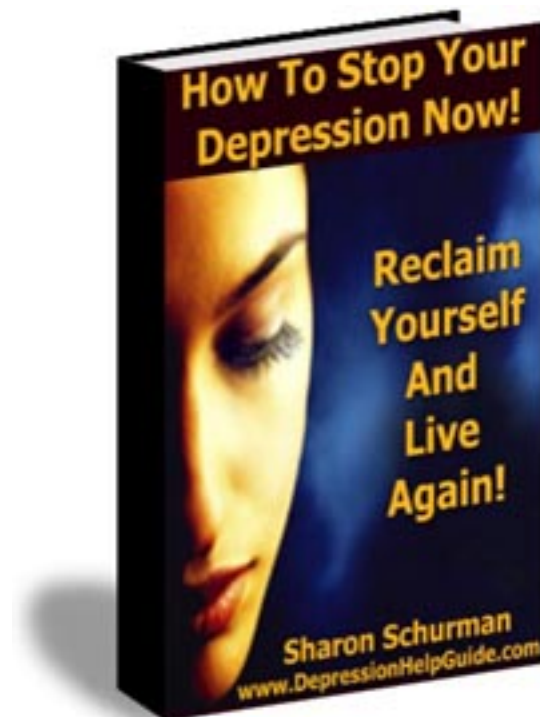


# How To Stop Your Depression Now Reclaim Yourself and Live Again



by Sharon Schurman

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This book is dedicated to my two daughters, Margie and Debbie. They have helped me come to a much better understanding of how important support is to the healing process. Having experienced a lot of pain and depression myself related to my own illnesses and that of other family members, I know support is essential. I also thank my husband for having the patience to live with me as I worked through my problems, found ways to deal with them, and overcame them.

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## **A Message From Sharon**

So much has been written about depression but often such information is given in a way that people can't understand. Most people don't really want to know exactly how their brain is not working when they are depressed. They want to know what's wrong and how to fix it.

I was a licensed clinical counselor and saw a lot of people suffering from depression. I saw many people who had physical illnesses and depression - same for chronic pain and depression. It is also true that I found that alcohol abuse, used as self medication, was involved in many aspects of depression. There are so many factors which get mixed together and produce depression that you need to look at the total picture. If you just treat depression and not the self medicating of alcohol abuse, you won't get far. If you treat a chronic illness like cancer or diabetes without paying attention to the psychological effect on the patient, you will not get good results.

I cannot stress enough the horrible effects of living with someone who is totally toxic to your emotional well being. Over and over again I saw people who were never going to have a peaceful relationship unless one was willing to sacrifice his or her own personality. And even then, there was only existence for these couples, never happiness.

We get just one life on earth, just one chance to be happy and healthy. As much as we are able, we owe it to ourselves to protect our psychological lives. Anyone can live to be quite old. Not everyone can live the years they have without feeling sad, hopeless, and miserable. Depression is a devastating disease. We need to fight to get it out of our lives, no matter what it takes.

I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I enjoyed writing it for you. I talk to you in the book as I talked to my clients. And they

always enjoyed me telling them that we would be doing a tune up, not a major overhaul. I say 'we' because that's the way I always worked with people. It was never 'me' telling 'you' what to do. It was us, together, finding a better way for you to live your life.

Just sit back, read, and let your mind be open to suggestions. I will do everything I can to help you understand about depression. Maybe there will be something here which will help you have a happier, more enjoyable day. That's the goal.

Sharon

# Chapter 1

## Introduction to Depression

This book is for the 'Average Joe' in this country who likes information given in an understandable way. You want it kept simple and you don't need to read about all the technical stuff behind the subject. Depression happens to the average Joe all the time and most of us who have it don't get treated for it. That's a shame because depression is one of the most treatable diseases. I hope that if you understand it and know that it isn't something to hide, cover up, or ignore, you can have the power to beat it.

At the very least, 30% of the American population suffer from a depression. The economic cost is out of sight but the cost in suffering for those who are depressed can never really be counted. Depression can not only destroy persons suffering with it, but everyone around them who cares about them. A serious major depression can ruin a family if left untreated. This is really bad news!

The good news is that there is quick treatment and relief available for depression sufferers. However, the majority of people who get depressed do not get treated. We have now learned that depression is mostly due to a chemical imbalance or mix-up in the brain. These mix-ups can be treated with medications. The medications available now can help you save your life or that of someone you love. Depression is treatable, just like high blood pressure, diabetes, and an ulcer. It is simply a matter of reaching out for help, getting the right medication, and following directions. Think of this as like having a car that goes on the blink. You wouldn't ignore trouble signs like an engine light flashing and think you could just keep on driving. You would investigate what was going on, get someone with training to check out your car, and fix whatever went wrong. Same thing applies if you develop a temperature over 102, are dripping with sweat, and become weaker and weaker. You know something has to

be done, and done quickly. It is exactly the same when you experience depression. Something is terribly wrong and you must act. I used to tell my new clients to think of themselves coming in to see me for a tune up, not a major overhaul. You won't need the big overhaul if you take action quickly.

How do you know if you have depression? There are some things that really stand out which can help you decide if a depression is going on. It involves your mood, your thoughts, your appetite, your sleep, and your feelings of self esteem. It is not just the blahs or the blues. Everybody has a few days or more when they feel down and sad. This is different. It's not like the normal experience of sadness you have when things go wrong or when you are disappointed and hurt. This is an emotional pit you've fallen into which affects your family, your job, and your whole life. It's a horrible feeling of hopelessness, of failure, of knowing that there is no way to make things better. You actually do 'drag' yourself along, going through the motions at home and work, thinking that you would rather hide in a cave and avoid everyone. If you are depressed you cannot just 'get it together', put a smiley face on, square your shoulders, and get a stiff upper lip. No matter how hard you try to lift yourself up, you can't. And it tends to get worse, not better. If you don't get treatment, this can last for months or even years. Why put yourself through something this awful when the right medication can get you back on track, able to feel better quickly?

There are some facts that will help you agree that it is good to know about depression, understand the symptoms, and get the treatment which will help. Depression is not something that you have made up in your head. It's feeling "down" and "low" and "hopeless" for months at a time.

Depression can affect people at any age, of any race, any ethnic, or any economic group. It doesn't just happen to soft people and is truly an equal opportunity illness. It is not a form of weakness but is a



serious health problem, like any other illness. It is not something which should be hidden or anything to be embarrassed about. The names of famous people who have suffered from depression like David Letterman, Mike Wallace, Terry Bradshaw, Wynona Ryder, Delta Burke, Tipper Gore, Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys, and so many more tell us that celebrities who seem to have all the breaks have suffered with depression. Depression is a thief. It comes into your life, steals your energy and self esteem, and whispers to you that you are worthless. It shoves you down deeper into the bottom of the pit where no angels want to go. It can drive you to actually think about suicide, getting it over with, and ending the agony which has made your life pure hell.

This book is intended to help you understand depression by giving you information that you will be able to understand. You will not have to have a Ph.D. to get through these chapters and by the time you have finished, you will know a lot. After reading this paragraph you won't have to think about 'genetic implications' or such things as 'human leukocyte antigen'. You may even surprise yourself with how much you have learned about depression and how to deal with it. I hope you will feel comfortable reading and rereading chapters that seem to have real meaning for you. You are the reason this book has been written.

## **Chapter 2**

# **What Are the Symptoms of Depression?**

How can you get a real feel for what depression is? Most people who get depressed for the first time have a hard time realizing what it is. As a matter of fact, it is often someone close to you who asks what is wrong, what is going on. This sort of makes you think that yes, there is a problem and there are things which are going wrong.

Here are some very typical symptoms of depression

### **Things depressed people say:**

- Talking about feelings of sadness or emptiness
- Saying they are hopeless that things will get better
- Saying that they are no good and worthless
- Saying that they have no interest in anything

### **Personality Changes:**

- Unable to make decisions
- Unable to concentrate and remember
- Having trouble at home, work, or school
- Hiding out, not talking
- Slowed down movement

### **Common Complaints of Depression:**

- No energy, feeling slowed down
- Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, waking early
- Appetite problems and gaining or losing weight
- Many physical complaints like headache, backache
- Feeling guilty about past actions
- Feeling unloved and unwanted

### **Obvious Behavior Changes:**

- Unable to Stop Crying
- Acting irritable, restless, and angry
- Insisting on being alone
- Stopping normal activities like hobbies or interests
- Taking drugs or heavy alcohol use

## **Dropping Hints About:**

- Death and Dying
- Committing Suicide
- Your life after he or she is gone
- Giving things away
- Seeing loved one who have died
- It's finally going to be over

**Look For Signs of Depression in You or Someone You Love -  
Take the Depression Indicator Test:**

Put a check mark by each statement that applies:

- I am really sad most of the time.
- I don't enjoy doing the things I've always enjoyed doing.
- I don't sleep well at night and am very restless.
- I am always tired. I find it hard to get out of bed.
- I don't feel like eating much.
- For no reason I eat all the time.
- I feel like eating all the time.
- I have lots of aches and pains that don't go away.
- I have little to no sexual energy or interest.
- I find it hard to focus and am very forgetful.
- I am mad at everybody and everything.
- I feel upset and fearful, but can't figure out why.
- I don't feel like talking to people.
- I feel the good part of my life is over.
- I feel like I'm walking around in a fog.

If you have marked more than five of these symptoms, you are depressed and need to get the help you deserve.

Here are some stories about people who have been depressed and how they learned about their illness:

**Jane's story:**

"It was really hard to get out of bed in the morning. I just wanted to hide under the covers and not talk to anyone. I didn't feel much like eating and I lost a lot of weight. Nothing seemed fun anymore. I was tired all the time, but I wasn't sleeping well at night. I knew that I had to keep going because I've got kids and a job. It just felt so impossible, like nothing was going to change or get better.

I started missing days from work, and a friend noticed that something wasn't right. She talked to me about the time that she had been really depressed and had gotten help from her doctor. I called my doctor and talked about how I was feeling. She had me come in for a checkup and gave me the name of a psychiatrist who she had sent other patients to who were depressed. Now, I'm seeing the psychiatrist once a month and taking anti depressant medicine. Everything didn't get better overnight, but I find myself more able to enjoy life and my children. And I don't think about death the way I did before. It scared me because I have kids to rise and they need me.

### **Ed's story:**

Things in my life were going all right. I had just finished college and was starting a new job. My family was really proud of me. But inside, I was feeling terrible. At first I was feeling sad all the time, even though I had no reason to be. Then the sadness turned into anger, and I started having fights with my family and friends. I felt really bad about myself, like I wasn't good enough for anyone. It got so bad that I wished I would go to bed and never wake up. My older brother, who I always looked up to, saw that I wasn't acting like my usual self. He told me straight out that I seemed depressed and that I should talk to a doctor about it. I hate going to the doctor. I thought, 'No way am I going in and tell some guy I'm a wuss.' But after a few weeks, I started having problems at work too. Sometimes I wouldn't show up because I wasn't able to sleep the night before. When I got fired, I knew I had to listen to my brother and get help. I saw a doctor at the health clinic. He told me I had a common illness called depression and that treatment could help. So I started taking anti depressants. I had to switch around because one seemed to help but had side effects and another didn't work as well as I needed. It took about 5 months but finally I started feeling much better. I think I'm ready to get started with my life now.

These are just sample stories and maybe you do not see yourself here. But you can see that very ordinary people get depression and can get better if they seek out help.

## **Chapter 3**

# **The Types of Depression**

Kinds of depression are different, like different kinds of diabetic or high blood pressure problems. And you may find that you or someone you love sort of fits in more than one category. This is OK. You are not training to become a psychologist. You simply want to understand that depression comes in different forms.

### **Major Depression**

A major depression can come from a single horrible event in your life, or may develop slowly as a result of several personal disappointments and life problems. Some people develop symptoms of a major depression without an obvious life crisis. In a major depression the combination of symptoms interferes with your ability to work, study, sleep, eat, and enjoy pleasure feelings. This could happen only once but often happens several times during your life. It is major because it stops your ability to function normally. It is severe and keeps you from living your life. If you suffer from this you feel you just cannot fix things in your life. You want to sleep because when you are awake there is no joy. Its effects can be so great that things like eating, sleeping, or just getting out of bed become almost impossible. You cannot just 'snap out of it' and every day you feel worse. If you get no treatment for this it can last from six to 10 months. It seems to run its course. But why in the world would you want to live in this horror for one minute longer than you have to?



## **Symptoms:**

- Feeling hopeless and helpless
- Thinking of death or suicide
- No energy, feeling tired all the time
- Irritable and angry outbursts
- Constant worry about physical health
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- Waking up very early, not able to get back to sleep
- Feeling guilty about past actions
- Big appetite changes
- Memory problems
- Having problems at work or school
- Sudden emotional outbursts, crying
- Unable to concentrate
- Brooding and going back over problems
- Lack of concern for physical appearance
- Slowness doing any tasks

Remember, these symptoms must be severe and cause real problems for you and eventually cause you to be unable to function at work or home.

Major Depression can be a one time happening a third of the time, but generally two thirds of the people who have this will have a repeat or maybe several. Many times the symptoms disappear for a while and then come back full force.

Here's an example of a woman experiencing a Major Depression:

Susan is 37 and just ended a 5 year relationship. She wonders what has happened to her. She thinks she is just sleep walking through her life. She cannot sleep well, wakes up at 4:00a.m., and is wide awake, thinking about is wrong with her. When she gets up she feels like she got no sleep at all and is foggy and can't think. She used to enjoy fixing nice meals and considered herself a good cook. Now she doesn't even like the taste of food and is losing weight fast. She isn't dieting but people ask what plan she is using. There is a man at work who has shown some interest in her but she could care less. She feels she can't concentrate and do her job as a computer input operator and she is making plenty of mistakes. Her boss has been watching her and she knows the group is carrying her. This can last just so long. When she leaves work she just goes home and lies on the couch. On the weekend she sleeps and takes the phone off the hook. She doesn't want to hear from well meaning relatives and friends. They keep telling her to get a grip on herself but she can't. When she wakes up early in the morning, she thinks about ways she could kill herself. There is no longer anything to live for. She thinks of things she might have done differently when she noticed her partner was

showing less interest in her. Maybe she wasn't sexy enough or attractive enough. Maybe she should have suggested some kinky sex. Her partner found a woman who was ten years younger and very beautiful. He said he felt like a young guy around her. He had told Susan she was getting old looking and needed a total makeover. At the time she laughed it off but now she thinks she made a terrible mistake. And now there is no going back. She has nothing.

And when you meet Bill, you will hope that you never suffer like this.

Bill was 58 when he lost his job due to a reduction in force after a large bank merger. He could not believe this had happened because he was always the loyal company man who followed the rules and always did more than he was asked to do. When he was given the news he did not act like it was so horrible because he didn't want to have anyone see him break down. But when he went home and told his wife he began crying and couldn't seem to stop. He found that he could not sleep. He went to see his family doctor who told him it was natural to be upset over losing his job and gave Bill a prescription for sleeping pills. They seemed to work at first, but when he woke up he felt sluggish and groggy and unable to start searching for another job. He would sit in his favorite chair with the TV turned on, thinking about how could this have happened to him. He started to wonder why he had ever worked so hard for a company which could so easily throw him out. He had enough years in to get a pension and had made good investments. They wouldn't starve or be unable to live decently. But to Bill, his job was a very important part of his life. It was who he **was**. When his wife wanted to get him out of the house and visit with friends he told her to leave him alone. He didn't need

anybody to come around feeling sorry for him. Within a month Bill had gotten so much worse that he was not taking care of himself, staying in his pajamas all day, and refusing to talk to his wife. He was continuing to get his prescription for sleeping pills refilled but he wasn't taking them. He was hoarding them and getting ready to take all of them when he had enough. There was no way he was going to continue living and feeling that he had been thrown away like garbage. When his wife found the pills he had saved up, she called their doctor. They arranged for Bill to be admitted to a mental health ward at the hospital. He was there for three weeks before he turned the corner.

If you or someone you care for is suffering from a Major Depression, you need to know it is something you cannot just 'shake off'. Depression is one of the most easily treatable illnesses in this country and there is no reason to deny or avoid dealing with the problem. Medications and treatment are available and will be discussed later in the book.

### **Chronic Depression**

This one is less life shattering than major depression but it makes anyone who has it miserable. It is a constant depression which varies from being mild to moderate. It's a sadness that stays with you

It lasts over 2 years. Most people can continue to work, go on with activities, and manage to have relationships. But just under the surface is that negative, pessimistic feeling. You never really feel happy or content. Also, if a large stress enters your life, you can go into a Major Depression. Depression is a strong feeling of sadness usually lasting for six to nine months. When the depressive

symptoms go away for a while only to return again, it is called chronic depression. Everyone experiences sadness at one time or another. These feelings tend to lessen with time. Chronic depression is long-lasting and interferes with daily activities, but not as severely as a Major Depression. You can keep going on but you wonder why you should.

### **Symptoms:**

- Sad mood
- No interest in normal activities
- Tiredness
- Loss of enthusiasm
- Restlessness
- Keeping to self
- Irritability
- Distracted easily
- Difficulty making decisions
- Difficulty dealing with change
- Avoiding social contacts
- Many physical complaints with no basis
- Being slowed up and sluggish
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much

Remember, chronic depression is like a low grade fever. It hangs around and makes you feel out of sorts, hurting, and not sure what to do about it. You just know you can't go full steam ahead and don't want to anyway. I have known people with chronic depression who never are able to experience true happiness or joy in life. This is because they spend most of their time just trying to survive and meet basic needs. They do not have the energy for much else.

Meet Doug who suffers from chronic depression:

Doug is 45 and will tell you if you are interested that he has never felt happy. He says that there have been ups and downs for him but he just doesn't get feel that his life has amounted to much. He has been married and divorced twice. The women he was married to told him that he was distant and had a hard time with closeness. His last wife told him he needed therapy because she knew he didn't like himself very much. Doug feels like he is carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders and just cannot lighten it up. He goes out five nights a week, stopping off at a bar, hoping to hook up with someone. He knows he drinks too much but it's the only thing that seems to pick him up at all. He hasn't saved for the future and thinks he hasn't accomplished much. He lives in an apartment and thinks by now he should be more stable and have roots. His mother is elderly and he has a hard time thinking that when she is gone he won't have anyone who really cares for him. He thinks time has passed him by and it's too late for him to make any big lifestyle changes. He hopes that maybe he will just have a heart attack like his dad and have it over once and for all.

And Connie:

Connie is 36 and has never been married. She has had several affairs and wonders why she always ends up with guys who treat her badly. She is a teacher and says that the only good thing she gets done is keeping the kids under control and says they don't seem to want to learn. She would like to do something else but needs the steady income and benefits. She has had to take a lot of time off work with her back problems and has been sent for every test imaginable. The doctor tells her that they can't find any physical reason for her pain. She keeps demanding that she needs pain medication because her back hurts and she has to be able to teach to support herself. She has a friend who seems to be in the same boat and they talk about how men seem to let them down. Connie is always trying a new diet, always talks about needing to lose 20 pounds, but she can't seem to stick to any plan. She calls herself a fat ass and gets very down. As she looks to the future she wonders if things are ever going to change, if she ever is going to be happy. Her doctor suggested she might want to see a counselor but her friend went for therapy and seems no better. So she just keeps on doing the same thing every day.

If you or someone you love is suffering from chronic depression, you have a hard row to hoe. There is no room for optimism in your brain and you just keep trying to put one foot in front of the other and try to cope the best you can. It's a bad life and one that you can change if you want to. The problem with chronic depression is that the person suffering from it and the people around him or her don't get too excited about how the person acts. You can slide by in our society without people taking much notice of whether you are happy or not. Only you can decide if you want to take action to change your life 100% for the better.

## **Bipolar or Manic Depression**

When you are in the manic stage you feel very high, enthusiastic, unable to slow down, and very impulsive .You can have bad judgment and do things that you would never ordinarily do. This can cause severe problems with shame and embarrassment. You become very irritated if anyone suggests you calm down and slow up. You can feel nothing is impossible, have grand ideas, and think you have no limits. Then you enter a depressed period

### **Symptoms of Manic Depressive Illness:**

Not everyone who is depressed or manic has every symptom described. Some have few symptoms, some many more that aren't even listed. How severe the symptoms are varies from person to person and also varies as to the person's age.

Manic State is described as a person having:

- Abnormal or excessive enthusiasm unusual irritability
- Less need for sleep
- Unbelievable ideas
- Increased and fast talking
- Racing thoughts
- Increased sexual desire
- Acting out sexually
- Increased, amazing energy



- Bad judgment
- Socially unacceptable behavior
- Impulsive acts, considering no consequences

The Depressed state involves a person having:

- Constant sadness
- Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Loss of interest in formerly pleasurable activities
- Decreased interest in sex and difficulty with performance
- Decreased energy, fatigue, being "slowed down"
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Insomnia, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight loss or overeating and weight gain
- Thoughts of death or suicide; suicide attempts
- Restlessness, irritability
- Persistent physical symptoms that don't have a cause.

Here's Mickey's story:

She's 46 and works in the personnel department of a mid sized company. Everyone likes Mickey and they call her 'magic Mickey' when she organizes all the flights and tickets and hotels for conventions. She laughs loud, dyes her hair a bright red, and has so much energy that she makes people tired just watching her. On her job everyone appreciates her 'give more than 100%' job attitude. Suddenly people at work start to notice Mickey is not just talkative, she can't stop talking. She tells her co workers that she thinks she could be president of the company and do a better job. She also is over the top in her flirty behavior with men in the office, telling them they don't know what they are missing, not having her sexually. Finally her boss calls her aside and tells her he thinks something is wrong and she needs to see a doctor. She explodes and slams out of the office, threatening to sue for discrimination. Her husband sees her come home out of control and asks her if she is taking her medications. She has stopped and refuses to take them. Her husband calls their doctor and he tells him to take her to the emergency ward. She has to be hospitalized for a week to get stabilized, be put back on medicine, and get back on an even keel. She feels humiliated that people at the office saw her that way. She wonders if she can go back to work there.

Jake has an equally bad story

He is 67 and sold his tool and die company for a nice profit. He and his wife are set financially and they live in a nice waterfront home in Florida. Jake loves to entertain and does much of the cooking himself. There is nothing

he likes more than to have a large group of people to the house for a party. His wife knows that there is another side of Jake that most people never see. He can quickly become depressed and when he is, he turns mean and nasty. He has hit his wife many times throughout the marriage when he is going into a depressive state. She reminds him to take his medication because she knows it will keep him more even, less explosive. They throw a large party for the neighbors and Jake is doing his usual grilling while telling stories to everybody in the vicinity. He starts to get irritated when a new neighbor starts to brag about his new home, how much it cost, how much more he is going to spend. Jake starts to talk over this man but the man has had a few drinks and just keeps going. Jake's wife doesn't like what she sees on Jake's face but there is nothing she can do. Suddenly Jake flips a piece of meat off the grill onto the offending neighbor. The two men actually start to fight and have to be pulled apart. Jake cannot calm down and is screaming and threatening to kill the man. Someone calls the police. Jake pushes an officer and is handcuffed and taken to jail. Suddenly people are looking at him like a wild man who is losing his mind.

If you or someone you care about is suffering from manic depressive type symptoms, you need to get help. This is one type of depression which really is controlled by medication. If you get on the right meds with small side effects you can tolerate, you will have a wonderful life with no extremes.

Remember this. Depression is treatable. Instead of worrying about whether you are depressed, do something about it. Worry is constructive only if you push yourself to change things for the better. Only one in three people who are seriously depressed get help. Make sure you are in the minority group with this one.

## Chapter 4

# Causes of Depression

Some types of depression run in families, suggesting that a tendency to be depressed can be inherited. That is, if there is someone in your immediate family, parents, siblings, aunts, and uncles, you may be more likely to suffer from depression. This is truer with manic depressive illness. However, don't think that just because you have an inherited tendency towards depression that you are doomed to experience it. There are many other factors which would play a part. Stress in your life at home, work, or even in working towards educational goals can be a trigger to start depression

If you have low self-esteem, are pessimistic by nature, and are easily overwhelmed by stress, you are a candidate for depression. An ended relationship, financial setbacks, or a difficult relationship or situation can trigger a depression. Often, an event seems to start off a depression, such as a serious loss, chronic illness, problems with a relationship or divorce, financial problems, or a disruption in your life due to circumstances beyond your control

People who get depressed are not sociopaths or psychotics. You get depressed because you are very concerned about your behavior or what you think are your wrong doings. When you get depressed you tend to be thinking of many things you should have done, could have done, or might have done. True evil people do not get depressed because they have no concern about how they may have hurt others.

Over the past twenty years it has been accepted that depression is a result of a chemical imbalance in your brain. It is not your fault. Your brain simply isn't sending the right signals and your body gets

confused. The messenger isn't getting the message to the right place. This has a lot to do with why you have sleep problems with depression. Certain illnesses can have a very big effect on the brain workings and the same is true as to medications people must take for illnesses. There is a chapter to follow on illness and depression.

If you tend to be a lonely person with low self-esteem, feel you have little control over your life, and worry excessively; you are more likely to develop depression. Because you already are feeling like you are just struggling to get along, if some big disappointment or crisis comes along, you will have a more strong reaction to it and perhaps start to fall apart inside.

It is true that negative thinking usually develops in your childhood or adolescence. If you feel a lack of being approved and praised as a child, if you feel you never got a chance to be special in some way, you are more likely to be rocked out of your socks when the big trials of life smack you in the head.

### **Women Are At Greater Risk For Depression Than Men**

Major and chronic depression affect twice as many women as men, so the statistics say. They do not mention that women go for treatment with less of a feeling of stigma than men. Men think they are weak when they admit depression. Women accept it as a consequence of things gone wrong in their lives. There is no doubt that hormonal changes a woman experiences can be a reason why she might be more prone to depression. Hormones do have a role to play in the messages sent to the brain. Here's an interesting piece of information. Family doctors are more than twice as likely to suggest that a woman is depressed than a man with the same symptoms.

## **Relationships and Work Problems:**

Stress in general can contribute to depression. There are stresses involving work, maintaining a home, caring for children, financial, and sexual problems. As people get older there is the stress of dealing with elderly parents. With jobs being shipped overseas, no one has a great sense of job security. Depression will tend to hit you the hardest if you are separated or divorced. This makes sense because there is always a sense of loss, of failure, even if you both agree that you will do better apart. You are dealing with change, and change always causes stress. Even positive changes cause stress. Staying married to a person who is toxic for you is never any good and can cause real depression problems. If you are married to someone and feel hurt, unloved, criticized, and not valued, you are bound to have a problem with self esteem. After all, if you are a good person, why should you be treated in such a bad way? Anger at your spouse can have a way of turning around and coming back into you, making you feel guilty, like there is something unlovable about you. If you are an unhappily married woman, you are very likely to suffer from depression.

## **Having Children**

Women do have a lot of hormonal changes when they become pregnant. Hormonal changes affect the brain messengers so there is a possibility of depression involved. There is a real mix up of brain chemicals right after a baby is born and some women are more likely to have a very upsetting depression. It is called Postpartum Depression or many people call it the 'baby blues'. Frequently if you have had a problem with depression prior to having a baby, you may be more likely to suffer from more depression after your baby is born. It is so scary to have depressive feelings when you are supposed to be totally joyful over a birth. Sometimes if you experience this you feel too guilty bring it up. You need to understand that this is a

hormonal imbalance and it is OK to get some help and possibly some medication to help you through this time. Don't feel awful. You love your baby but you need a little chemical adjustment. It is also true that you become exhausted taking care of a baby, not getting enough sleep. This is worse for single parents who have to handle all this alone. With people moving all over the country to get jobs, more couples are bringing up children without the support of relatives. Most couples really are not prepared for the big difference a baby will make in their lives. Men can feel very jealous about all the attention given to the new baby and be less supportive with the mother. There is more stress if both parents have to work and arrange for child care. The more that is demanded of you when you have the stress of nurturing a new family member, the more pressured, worried, and depressed you can feel. Sexual desire and romantic moments tend to fly the coop when a baby has colic and demands constant attention.

Having children starts a total change in your life. You have the children to take care of for at least 18 years. Plus these days with children returning home after they experience life problems, they can be with you well into your 60's. The financial and economic costs of raising a child have risen unbelievably, let alone the emotional demands. Children are so pressured by what their peers have and make unrealistic demands on parents who can not afford to give them what they desire. Often you feel like you are giving everything you can to a child who then thumbs his nose at you and tells you that you aren't making the grade. This can cause a great deal of depression. Family ties are so special and important but we all know they can be the source of great distress and problems

### **Being a Victim and Being Depressed:**

Children who are molested are more likely to become depressed. There is a much higher incidence of depression among individuals

who have been raped, assaulted, and stalked. People who are harassed or abused on the job have higher rates of depression. Any kind of abuse can cause low self esteem, a feeling of having no control of your life, blaming yourself, and feeling alone and unable to tell anyone. If you grow up in a dysfunctional family which does not support and love you for just being you, you are much more likely to get depressed.

### **Poverty Breeds Depression**

Especially now in our time of media telling us all what we should have, poor people tend to feel more depressed. Women and children make up 75% of the people who are poor. Poor people have less access to resources to get the help they need. Low incomes tend to go along with sadness and low morale. These are things in your environment many times you cannot control. Combine this with coming from a dysfunctional family and you have a recipe for disaster, creating anti social people who have a grudge and need to make their anger known. This can cause terrible consequences for all of us.

### **Old Age Can Bring Depression:**

Anyone who tells you the golden years are the best could get a good argument from a lot of people over 50 I know. So many things are happening at this age. Parents are dying, children are leaving home (hopefully), illnesses are starting, and as you retire, things are changing. The death of a life partner can be a terrible end to a relationship which has lasted for years. Our society places so much value on youth that we send the message that if you are old, you aren't much. Many times older people will congregate with each



other so they feel comfortable. They limit contact with younger people and many times that it not good.

So there are many factors and life situations that seem to enter in along with your depression. I personally believe that the most important thing to do is to get treatment going and then try to solve the problem which triggered the depression. If you are so depressed you cannot think or solve any problems, you can't be expected to make it out of the pit.

## **Chapter 5**

# **Alcohol, Drugs, and Depression**

If you are depressed you don't feel good. You may tend to self medicate using drugs or alcohol or both. Alcohol can be a strong anti depressant at first but then when the use continues, alcohol becomes a depressant. Alcohol is like many other drugs that act on the brain. If you drink it regularly, you find that it has less effect on you. You need to drink more and more to get the effect you want. This is called 'tolerance' and is a powerful part of the problem you can develop using alcohol to deal with depression. It is so easy to get alcohol- you don't need to talk to a doctor or get a prescription- that it is the drug of choice to deal with depression more often then not. The problem is, alcohol can really make the depression worse. It definitely interferes with your ability to deal with the problems which caused your depression in the first place. Many people who have trouble sleeping start using alcohol as a sleeping pill and it causes no end of problems. In the end, alcohol abuse will really interfere with sleep.

In low doses, alcohol makes you feel relaxed and more able to talk to and be around people if you are shy or lack confidence. Taking small amounts of alcohol, especially red wine seem to be good for our hearts. But there is a big difference between drinking a glass of wine and downing a six pack to back off the pressure.

Even a few drinks can be a depressant for you. Some of the effects are:

- Impaired judgment and decision making
- Vision disturbance, especially peripheral vision
- Less coordination
- Problems with depth perception
- Slower reaction time
- Sleepiness

At moderate-to-high doses, alcohol also causes:

- Feelings of sadness and despair
- Impaired coordination
- Impaired perception
- Slower reaction time
- Sleepiness to the point of dropping off

And here are health problems you stir up with over alcohol use:

- It can lead to obesity
- It can cause kidney and liver problems
- It is involved in one half of suicides
- It plays a role in many auto accidents
- It is often a part of domestic violence
- It is often a part of assaults and homicides
- It can allow unacceptable behavior
- It can become an addiction
- It can ruin relationships and families
- It can cost your job

As you can see, I am really suggesting to you that alcohol is not the way to deal with your depression. Alcohol is cheap and easy to get and you don't have to talk over your problems with someone to get it. But it can and will cause you to become more depressed if you are using it to treat yourself.

The same can be said for abuse of street drugs. If you use cocaine or heroin or amphetamines to solve your emotional pain, your pain will only get worse and then you will have not only problems with depression but also problems with addiction.

## **Chapter 6**

# **Illness and Depression**

Depression often tags along with another serious illness such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer, Parkinson's Disease and more. So often doctors will treat the illness but not treat the depression which follows along. This is sad because if you are so dejected and pessimistic about being sick, chances are your recovery won't be the best.

### **Cancer Can Scare You to Death**

Millions of people are living with a current or past diagnosis of cancer. Just the word 'cancer' causes people to panic, become overcome with fear of dying, and think they are forever ruined. There is an immediate fear of death, life plans upset, change in lifestyle, medical bills to face, and a fight to survive. So often your doctor, your family, friends, and cancer specialists think that it is normal for you to be depressed when you have cancer and don't think it needs to be treated. But how can you really participate in your treatment plan if you are expecting the worst, and knowing it will happen?

I have sat with people and their families when the diagnosis of cancer is given. The reaction is always disbelief, even if the person was suspecting this to be true. I have held the hand of women who have been told that their husbands have prostate cancer, lung cancer, brain cancer, and many more. I have sat silent with husbands who have just been given the news that their wife has breast cancer, uterine cancer, pancreatic cancer, and ovarian cancer. Men tend not to talk but their pain can be felt through the looks on their faces. Cancer scares people and sometimes it scares them to death before their time.

Depression can and should be treated right along with any treatment for cancer. Antidepressant medications are usually well tolerated but there may be some side effects and problems with other medications taken. It is very important to make it clear to your doctor that you need help for your depression as well as your cancer. It is also very important that if you are the husband, wife, sibling, or child of someone who is dealing with cancer to do the same thing. Please ask your doctor for antidepressant medication if you are suffering with cancer and are depressed.

## **Depression Can Break Your Heart**

People with heart disease tend to suffer from depression more than healthy heart people. Flip that coin and people with depression are at greater risk for getting heart disease. If you have heart disease and are depressed you have a bigger risk of death after a heart attack. After having heart surgery, it's very important to follow through with necessary rehabilitation. This is more difficult for someone who is depressed. Depression can increase blood pressure and affect clotting. It can also lead to elevated insulin and cholesterol levels. It can increase stress hormones, those fight or flight impulses we have when faced with danger. Again, a chemical imbalance in the brain sends the wrong messages to the body. Depression and heart disease are deadly companions and can lead to each other. They are a frightening hand in glove combination.

Despite the real connection between these two dangerous illnesses, depression often goes undiagnosed and untreated. Persons with heart disease, their families and friends, and even their doctors and cardiologists may miss depression's warning signs. And when treatment is given it is often not enough. They think that these feelings just go along with heart disease. When my husband had emergency open heart surgery, there was never any discussion

about depression which went along with heart problems. I was on top of it and worked to make sure my husband was able to get all the support he needed. Others may not know what to do and they get no help from the doctors.

The impact of depression and heart disease is enormous. Depression is the leading cause of disability and heart disease is by far the leading cause of death in the US. One in three Americans will die of some form of heart disease. So it is very important that we all become aware that depression and heart disease are associated with sickness and death and proper treatment must be given. Newer anti depressants don't have the negative complications that the previous ones did.

Treatment for depression helps you manage heart problems better and have a better quality of life. It should be made very clear to people with heart problems complicated by depression that exercise is one of the best treatments for both.

Treatment for depression helps people manage both diseases, making survival and enjoyment of life possible. Keep your heart and mind safe and sound. Total health is in your future.

## **Suffering A Stroke And Feeling Hopeless**

Getting severely depressed after having a stroke is not unusual. When my mother had her first massive stroke and I went to the hospital, tears were flowing down her face and she kept telling me, 'I don't want to live'. My mother was always a very proud, independent woman. She did not want to depend on anyone. She was depressed and very angry. Nurses did not want to come into her room because she would not play the game and act grateful because she was unhappy. No one discussed depression with me, not her doctor, not her neurologist. But I knew how bad it was. The

depression had to be treated if my mother would ever get rehabilitated.

People who have a stroke need very much attention and love. They feel helpless and hopeless. Recently a neighbor of mine had a stroke and when I went to the hospital, she too was crying and so sad. She is a widow who prides herself on being independent at age 86. The problem with her situation is that she was depressed for at least a year prior to the stroke since her husband had died. When the stroke hit her it was double trouble.

Treatment for depression can shorten the rehab process, lead to quicker recovery, and save health care costs. It makes so much sense that it's hard to believe that doctors don't seem interested in explaining this to family members right up front. Depression is something that stroke victims deal with a large majority of the time.

Even though stroke is a disease of the brain, it can affect the entire body. Some of the disabilities that can result from a stroke include paralysis, thinking problems, speech problems, emotional difficulties, fatigue, and daily living problems. Many people require psychological help after a stroke. Depression, anxiety, frustration and anger are common in stroke victims. It depends on the person and what his or her life has been like so far. If you know someone who has had a stroke, you know recovery is a slow and long lasting process.

If you or your loved one has a stroke, be prepared for damage to that person's self image and self esteem. It is very common for stroke victims to feel they have no future. Make sure that anti depressants are part of the program for anyone you care about who has a stroke. Insist that the doctor find the right combination of meds. Maybe it will take some time but you and your loved ones are worth it. Depression can be treated in addition to whatever other illnesses a person might have, including stroke. If you think you may be depressed or know someone who is, don't lose hope. Seek help



## **Depression and Parkinson's Disease**

It is very sad to know that at least half the people with this disease experience depression. First they are the victim of one horrible disease, and then they suffer from depression. The person who has it, their families, friends, and doctors so often misinterpret the warning signs of depression and just think it is part of the other disease. Men in particular do not want to say that they are depressed as a result of this illness.

Symptoms of these two illnesses tend to overlap each other. Not enough research has been done on relationship between these two illnesses. People with depression who have Parkinson's disease have a different symptom group than those without Parkinson's. The Parkinson's profile includes higher rates of anxiety and sadness without guilt or self-blame.

Parkinson's disease is a chronic and progressive disorder of the brain. It affects the motor system, but also thinking and emotion. It results from the loss of brain cells that control movement. The four primary symptoms of Parkinson's are: trembling in hands, arms, legs, jaw, and face; stiffness of arms and legs, slowness of movement, and poor balance and coordination. Plus it causes difficulty walking and talking.

Anything which can help these victims and lift their spirits is needed ASAP. Antidepressants can be extremely helpful for anyone dealing with Parkinson's. Treating depression can help anyone feel better about and cope better with their illness. Doctors of Parkinson's patients need to devote the time and energy to finding the right prescription and right dosage. Be sure you insist that the doctor is "on it" and the help is given. As usual, the squeaky wheel gets the grease. Don't hesitate to demand the care you need.

Depression can and should be treated when it co-occurs with other illnesses. Untreated depression can delay recovery from it or worsen the outcome. If you or someone you love has Parkinson's disease, don't give up and don't lose hope. Depression is a treatable disorder of the brain. Depression can be treated in addition to Parkinson's. Get the help you need, even if you have to demand it.

## **Chapter 7**

# **Depression And Chronic Pain**

Anyone who has suffered with chronic pain, the pain that becomes your life partner and then stabs you in the back, knows how easily it becomes to fall into a really bad depression. The pain that never quits leaves you wondering if living is as great at you thought it was. Depression just gets in line and follows the pain leader down that lonely road. Believe me, I've been on that road and it's a mean, dead-end.

Pain is a normal. It's a bad sensation triggered by your brain to let you know there is something wrong and you need to do something about it. Chronic pain is different. It stays with you and makes itself at home. Pain signals keep firing at you for weeks, months, and maybe years. This is caused by many illnesses such as arthritis, cancer, chronic fatigue syndrome, irritable bowel, spinal degeneration, and so many more. Pain is the not same for everyone. It can last for months or last a lifetime. It takes a toll, both physically and emotionally. It can lead to depression, anxiety, anger, insomnia, and irritability. Some chronic pain sufferers cannot work or even do the pleasurable things they used to do. It can cause problems in relationships. Everyone who is around the person with chronic pain suffers. It can lead to the over use of drugs and alcohol. Chronic pain is toxic and can ruin your life.

There may have been an accident which started it off, an auto accident perhaps with sprained back or neck injury. Most chronic pain sufferers tend to be in the older age group. You have chronic complaints such as low back pain, headaches, nerve pain, sciatic pain and many more. And the real kick in the head is that your doctors don't really get that concerned about your pain. They worry

about prescribing heavy medications which they have to explain about prescribing to government offices. So doctors tend to turn a blind eye and deaf ear your way.

There are many treatments around for chronic pain. There are pain medications, acupuncture, electric stimulation treatments, and even surgery. So often you keep getting referred off to yet another specialist who runs tests, shakes his head, and says there is just so much that can be done. Some must suffer – so they say.

Over 70 million people a year suffer with chronic pain and if you are a member of this group, you aren't a happy camper. I have had a chronic pain problem for several years and I know the run around involved. Doctors want to turn away from this problem because there are no tests to prove your pain and no quick way to fix you up and make you happy. They look at you as a 'chronic' who can't be satisfied with the relief you get.

You can get to the point where you look around and think that nobody understands what you are going through and doesn't care anyway. This is a good breeding group for the depression soldiers to march right in and claim you. At one time I was prescribed so many medications from a doctor at a pain clinic that I couldn't think straight. I wrote a check for \$800 for an \$80 bill. Then when I could not deal with being this disjointed, I went off them. Once again I promptly became surrounded by pain and became depressed. I was very frustrated that there seemed to be no real effort to get me on the right combinations of medications which would let me continue to function.

Believe me; I know that anyone experiencing chronic pain can come to feel totally alone in the suffering. Sooner or later you will run into someone who questions that you could have that much pain. Your quality of life is changed dramatically. I was always a very athletic person who loved to be physically active. When I had to slow down I resented it because I was giving up a very important part of my life.

Depression and anxiety are a normal part of the experience of anyone who experiences chronic pain. But that's just the beginning. There are so many other aspects of your life that start getting affected. It's the terrible triangle of pain, lack of sleep, and sadness. Depression and irritability lead to fatigue and bone weariness. You are so sleepy all the time but you can't get a good night's sleep. You want to stop the pain and you want to get to sleep. All this trouble tends to lead to alcoholism, drug abuse, getting surgeries which are unnecessary, and family misery.

Your appetite may be gone or you may eat yourself silly with the pain and depression. It's almost impossible for you to have any kind of social life because you have to be medicated to do much of anything. As a result, you are no longer a part of your former world. You are less active and perhaps you start to gain weight. You can't exercise like you used to because it hurts too much. Then your clothes don't fit. Your life cannot be planned because you don't know when your pain will flare up into a situation where you can't know if you will feel up to going somewhere. That's when you start to feel that there's nothing better to look forward to. You are tired, irritable, and isolated.

Anyone who has dealt with getting appropriate medications for pain has run into doctors who feel that you should never get the proper pain relief. Pain is the leading cost of medical care so it is a major problem. So how do doctors and regulatory government agencies deal with this? They say we should not have narcotic medicine to make us comfortable. There are so many people who need to be made comfortable but they are told they may only be comfortable a few hours per day. After all, you don't want to become addicted to pain meds. So many of us end up doctor shopping or going to the emergency room.

Again, the feeling of isolation sets in. People who don't know how the pain affects you, including members of your family, cannot really understand. You don't want to have your pain as the main topic of conversation but you don't want anyone dismiss your pain either. That's why support groups are so important to people with chronic pain. You find that there are other people who have many of the same symptoms.

Don't worry about going to such a group. You won't be a 'marked person'. They can give you support you can't get anywhere else. People in the group can explain how they learned to cope and how they made it through the worst. This can help give you a few ideas. And you can finally let loose and tell other people how horrible you feel without knowing you might be driving them away.

If you have chronic pain and depression, here some benefits to joining a support group:

- You are among people like you who have had the same bad experiences. You don't feel like such an odd ball.
- When the people in the group talk, they will be saying things that you relate to. They will know what you are feeling and thinking and they won't disapprove. You can let your hair hang down and spill your guts.
- It's a chance to meet new friends. They will listen and also get you to laugh some about what all you have been through. And you will have a network of people who can give you new information and share with you what didn't work for them.

Even if you are a shy person, I would encourage you to at least try one of these groups. They are in your community and on the internet. If you are too depressed to be around anyone, you are not

getting the right medication. The group would be able to tell you that right away and give you encouragement.

With chronic pain and depression, you will need treatment based on how severe this deadly combination is for you. You will most likely get pain medication and antidepressants. The main thing for you to know is that if you have bad side effects, demand that your medication be changed. Insurance companies will pay for your medications in most cases. Often they will also pay for counseling as to how to handle your chronic illness such as diabetes. Don't expect them to pay for much talk therapy.

Some people swear by chiropractic adjustments for spinal pain. Others say that acupuncture has helped them. The main thing for you to understand is that chronic pain can't be cured most of the time. I about fell over when my doctor told me to forget finding a cure, that there was none. But you can get some relief from your pain and you definitely can get relief from your depression with the right medication. Do not give up. Insist that you get the best help there is to get. You deserve it.

## Chapter 8

# Talk Therapy and Depression

We have watched Tony Soprano go in and talk to his therapist as well as Robert DeNiro, the crime boss talking to his therapist played by Billy Crystal in the movie 'Analyze This'. Watch any soap opera and they will get around to having a character see a shrink. Bob Newhart had a popular comedy show about a psychologist and his hilarious contacts with his patients from group therapy. So we all know about therapy. Some of us think that only real sickos go in to visit a shrink and some of us won't even admit we might need a helping hand from a therapist.

There are different approaches to therapy and you need to know this because if you go to therapy you want to know which approach your therapist is using. You can choose because you have the up front knowledge you got here.

### **Psychotherapy:**

This is the most famous kind of therapy we have heard of where a person goes in, lays down on a couch or sits in an easy chair, and talks about his mother. It's probably the worst way to treat depression.

Sigmund Freud started this idea which said that behavior today is caused by our childhood conflicts. Before a person can get better, he or she must solve the riddle of why he did things as a child. Insight must be achieved. You have to know exactly why you got depressed before you get any better. The results of this type therapy have not been very effective. You can work and work and find out why you do the things you do but if you don't change your behavior, no good results happen. You are talking about the past and trying to analyze things that happened maybe forty years ago. The



therapist typically sits there and tells you nothing, wanting you to come to your own conclusions. This therapy can go on forever, or as long as you have the money to afford it. Few insurance companies are going to foot the bill for this drawn out therapy. Only someone like Woody Allen can afford to keep it going.

### **Behavioral Therapy:**

In this type of therapy the only thing you will be talking about is your behavior, what you did. The basis of this therapy is that you are feeling depression because of what you did. This therapist won't be going into your past and asking about your parents or your birth order. This therapist wants to hear what is happening and then will work with you to change your behavior and do it now. It works very well for many people.

### **Cognitive Therapy:**

This therapy has as it's belief that all emotion comes from thoughts. The basis for this therapy is for you to interrupt your thoughts, ask if they are really good and true, and discard them if they are not. This therapy says that you have to review the way you typically think. Then you ask yourself if this thinking is based on good sound information.

If you decide it is not, you need to change your way of thinking. It is a good therapy for someone who likes to spend a lot of time thinking about and analyzing their thoughts. For others it's way too complicated.

## **Interpersonal Therapy:**

This therapy deals with how you relate to other people in your life. It focuses on how you communicate and express your feelings. Your social skills are seen as the key to understanding why you are having trouble in your life. You need to learn how to become more self-assertive and positive, making eye contact, and rehearsing what you will say or do in a situation. This can be very practical for you to learn better communication skills. But for many people this is not enough. I saw so many couples who were never going to be able to have good relationships. They were different to the core and neither of them could really change. I was never one to prescribe divorce but when I would sit week after week with two people who obviously were destroying each other, I knew they were destined to fail in the relationship.

## **Anti Depressant Therapy:**

There is never anything to be ashamed of in taking anti-depressant medication. Anyone you know may be taking it someday, including you. We are so lucky that there are now anti-depressants with fewer side effects. We can take them and get fast treatment for depression. Taking the right anti-depressant can change your life, and change it for the better. I have talked to so many people who have told me that they had no idea how bad off they were until they started taking anti-depressants. If you combine anti-depressants with talk therapy, you may get the most benefit of all.

We have learned that depression is triggered by a chemical imbalance in your brain. Just like an antihistamine can stop your sneezing, anti-depressants can stop your depression. They can help

you to function and get your life moving again. They can lift those heavy clouds off your shoulders and let you see the light.

How long you take the medication is up to you. The biggest challenge is to find out what dose works for you. Too many people give up after the first few weeks saying that the side effects were awful and they never go back to the doctor

It is very important when an anti depressant is prescribed for you or you order it over the internet that you know plenty about this medication. You need to know what its side effects can be.

I encourage people do their own research regarding any medication they use.

Find out:

- What is it supposed to do?
- When and how do I take it?
- What other medicines should I avoid while taking this?
- What food or drinks should I avoid?
- Can I use alcohol with this?
- What are the side effects?
- When will it start to work?
- How long will I be on it?

### **Take it on yourself to:**

- Ask any question you feel is important.
- Tell your doctor about your fears of taking the medicine.
- Let your doctor know if you stop taking your medicine.
- Let your doctor know about any bad side effects.
- Demand a different anti depressant if yours is not helping.
- Ask yourself how you can deal with your problems.

Think about how you can find new ways of handling the problems you have. The medicine gives you more ability to think clearly.

One of the most important things you need to know is that it is quite possible that the first one or two anti depressants you try will not suit you. Every person's system is different and there is no magic one to fit all. Don't let yourself get discouraged and just stop taking your pills without trying others. So many people do exactly that and don't you be one of those people. Push on and get what you need. You are important. You are suffering. You deserve help and deserve to get better. Take the time to find the right anti depressant for you, then stay on it for as long as you need it.

### **ECT Or Shock Treatment**

Electro convulsive therapy is a treatment for severe depression. It is used when the situation is so bad that there is a concern for suicide or serious behavior problems. During this treatment the brain is zapped with a strong electrical current. This causes a seizure like someone with epilepsy would have. Supposedly this seizure releases different chemicals in the brain and make the brain cells work better.

The person's mood will improve when the chemicals take the right messages to part of the body. Typically the person is given around 12 treatments.

Some people swear that ECT really is helpful for anyone suffering from very severe depression or uncontrolled manic behavior. Others will tell you that it is one of the worse methods used to treat depression and is very destructive. Two very important side effects are confusion and long lasting memory loss. People have said that after these treatments they never felt they were as mentally sharp after as they were prior to the ECT.

Here is a typical description of someone who is given ECT treatments.

Sally is a middle aged woman who has gone through a very bad divorce. Her ex husband threw up everything that ever happened in their relationship as her fault. She realizes that the only people who are benefiting from this court action are the lawyers. She feels her lawyer was less competent than the one her husband had. The result came out much more favorable to her husband. She is extremely depressed, locks herself in her home, and cannot go to her work. She knows she will be fired soon. She is thinking of ways to kill herself and tries to cut her wrists but the cuts are not deep enough. She ends up at a hospital emergency room. From there she is transferred to the psychiatric ward. Her sister has a conference with the doctor and agrees Sally should have ECT. Her sister is amazed that when she goes to visit Sally she cannot remember the names of her children. She has even walked out into the hall naked. Her sister is

worried that she made the wrong call. As it happens, several days after the ECT Sally starts to smile and talk with her sister about how well things are going. She doesn't remember why she had the problem in the first place. Sally's sister wonders if her sister's memory is going to be permanently affected.

### **The Pros Of ECT are:**

- Quick relief of your symptoms, especially if you are suicidal
- It an work when anti depressants aren't doing the job
- There's some physical reason you can't take anti depressants
- You had previous depression and it keeps coming back

### **The Cons of ECT are:**

- After receiving these treatments you can become confused while having the treatments
- You can have memory loss which can last many years. It could be permanent.
- It involves anesthesia and has potential for medical complications
- You may have headache, jaw pain, and muscle aches after treatments

Only you can decide if having shock treatments is the right thing for you to do. I view it only as an emergency treatment for people who are at risk of killing themselves or others. You may want to ask the doctor who is offering these shock treatments if he would have them himself or give them to members of his family. Unless the situation is critical, the use of anti depressants and anti anxiety medication can go a long way towards minimizing symptoms.

### **To Summarize:**

#### **What Can Treatment for Depression Do For You?**

- Your mood will improve and you won't feel as desperate.
- It can keep you from having another bad episode if you stay on medicine.
- It can help you sleep better.
- You start to know you can cope instead of feeling hopeless.
- It can lessen your need for alcohol or drugs.
- It can help your personal relationships.
- It can help your to think better and concentrate.
- It can help you relax and lower tension
- It can help you deal with pain and illness.
- It can help you deal with terrible blows, like death and job loss.

There are so many reasons for you to get help for depression that it's

hard to imagine why you would buck and refuse to get help. No one needs to suffer alone and no man is an island.

### **How Do You Know If Treatment Is Working?**

- Your symptoms should be less.
- You should be able to go back to pleasurable activities.
- You should be able to go to work or school
- You don't have the same symptoms coming back again and again.

### **How Long Should You Need Treatment?**

Remember this, getting better doesn't happen overnight. It took quite a long time for you to get really depressed and it's going to take time to restore your peace of mind. You may not even feel better for two or three months.

At first you will just be dealing with the depression that brought you to realize you need help. The goal is to get you to a point where you feel up to dealing with your situation. This can take four to six months. It also could take longer.



Next you will be trying to understand why you had this depression happen to you. You will need to really look at your personal life, your work, your relationships, your activities, your hobbies. You need to find out what things you were doing that didn't work right. You must decide if a situation is no longer one you want to live with. You are rethinking your life and deciding how you want it to turn out.

Then you will be on maintenance therapy for as long as it takes to make you feel you have overcome the problem and can function without any medication. Do Not Rush this decision. You do not want this to happen all over again and have your life totally disrupted.

There is no reason for not getting help for your depression. The help can save your life and also make your loved ones' lives better. Going through life feeling no joy, feeling hopeless, and dreading another day is no way to live. Get help today.

## Chapter 9

# Suicide When Depression Is Too Much

Suicide is a taboo subject. Nobody who is happy likes to think about it and it's one thing people don't tell jokes about. When you know that from 50,000 – 150,000 people a year commit suicide, it's scary. The figures are hard to nail down because many deaths are not labeled a suicide which really are. You need to be informed. You could be pushed far enough to consider it and so could someone you love.

Here are some facts:

- It happens twice as much as homicide.
- Men are 4 times as likely as women to do it.
- Women make more attempts to do it but fail.
- Over 70% of suicides are committed by white men.
- More than 65% are committed with a gun.
- People who live alone have a higher rate of suicide.
- People who are divorced or single have a higher rate.
- People with no support system do it more often.
- Those with chronic or terminal illness do it more.
- Chronic pain patients are more likely to do it.
- Alcohol and drug abusers are more prone to it.

- People with failed relationships do it more often
- If a family member did it, you might do the same.
- Fewer than 10% of those who try suicide are successful
- Strong financial pressure can push someone to it.
- Retired people have an increased likelihood.

All of us have passing thoughts of death. Sometimes things in your life are miserable and there seems no way they can get better. You might even think that being dead might be better. That's not something to worry about unless you keep thinking about how you would do it or have even made a plan.

Even if you think of suicide you probably do not really want to die. You just think suicide is one solution and a way to finally get bad things over with. You are feeling hopeless and helpless. The pain is taking over and you don't see another other way out. You don't think there is any help for you. The problem is too big for you to deal with. You feel like a failure or feel there is nothing to live for. You may be in such physical pain or have been told that you are going to die with a disease so why not get it over with.

Elderly white males are more likely to commit suicide and tend to get the job done. People with alternative life styles are also more likely to commit suicide. People going through severe grief or loss tend to think more about death. These groups feel outcast and not a real part of our society.

Why should you be concerned about suicide? It's the ninth leading cause of death. When thinking clearly, you find it hard to imagine anyone intentionally taking away life. But it happens every day and could someday happen to you or someone you love. What a

frightening thing to hear someone you love talk about suicide. You always hear that people who talk about it don't do it, but is this true? Of all the people who attempt suicide and don't succeed 20% to 30% try it again within the next year.

Losing a loved one to suicide is a very different from any other kind of death. Family members may blame each other or themselves and the experience is like no other kind of grief. After all, if a person decides to leave this life it means the person no longer felt there was something or someone to live for.

What methods are used most often to commit suicide?

- Overdose of pills
- Pills taken with alcohol
- Carbon monoxide poisoning, exhaust fumes in garage
- Guns, mostly among men
- Slitting wrists

What are the symptoms which should cause concern?

- A person talks about committing suicide
- Talk about wanting to die or being better off dead.
- Sudden concern with writing a will.

- Acting very depressed, crying, isolated
- Writing about suicide
- Giving away treasured items
- Withdrawal from family and friends
- Looking into ways to commit suicide
- Dramatic increase in drug and alcohol use
- Sudden talk about the afterlife
- Reckless action like driving at high speeds
- Getting affairs in order
- Calling people far away to say goodbye
- Close calls with accidents
- Talk about seeing dead loved ones

You may ask how anyone including yourself could ever get to the point of thinking of taking your own life. It is against nature, you say. Let's go back to the brain and the chemical mix ups that occur. There is one chemical called serotonin which is not in good supply in suicidal people. The lack of this chemical can change a person's thinking. You are not thinking rationally when you commit suicide. You don't think you can be helped and this is not true.

When someone you love or even yourself are talking about suicide, it could be that it is just a way to blow off steam and get some relief.

You can be so sad, so hopeless that for a brief time you think you would be better off dead. Just because you are talking about suicide does not mean you have definitely made up your mind. You just want the pain to stop and you don't know how to stop it. But since there is always that chance you will go through with it, all talk about suicide should be taken seriously. There are many people who hear that someone is talking about suicide and just think that person is trying to get attention. Any mention of suicide should be taken very seriously. This is a deadly subject.

#### What To Do If Someone You Love Mentions Suicide:

- If the person wants to talk about it, listen.
- Ask what would be the reason for doing it.
- Say that you care and want to help.
- Say you love this person and would miss him or he
- Say normal people think about this when stressed
- Ask if the person has made any definite plans
- If so, what would be the method of suicide.
- Ask if the person has the pills, the knife, and the gun.
- Ask if the person is prepared to carry this out soon.
- Ask if there have been any previous attempts.

## **This Is What You Do Not Do:**

- Don't challenge him or her to do it
- Don't try to offer quick, easy solutions
- Don't criticize
- Don't use a lot of intellectual arguments
- Don't say you are calling the bluff
- Don't minimize the problem
- Don't laugh and say 'oh yeah'
- Don't call the person a nutcase
- Don't say how hurt those left behind will be

You will be very uncomfortable talking to someone about suicide. It's not a subject people tend to discuss often. But if someone you care about seems very depressed, ask about any thoughts of suicide. **Better to ask before than question after.** The main thing you have to find out is if there has been any actual planning of suicide, previous attempts, and if the person has the means to carry it out.

Listen without putting your two cents worth in. Let the person talk as long as necessary. You will not only be helping the person to let the horrible feelings out. You will have information to give to any health personnel. The main thing to do is listen without doing much other than consoling and being compassionate. As long as you can keep this person talking, the more the desperation will notch down lower. You want to calm this person down, keep your voice low, and nod like you can see how bad this is.

You have to realize the seriousness of the situation. If the person is not planning and does not have the means, this may not be an emergency situation. You may not have to take urgent action right now but it could happen later. You must tell this person that he or she needs help and try to help find it. It does no good to tell someone who is uninsured to call a private psychologist or psychiatrist for treatment. You have to get down to the nitty gritty and see what help is available for someone who cannot afford private treatment. Perhaps the emergency room is the only way to get treatment.

**Do Not Leave The Person Alone.** The person who is really considering suicide is not thinking rationally and is not in control. Give reassurance and say you are trying to understand and will help this person get help. Say that many people have thoughts of suicide and that having these feelings doesn't mean anyone should do it. Say that this person is depressed and that depression is one of the most treatable illnesses. Say that the feeling will pass and is temporary. Reassure that there is help, that these feelings are treatable, and that the suicidal feelings are temporary. Don't get too wordy. Someone in this state of mind needs lots of physical rather than verbal reassurance. Nod a lot and show you care.

You don't want the person to act on suicidal impulses but it might happen. You can't take the chance. If someone is hurting, not able to be consoled, talking about suicide, and having made plans to do it, this is a deadly situation. It needs immediate action. You must do whatever you need to do to get this person help. Even if this person begs you to keep the confidence and demands that you not tell anyone, you cannot accept this direction. This person's life is on the line and you don't have to worry about losing this person's trust. And remember, if the person is telling you all this, it is truly a request for assistance. It is a cry for help. **Pay Attention!**



Emergency situations require this action:

- Tell the person you are going to call for help.
- Call 911.
- Take the person to an emergency room.
- Do not let this person alone. Watch constantly.
- Don't even let him or her in the bathroom alone.
- Make sure that no weapon is close by.
- Keep saying 'help is on the way'.
- Say that this person is worthy and deserves to live. Say that you need this person.

Remember if it is you or someone else thinking about suicide, this threatening thinking must be taken seriously. It is a sign that the brain is giving off the wrong signals and needs attention. This is deadly thinking and needs to be stopped. Professional help is needed and must be gotten. Better to be safe than sorry. Better to get help now than to wish you had gotten it later. It may be necessary for a suicidal person to be hospitalized until the right medications are given to lessen depression. Be on the safe side. Step up. Do the right thing.

After saying all of this, I must tell you that there is no guaranteed way to prevent suicide. You might not be able to stop it no matter how

hard you try. If someone commits suicide, you cannot blame yourself. Everyone makes her or his own choices, good or bad. This is not on you.

If someone you love has committed suicide, you need to get some psychological first aid. It will help if you are able to talk out your feelings and express how horrible you feel. You may be very angry that this happened and it's good to let this out also. It might also be a good idea to go to a support group of people who have lost loved ones through suicide. You may need to talk to a grief counselor. It would be good to talk to a minister. Your family system may be shaken by the loss of this person and there can be financial problems as well. You need to talk about your feelings, the problems left behind, and seek out help on how to deal with the future.

You now have to consider that you yourself are under a lot of stress from this happening. You have to be strong to deal with all that is going on. It might be a good thing for you to get anti depressant medicine to help you through this time.

Suicide is an awful thing. Not only has one person left this life voluntarily but everyone who is touched by this act is affected. There is plenty of pain and misery to go around and the scars may last a lifetime.

If you are thinking about committing suicide or know someone who is, please do something about it. So often there is a situation which just overwhelms someone and there is not a vision of a way out. Then combine this with overuse of alcohol and drugs and bad things are likely to happen.

As long as there is life, there is hope. There is another way to look at things, another solution, another plan. And there are resources to turn to when you are at the end of your rope.

If you are thinking of killing yourself, don't do it. Get the medication you need to get your brain back on track. You are not in a healthy

state of mind. With help, you can work your way back and find that there are reasons for you to keep living.

Please get help.

## Chapter 10

### Life Changes After Depression:

After you have been through a depression, you are changed forever. You know just how bad you can feel and how hopeless and unimportant life may appear. You have gotten help either through talk therapy, antidepressants, a combination of both, or more dramatic measures. Your pessimistic, self critical thoughts are getting less and you are beginning to take stock of your life, where you have been and where you are going. You are trying to cope better with the stresses in your life and evaluating which of them could be taken away.

You have considered what you expect out of yourself, others, and life in general. Most of us sooner or later come to the conclusion that things have to change in order for us to stay better. Relationships and work situations have to be looked at closely. Change has to happen for your recovery to work.

Even though old routines and habits have seemed comfortable to us in the past, they obviously did not work for us. If you were having relationship problems before the depression, you probably still have them. If you hated your job before, you probably still don't like it now. If you did not like where you lived, how you lived, and who you hung out with, that's still in your face.

No matter how bad things are, it is very difficult to change. Let's use the example of someone having had a heart attack. It may be found that the person's lifestyle has played a big part in the development of this illness. The heart patient gets treatment, perhaps surgery, and then is given guides as to better lifestyle choices. I know all about this because when my husband had his triple bypass and went through rehab I learned that we would have to change our eating habits and make sure my husband was getting the right kind of

exercise. Our way of life was changing and it was difficult at first to get used to this. But this was a fact of life and we had to face it.

On the other hand, we knew people who had bypass surgery and went right back to their old eating and drinking habits. Within 2 years they were having serious problems again.

They were smoking, eating lots of fatty foods, overdoing it in the alcohol department, and not getting enough exercise. They were also complaining that they were having serious symptoms again.

With depression, when it happens, it's the same way. You can't just return to your old ways of dealing with stress and use the same coping skills that got you depressed in the first place. It's time to see what your priorities are and what needs your attention most.

Let's take Ralph:

He's 64 years old, retired, and enjoys playing golf, going fishing, and hanging with his old friends who are also retired. He drinks a little more than he should but he never had a DUI so he thinks he is OK. His wife has many friends and is involved in church work and helping the local animal shelter raise money. Ralph's wife meets Tom at the senior citizens' center and they immediately have a good mojo. Within weeks she and Tom are planning a future together. When Ralph learns of his marriage falling apart he drinks a quart of alcohol and runs his truck into a cement post. He is not seriously hurt but is diagnosed as seriously depressed. He is treated for two weeks in the hospital. His wife has shown concern but does not plan to stay with him. Ralph needs to find a way to live his life in a way that he does not need a steady flow of booze to keep going. He realizes after he's gone through detox that he will have to change his

lifestyle and become more active doing things that don't involve booze. He tells himself that maybe getting divorced isn't the worst thing in the world since he and his wife were never really that happy.

Annie is another example.

She is 46 years old and her 24 year old daughter was killed by an abusive husband. Annie has not been able to deal with her depression over this and has had to go to court to see her former son in law tried and sentenced. She takes sleeping pills and tranquilizers; sometimes to the point she slurs her words and stumbles when she walks. She is a realtor and does not have to report for work at any given time so she lays in bed much of the day. She has a friend who is handling her real estate closings. Annie was very close to her daughter and was not really close to her son who lives nearby. Her husband died of a heart attack and she lives alone in a lovely condo. Her diet is terrible and she looks bad. Her son comes over one day and tells her that he is taking her to a mental health clinic, that he has already made an appointment. She agrees reluctantly and when she tells her problem to a counselor, she is given anti depressant medication. Within 3 weeks she is feeling better and has more energy. She realizes that she will always grieve for her daughter but that relationship she counted on was gone. She checks out the local recreation center to see what classes she can take and she signs up for a gym member ship. She also feels much closer to her son and is trying to repair old grudges and arguments with him.

Jim was in a toxic relationship.

Jim is 28 and was living with Laura, 26. She is a nurse and he works for a drafting company. He dated her for five months before asking her to move in with him. When she did, their relationships seemed to go south. She never wanted to help with the cleaning and cooking and felt that they should go somewhere every night. The sex was good but she was always suggesting how he could make it better. He was very turned on by Laura because she was pretty and well built. However, he noticed there were phone calls coming in and Laura would take them in the bedroom and talk for an hour. He asked who it was but she didn't say. Finally he answered the phone and talked to the man who had been seeing Laura on the sly. Jim blew up and screamed at Laura to get out of the house. There was a terrible scene and the neighbors called the police who decided to arrest Jim. When he got out on bail, Laura had cleaned out the TV, stereo, and his computer. He was so depressed he could barely go to work. His mind would wander back to how he had gotten involved with a woman like her. He didn't want to go out with any friends and just got fast food to eat. His parents called and asked him to come visit as they only lived an hour away but he wouldn't go. He just sat and brooded. Finally he was causing so many screw ups at work that his boss told him to get help or he would be out of a job. Jack went to see a psychologist and let it all out. The counselor was understanding and arranged for Jack to get on antidepressants. He also told Jack that he needed to find out why he had been attracted to a woman like Laura and decide what was important in a woman that he would want to have a relationship with.

So you can see that there are reasons people get into depression. Happy times and sad times are part of all our lives. When we go over the edge into a really heavy duty depression, it's very hard to pull out. Then we have to look at what was causing us to be so depressed and so miserable.

Are you happy with your job? Lots of people would answer no but stay for the benefits. Sometimes a job is too much of a downer and maybe your boss is a toxic person for you to deal with. Change is hard. You hate to leave a job because you are used to it. But if you are being made miserable there, you have to make an effort to get another job.

Are you happy with how you look? If not, why not? Maybe there are changes you know you should be making. It may be time to follow through with that diet you have always talked about. Maybe you need a new look, a new hairstyle, a new you.

If you think you are hanging around with the wrong people you probably are. If you are drinking heavily or using party drugs, that has to change. If you are cheating and feeling bad about it then stop. If you are ignoring your children and not giving them the support and guidance they need, change this right now. If you think your marriage is not going to work, prepare for divorce. If you feel you are living in the wrong place, change residence.

You may say, 'Well, it's not that simple.' Yes it is. You can either change and do better or revert back to your old patterns and find yourself severely depressed yet again. Life is very short and each of us has the obligation to be as happy as possible. No other thing or person can make us happy. Money can make our lives easier, but not better. A bad marriage may give us security, but it may kill our souls. Alcohol and drugs may give us a temporary high but the downside is just around the corner.

You don't get depressed in a vacuum. Circumstances are happening, some of which you can control. Others you will have no



control over and you are going to have to adapt. Life is not fair. You may lose someone you love and think that it was rotten that this happened. You maybe fired from a job you love and feel bitter resentment and fury.

You may have had a very sad childhood and still don't get any love or support from your parents but that cannot be changed. Only you can change. Only you can do the hard things that will make it possible for you to keep living. **You can't depend on someone else to be your life source, to feed your heart and your soul.**

Depression is a terrible illness. It does, however, provide so much pain for us that we are forced to look at what is going wrong in our lives. It is very important to get the right medication, to get your exercise, and always try to think positively. It is essential that you consider your relationships, are they good or bad for you. Are you being the best person you can be, feeling proud of your actions, and knowing you are acting in a decent way?

Depression can be treated. Anti depressants are wonderful ways of changing and fixing the chemical imbalances in our brains. Remember also that you then have to fix yourself, your life, and your future.

## ***And Finally***

Let me say this to paraphrase the great coach Vince Lombardi.  
Healthy happy living isn't the only thing.....it's everything.