

Turning the Tide on Depression

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According to a recent Harvard study, currently 9.6% of adults in the United States are clinically depressed. 12% of men and 10% of women experience depression at some point during their lifetime. Depression often hides in substance addiction, work addiction, and aggression.

There are several possible brain-based causes of depression (low levels of serotonin and/or dopamine) as well as other underlying sources of depression, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, beliefs about self and control, a sense of helplessness, and early life experiences of neglect, abuse, or attachment problems. While the exact cause of any person's depression may be difficult to determine, we do know of several exercises that can diminish or eliminate the most troublesome symptoms of depression.

Exercise #1: Appreciate yourself

Have you ever noticed that some people say bad things about themselves that they would never say about someone else? The first thing to remember when trying to tackle depression is to ***STOP SAYING BAD THINGS ABOUT YOURSELF***. Do not say them to yourself and do not say them to other people. Next, notice things you appreciate about yourself and write them down on a list. Carry this list with you. Expect a slow change in making this appreciation of yourself real and making those qualities dominate your presence to yourself and to others.

Exercise #2: Focus on your strengths

What we do changes how we feel about ourselves, and our opportunities to do what we are good at give us self-esteem of the most important kind. People with depression may forget they have strengths and positive attributes. To focus on your strengths, make a list of your best strengths (hard worker, honest, kind, creative, disciplined, etc). Make a list of opportunities to use your strengths. Every day ask yourself and record: did I use my strengths? How?

By committing to practice these exercises on a regular and consistent basis, most people will find their symptoms of depression will diminish within a couple of months, leading to a fuller, healthier, and more joyful life.

Wehrenberg, Margaret, Psy.D. Ten Best-Ever Depression Treatment Techniques, 2009.