Depression: Ways to Win the Battle

How widespread is depression? What are its causes? Most important, what are the weapons in the struggle against depression?

by Noel Horner

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**Good News about Depression**

The good news is that the majority of those who suffer from depression can recover. Professional practitioners estimate that 80 percent of people can gain substantial relief. Routine— but important— steps that anyone can take can assist in avoiding depression in the first place. Maintaining a positive outlook on life and a positive outlook on life is Theodore Roosevelt, 26th president of the United States. Roosevelt suffered crises that might have maimed someone else. As a young husband, he was pounded by a double tragedy. His mother and wife were struck by unexpected illnesses. At first their afflictions did not appear to be serious, but they grew worse, and both died within a few hours of each other on the same day, in the same house. To make matters worse, Roosevelt’s wife had given birth to a daughter only two days before. He attended the double funeral in shock. One of his friends wrote that Roosevelt was so grief-stricken that “he does not know what he says or does.” Roosevelt later wrote: “When my heart’s deepest died, the light went out of my life for ever” (quoted by David McCullough, Mornings on Horseback, 1981, p. 285, 288).

He struggled for three days after his wife’s death; he was back at his desk as a state legislator. He immersed himself in activity. His philosophy for life might well be best expressed in his most popular book, which has already been reprinted in paperback. A case can be made that he is among a select group of people who have not been able to find any brightness in life, life becomes a treadmill of boredom and bleakness’ (Talking Back to Prozac, 1994, p. 201).

An expert on depression, Dr. Peter Breggin, observes: “Many people go through life with what might be called a ‘low-grade’ depression. They are apathetic and life seems monotonous . . . they cannot find any brightness in life, life becomes a treadmill of boredom and bleakness” (Talking Back to Prozac, 1994, p. 201).

Contact and support—Cultivating relationships is vital to one’s well-being. Psychologist Dorothy Rowe wrote: “You have to find . . . people to confide in, and you have to overcome the habit of keeping things to yourself” (Depression: The Way Out of Your Prison, 1996, p. 199).

**Is It Depression or Just the Blues?**

S ometimes we’re sad. When we’re less than buoyant, we may say we’re “depressed.” But real depression—clinical depression—is more than just being sad or not quite buoyant. It involves severe symptoms and biochemical changes.

Many minor symptoms of depression are the result of cheapo- ment. Fears may fail to materialize, and frustration results. The writer of one of the books of the Bible realized this: “Hope deferred makes the heart sick” (Proverbs 13:12).

When hope is dashed, discouragement can grow. When this hap- pers, it helps to think of time and space. A break from time and space can restore a positive perspective.

Some people’s marginally “blue” feelings become a way of life. Such people may be in a depressed outlook. The roots of such feelings can run deep. Such a person may be modeling behavior he saw as a child in someone else.

Habitual patterns of thought can drive a child toward perpetual gloominess. The apostle Paul advises parents: “ . . . Do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged” (Colossians 3:21).

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Good News about Depression

The good news is that the majority of those who suffer from depression can recover. Professional practitioners estimate that 90 percent of people can gain substantial relief. Routine—but important—steps that anyone can take to avoid suffering depression in the first place. Maintaining a positive, useful life is important. The experts agree that an active life is beneficial therapy. An example of a man who overcame depression and led a productive, fulfilling life is Theodore Roosevelt, 26th president of the United States. Roosevelt suffered crises that might have nixed some less determined heroes.

As a young husband, he was pounded by a double tragedy. His mother and wife were stricken by unexpected illnesses. At first their afflictions did not appear to be serious, but they grew worse, and both died within a few hours of each other on the same day. To make matters worse, Roosevelt’s wife had given birth to a daughter only two days before. He attended the double funeral in shock. One of his friends wrote that Roosevelt was so grief-stricken “that he does not know what he is doing or says.” Roosevelt later wrote: “When my heart’s dearest died, the light went out of my life forever” (quoted by David McCullough, Mornings on Horseback, 1981, p. 285, 288).

He pulled himself together. Three days after his wife’s death, he was back at his desk as a state legislator. He immersed himself in activity. His philosophy for life might well be best expressed in his own words. The important thing is to carry on. “The way out of your prison, dear sir, is to cease clinging to the past and get to work” (The Way Out of Your Prison, 1996, p. 199).

The Bible provides us with examples of men of God trusting in Him to recover from depression. “The Lord shall enlighten my darkness,” as David so eloquently stated (2 Samuel 22:29). David knew God would hear him.

The Bible gives good advice about a related problem—stress. Jesus Christ promised relief from the stresses of life. “Come to Me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28, New International Version).

Stress бегется. Jesus gives good advice for the anxious: “There-fore do not worry” (Matthew 6:25). Stress alone keeps you down, but it is capable of being controlled by them. “In the world you will have tribulation,” Jesus said, “but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). We can over-come the negative influences—the depressing aspects—of our world. The Bible shows that depression can be induced by the spirit world. It presents Satan as having an unseen influence on humanity. The Bible says that Satan is the “ruler of the darkness of this age” (Ephesians 6:12), swaying people with negative influences, inspiring destructive thoughts (Ephesians 2:2), which add to the spiritual influences we have to resist.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). The Bible provides us with examples of men of God trusting in Him to recover from depression. “The Lord shall enlighten my darkness,” as David so eloquently stated (2 Samuel 22:29). David knew God would hear him.

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Depression is one of the most prevalent afflictions. Health practitioners encounter it so often that it has been called the common cold of psychopathology. Psychologists have estimated that during any month 5 percent of American adults suffer from depressive illness. Depression knows no territorial or national bounds. William Manchester aptly described the outlook of someone who is depressed: “Every day he chisels his way through time, praying for relief” (1983, p. 23). Mood fluctuations are normal, but severe melancholia “resembles the passing sadness of the normal man as a melancholy resembles a cancerous sore” (ibid.). The depressed person’s perspective alters. He views life through a distorting lens. He often imagines that he will never be better. “Pervading everything is hopelessness, an irrational sense that, regardless of effort, nothing will change or that things will only get worse” (David Cohen, Out of the Blue, 1994, p. 76). The depressed person’s belief that his life will never return to normal exacerbates his ailment, casting a pall over the future. A gloomy outlook leads some to contemplate suicide.

Depression is not a problem only for the sufferer. The strain on friends and family can be brutal. A depressed person may be easily angered. A parent’s depression is especially hard on young children. “It is probably not possible to calculate the degree of pain and the exhaustion such families feel” (Demetri Papoutsis, M.D., and Janice Papoutsis, Overcoming Depression, 1992, p. 289). The causes of depression

Depression is an illness so complex that the professionals don’t really understand it. For some, depression is triggered by chemical imbalances and is best treated with medications. Others are wise to seek help to determine any underlying physical cause. Without addressing the underlying cause, other steps will not be of much help. For others, the roots of depression may be psychological and social. These factors include “genetic transmission; personality characteristics; early life experiences, particularly childhood.”

Recommended Reading

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Dehydration: Ways to Win the Battle

How widespread is depression? What are its causes? Most important, what are the weapons in the struggle against depression?

by Noel Hornor

Depression is a major concern in modern society. It affects millions of people, both young and old, across the globe. The symptoms of depression can include feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and worthlessness, as well as a lack of energy and motivation. In some cases, depression can lead to suicide.

There are several factors that can contribute to the development of depression. These include genetic predispositions, biological abnormalities, environmental stressors, and psychological factors. In some cases, depression may be triggered by a specific life event, such as the loss of a loved one or a major change in one’s life.

Treatment options for depression include medication, psychotherapy, and lifestyle changes. Medication can help to regulate chemical imbalances in the brain, while psychotherapy can help to address underlying psychological issues. Lifestyle changes, such as regular exercise and a healthy diet, can also be helpful.

It is important to seek help if you or someone you know is struggling with depression. Depression can be a serious illness, but it is one that can be managed with proper treatment. By learning about the causes of depression and seeking help when needed, we can take steps to win the battle against this debilitating condition.


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