingness from which it was born." (ACIM)

6. Then let go, be still and wait with infinite patience, patient expectancy and calm certainty for the Healing Energy within you to answer your request, as with patient faith, It surely will.

7. Finally, realize that your complete healing and release from the pain and fear within you will come through an ongoing process of "**Authentic Forgiveness**," the ability to accept without resistance or judgment and overlook with compassion the painful, fearful and defensive parts of yourself, not of love, activated and reflected in your dream of separation here. End your healing session with this prayer. "Healing Spirit, help me to accept without resistance or judgment and overlook with compassion this part of me not of love that I now experience in my dream of separation here. This person is an appearance only, not the truth, mistaken like me. There is nothing to fear or forgive "

Concluding Explanation

The healing methods outlined in section "B" of this article come from Gestalt Therapy and the "Non Dualistic" philosophies found in early Christianity, parts of Buddhism, the Hindu Vedanta, "A Course In Miracles," and the "Infinite Way" material of Joel Goldsmith. Quantum Physics confirms important aspects of this philosophy with its research that demonstrates the world we see is held in place through our individual and collective belief and **attention**. In other words, we make real and give power to anything we believe in and attend to. This suggests the world we experience through our five senses is not real, rather a dream we project from within our own consciousness, collectively miscreated from the fear-based wishes, thoughts, beliefs and emotions **we attend to**. This explains why we see so much pain, fear, anger, attack, illness and suffering reflected here. You can see, therefore, why our release comes from **not responding or attending** to the fear-based issues we seem to encounter. When we do, we affirm their reality and give them power. The Buddha called this physical world Maya, another word for dream or illusion. Once we begin to understand and accept that the world we see is a projected reflection of our own fear-based consciousness, we can then begin to use it to release the unconscious pain and fear within us. This is the gift offered by it, an opportunity to see, experience and release this hidden body of pain and fear housed within our unconscious mind. This "Pain Body," as it is called, separates us from the peace, power, joy, love and healing power of our Spiritual Identity. Once we understand and accept that what upsets and frightens us in the world is really a projection of the disowned, pain, defenses, and fear hidden within our own unconscious mind, then we can use the methods I have suggested above to release them. The natural consequence of releasing this unconscious body of pain, fear and the defenses within us

is that we then awaken from our dream of separation and fear, this physical universe, into the infinite peace, power, joy and love our Spiritual Identity, our True Self. Teachers like the Buddha, Jesus and to some degree Joel Goldsmith have done this and gone on to demonstrate the **healing power** of peace and love housed in our consciousness, beneath the layers of our fear-based mind, body, emotion or ego self. Spiritual Healings and Spiritual Healers merely demonstrate the healing power **we all house within us**, once we release or surrender these layers of ego defenses and allow the healing energy of our Spiritual Identity, **Love**, to shine forth from within. This is what it means to “Awaken From The Dream,” or become “Enlightened,” the foundation of all Healing and Miracles.

Summary

It is unfortunate that because of limited belief systems and lack of readiness, many individuals, perhaps a majority, are restricted to dealing with depression largely through crisis intervention, avoidance and symptom control. In many instances, individuals avoid their boredom, anxiety and **depression** by distracting themselves through compulsive activities like texting, gaming, web surfing, sex and TV, or by sedation and self-medication through food, smoking, drugs, and alcohol, methods that can become addictive and harmful over time. In addition, they rob us of the opportunity to find lasting security and peace. Keep in mind, **when deep depression hits, they will not work**.

In this article, I have attempted to outline the cause of depression and presented methods for dealing more constructively with, both symptoms and the underlying pain, fear and defenses that cause it. In the beginning, you may need to repeat these steps or methods often, probably with every occurrence of the symptoms. Eventually, you will begin to **experience** the peace within you beneath your pain and fear. Then, you will become increasingly more willing to trust, give up control and fully release your pain, fear and ego defenses, the **underlying cause** of your depression. See “The Cloud-Layers Of Ego” illustration below:



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