



# UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION:

TOOLS FOR BOOSTING  
HAPPINESS, POSITIVITY  
AND FULFILLMENT  
IN YOUR LIFE



## *Introduction*

Depression is a mood disorder that may occur as a result of feeling overwhelmed by life's challenges, as a response to changes in season or circumstances, or due to factors that can't be easily identified. Depression can affect your brain chemistry. It can make it so that your mind processes information more negatively, sadly, and cynically. And unfortunately, when this occurs, you believe those feelings. They feel natural, normal, and justifiable.

This is what happens when you live with depression. It makes you feel sadder, less energetic, and unable to feel happiness. But what makes it worse is that it shapes the way in which you view the world. When you have depression, you feel as though all of those negative emotions make perfect sense, and they simply represent the way the world works. Your thinking becomes distorted where negativity colors your perceptions of the world and it feels like sadness is always around the corner.

Depression can manifest differently for different individuals and may impact thoughts, feelings, and the ability to effectively manage daily activities/responsibilities. When depressed, people tend to focus more on the negative, stressful aspects of life rather than on what is positive and wonderful. This then interferes with their ability to feel joy from their experiences and relationships.

***"Depression can manifest differently for different people and may impact thoughts, feelings, and the ability to effectively manage daily activities/responsibilities."***



## *Chapter 1:*

# **SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION**

Symptoms of depression may manifest as emotional, physical, or a combination of both. Here are some indications that you may be depressed:

- ◇ **Chronic feelings of sadness, emptiness, or the inability to feel happiness**
- ◇ **Loss of interest/pleasure in previously enjoyable activities**
- ◇ **Lack of motivation or trouble keeping up with day-to-day responsibilities**
- ◇ **Irritability or restlessness**
- ◇ **Low self-esteem or self-worth**
- ◇ **Low energy and/or fatigue**
- ◇ **Insomnia or hypersomnia**
- ◇ **Reduced or overactive appetite; weight change**
- ◇ **Impaired memory, concentration, or decision-making**
- ◇ **Persistent pessimism and/or feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness**
- ◇ **Increased thoughts/considerations about death or suicide**



## *Chapter 2:*

# DEPRESSION FACTS & STATISTICS

- ◇ *1 in 10 adults struggles with depression every year.*
- ◇ *Worldwide, depression is the most prominent cause of disability among people age 15-44.*
- ◇ *Prevalence for MDD is highest among adults aged 18-25.*
- ◇ *Median age for onset of symptoms is 32.5 years old.*
- ◇ *More women than men are diagnosed with depression, however this may, in part, be due to the fact that women are more likely to pursue treatment.*
- ◇ *For children and adolescents, depression is more common in girls than boys.*
- ◇ *Approximately 20% of adolescents struggle with depression by the time they enter adulthood.*
- ◇ *Depression is a common mental disorder among individuals above the age of 65, often impacted by the fact that elder adults also suffer from one or more chronic medical conditions.*
- ◇ *Suicide rates are highest among the elderly and are more common for men than women within this age group.*
- ◇ *Approximately half of those with depression will experience another comorbid mental disorder.*

### AT-RISK POPULATIONS

- ◇ **Teens, seniors, and individuals experiencing any major life stressor or transition**
- ◇ **Low-income**
- ◇ **Unemployed**
- ◇ **Poorly educated**
- ◇ **No health insurance**



## *Chapter 3:*

# FORMS OF DEPRESSION

1

### **MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER**

*Someone with Major Depressive Disorder has experienced one or more depressive episodes, which may occur as a result of a significant life event/change or may seem to occur more randomly. A depressive episode is a bout of depression in which symptoms persist for most of the day, nearly every day and significantly interfere with one's ability to function as usual in occupational, academic, or social domains.*

2

### **PERSISTENT DEPRESSIVE DISORDER (AKA DYSTHYMIA)**

*Life is a rollercoaster filled with highs and lows, but sometimes the low points feel more chronic and intrusive than the highs. Dysthymia is a form of depression that differs from Major Depression because symptoms are generally less severe than Major Depression, but they persist for much longer – sometimes for years at a time. Dysthymia involves many of the same symptoms as other forms of depression, but these symptoms are experienced on a consistent basis for at least two years.*

3

### **BIPOLAR DISORDER (AKA MANIC DEPRESSION):**

*People often misuse the word “bipolar” to describe someone who is “emotional,” however; bipolar disorder is actually a clinical presentation wherein one struggles with both episodes of depression and episodes of mania. Someone experiencing a “manic episode” may appear unusually energetic, enthusiastic, distractible, irritable or jumpy, have heightened levels of focus and activity with little need for sleep, be excessively self-confident and talkative, be more likely to engage in risk-taking behavior, and have racing thoughts or ruminations that cannot be contained. A “hypomanic episode” looks similar to a manic episode, but symptoms are less severe. Periods of depression/dysthymia and mania/hypomania may last for different lengths of time with different people, and episodes may be one-time occurrences or may reoccur periodically over time.*

4

### **SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER (SAD)**

*Seasonal Affective Disorder is a form of depression associated with seasonal changes, and it triggers many of the same physical and emotional symptoms present in Major Depression. Most people with Seasonal Affective Disorder begin to notice symptoms in the Fall, which then persist throughout the winter months and finally improve once Spring arrives. Though less common, other people may instead experience an onset of symptoms in the Summer that taper off as winter begins. SAD symptoms may be triggered by the fact that colder months require more time spent indoors and less exposure to natural sunlight. Furthermore, they are associated with holidays, family relationship dynamics and memories of previous holiday experiences, which, for some, can be difficult to navigate. Light therapy and talk therapy are considered two highly effective ways to manage and overcome SAD. .*

5

### **POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION**

*A form of depression, most typically experienced by women, after the birth of a child, which interferes with caretaking and bonding abilities.*



## *Chapter 4:*

# **GRIEF VS. DEPRESSION**

There is nothing quite like experiencing a loss to bring out some of the world's harshest emotions. There are issues in life that make us sad, scared, empty, and lonely. But mourning a loss seems to bring out versions of those emotions that few other experiences can provoke. Grief can also trigger long term emotions that persist for an extended period of time, and for some people, that grief can become life altering or debilitating in a way that goes beyond "healthy" grieving. We never truly overcome someone's loss, because their importance in our lives is always remembered. But if that grieving is becoming more of a longstanding, persistent issue, it is possible that mourning has turned into something more.

Mourning is an acceptable behavior. But the long-term goal is to still have a good quality of life despite the loss.

- ◇ If you find that you're struggling before 12 months, it is always a good idea to seek someone to talk to in order to feel better.
- ◇ If you find that you're struggling after 12 months, it helps to see someone that can assist you in determining whether you may be depressed and can provide the tools necessary for regaining control of your happiness.

Grief is entirely natural. But if you're struggling with grief, it helps to speak with a trained grief counselor and psychologist that can walk you through strategies for how to feel better. It doesn't matter if that is 10 days after the loss or 10 years.

# OVERCOMING GRIEF

After the death of a loved one, we often feel a lot of pressure from our environment to move on and leave the past behind. But that can be difficult for many reasons – not the least of which is because we may simply not be ready. It's natural to feel resistant to the pressure to move on. It's also normal to feel anxious or depressed about life without the person in it – what it might look like, what it once was, and the things that you may miss out on in the future.

One of the things we focus on in therapy is helping you realize that you do not need to leave the past in the past and forget about it to move on, nor do you have to force yourself to move on in a way that you're not comfortable with. Instead, we aim to help those who are grieving embrace a new approach to moving forward – by integrating the past into your present so that you're able to experience a better future.

## **Bringing the Person with You**

One of the ways we can move forward is to carry things from the past with us into the present and future. We can learn how to integrate past experiences, relationships, and qualities that we have seen, appreciated, and learned from into the way we act today. Doing so has the potential to bring us new levels of happiness and fulfillment specifically influenced by the person that was lost, even without them here. It's a way of keeping them alive in our hearts, even when they are no longer around, and allowing their presence in our lives to benefit and affect the person we turn out to be later. This is one of many ways that we can overcome grief, either in counseling or in your own personal life, and a potentially effective way to help bring about progress in your ability to mourn and move forward.

***“We aim to help those who are grieving embrace a new approach to moving forward.”***





## Chapter 5:

# TIPS FOR COPING WITH DEPRESSION

When you feel depressed, it may be hard to get out of bed, let alone engage in self-care activities and behaviors that have potential to improve your outlook and mood. In fact, it probably feels frustrating and unfair that the most difficult things to do are those that can ultimately be the most helpful to your process of recovery. However, you may also draw strength from the fact that any small step forward is likely to reinforce more steps. Noticing your own progress will give you more hope, more energy and more confidence that it will get easier to manage your depression and feel happier over time.

1

### CONNECTION IS KEY:

*Depression can be a powerful force in making you want to isolate or withdraw from the people in your life, but maintaining human connection can significantly improve your mood. Remind yourself that your loved ones are there to offer support and lend an ear.*

*Find someone you feel safe talking to and share how you're feeling, whether in-person or over the phone/internet. If you would rather not talk, plan to do something together and simply benefit from the companionship.*

2

### **PRIORITIZE YOUR BASIC NEEDS:**

*The associations between our moods and aspects of self-care such as sleep, diet, and hygiene are undeniable. In working to reduce depressive symptoms and boost your mood, it is important to notice the specific challenges you experience in maintaining self-care and to then explore potential strategies for improvement. For example, if you recognize a need to improve the quantity and quality of your sleep, you may change up your bedtime routine, limit screen time before going to sleep, drink a cup of warm milk to induce relaxation, or try using a white-noise machine to help drown out sound and facilitate a deeper sleep. Taking care of yourself in these ways can also serve to combat feelings of low self-esteem that some people experience when they are feeling depressed. Making efforts to take care of yourself and your needs may remind you that you are worthy, valuable, and capable of feeling more positive overall.*

3

### **STICK TO STRUCTURE:**

*Often when we feel depressed, our levels of motivation and productivity suffer, and when we are unproductive, we tend to feel more negatively about ourselves. The more you can implement and stick to a regular routine, the more likely it will be that you recognize your strengths and feel less defeated.*

4

### **MAKE TIME FOR MOVEMENT:**

*It has gotten to the point of becoming almost cliché, but there are sound medical benefits to exercising when it comes to boosting mood. Exercising relieves the body of excess adrenaline, it releases a hormone in the brain that both improves mood and reduces “pain,” and it helps people feel better about themselves. So even when it feels like climbing a mountain just to get out of bed, remember the many important benefits of incorporating physical activity, and try to do something active, even if it’s as minor as a walk around the block.*

5

**LISTEN TO MUSIC THAT MAKES YOU FEEL GOOD:**

*How often do you find yourself listening to music that matches the way you feel, not necessarily music that matches the way you want to feel. Studies have shown that music can have as powerful an effect on the mind as medicine. Listening to angry music, sad music, or ambivalent music may seem like a good coping strategy, but happy and upbeat songs are more likely to help you feel happy and upbeat as well.*

6

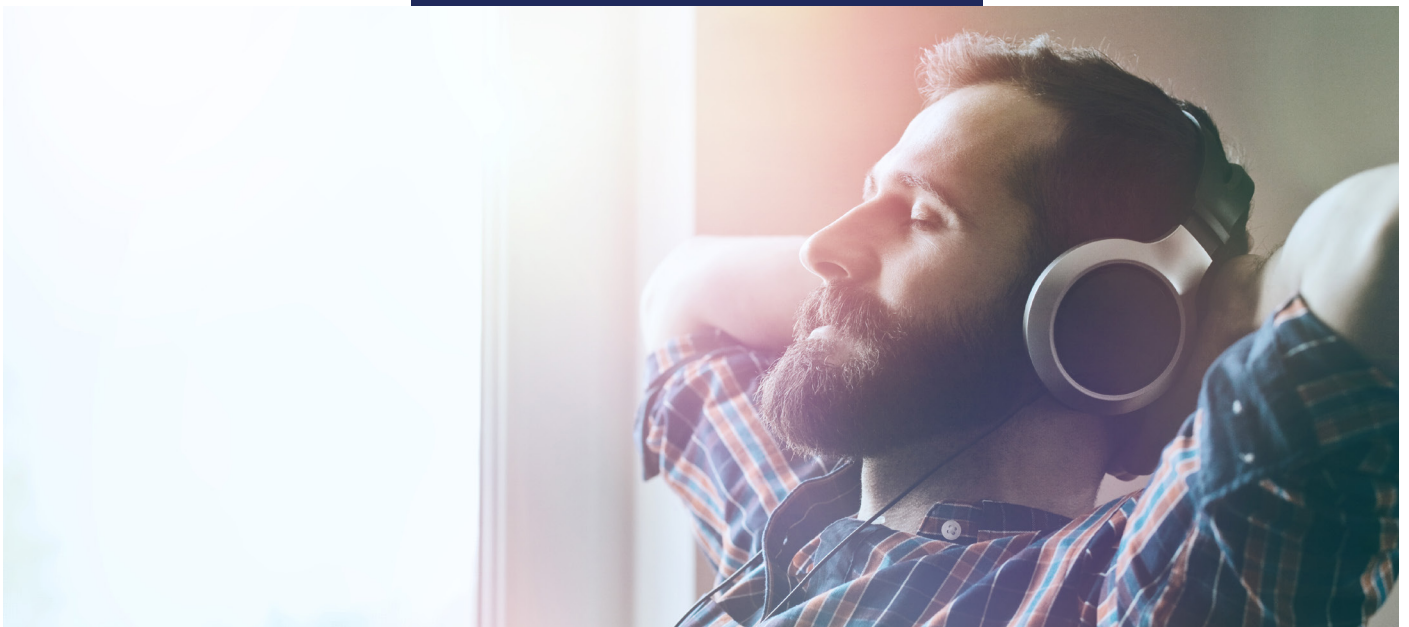
**GET OFF YOUR PHONE:**

*Young people that are also heavy cell phone users are significantly more likely to have anxiety and depression. It's highly unlikely that finding is limited to young people. Staring at a cell phone all day may be changing your brain to experience more negative thoughts. Put down your phone, go outside, and chances are you'll experience greater levels of contentment.*

7

**FIND A DISTRACTION:**

*Sometimes your own thoughts are your worst enemy. That's why it's good to distract your thoughts with pleasant activities (activities that you want to do and not those that you are required to do) to turn the negativity off. Additionally, sometimes having neutral or relaxing sounds on in the background at a low volume (even while asleep) can act as a mental distraction, preventing your negative thoughts from running wild.*





## *Chapter 6:*

# HOW EMOTIONAL PAIN CAN SOMETIMES BE BENEFICIAL

We spend much of our time trying to avoid emotional pain. People will go so far as to resort to alcoholism just to try to escape from painful thoughts and experiences. It is one of the greatest challenges that we experience as a result of issues like:

- Heartbreak
- Failure
- Loss

Science has shown that emotional pain triggers many of the same reactions as physical pain in the brain and body, and yet unlike physical pain, there is rarely a pill you can take to get rid of it. Emotional pain can be hard. But emotional pain is also something else – it's a chance to learn.

## Why We Feel Pain

It's important to understand why we experience pain at all. Ask yourself: What is the evolutionary benefit of pain?

The answer is that pain:

- Tells you there is something you need to change
- Promotes learning and growth

What happens when a young child accidentally touches a hot stove? Their hand hurts, so they move it quickly before it burns too severely. Then they learn never to touch the stove again, which keeps them safe from future problems.

Emotional pain works the same way. Emotional pain may be challenging, but it is also an opportunity for growth. It tells you that something is wrong and that something needs to change. Indeed, emotional pain is often what makes people finally come to therapy to make real changes with how they feel.

While difficult and uncomfortable, emotional pain is also a learning experience. If you are struggling with some type of emotional pain, reach out to a therapist today. Talking about what you're struggling with and then coming up with an effective plan to help you learn from it can be extremely valuable.





## *Chapter 7:*

# RESOURCES FOR SUPPORT

If you are depressed and experiencing suicidal ideation, you may feel isolated and/or ashamed of the intrusive thoughts. But you are not alone and there are free, confidential sources of support available to you. Support is also available to friends and family who are concerned about a loved one:

### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

1(800) 273-TALK (8255); 1(800) SUICIDE (784-2433)

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/talk-to-someone-now/>

### **Support for Moms with Postpartum Depression**

1-800-PPD-MOMS / 1(800) 773-6667

### **Support for Teens or Parents of Teens**

(800) TLC-TEEN / 1(800) 852-8336

### **Support for LGBTQ Youth**

The Trevor Lifeline - 1(866) 488-7386

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org/get-help-now/#sm.0001pcoycii6tdyntel25n8vpe8ju>

### **Support for College Students**

ULifeline - Text "START" to 741-741

or call 1(800) 273-8255

<http://www.ulifeline.org/>

### **Support for Veterans**

Veteran's Crisis Line - 1(800) 273-8255; Press 1

Text or chat online: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/>



## *Chapter 8:*

# HOW WE CAN HELP

Depression can be a powerful force in holding you back from living your best life. Symptoms may make it difficult for you to recognize that treatment is an option and hinder your ability to seek help. At Long Island Psychology, we are prepared to support you in the process of understanding how your depression is rooted in and triggered by the unique circumstances of your life. We will customize our therapeutic approach according to your specific needs and work through your challenges in a safe and nonjudgmental space. Our goal is to empower you to enact positive change and boost your happiness now and for years to come. We'll use proven depression therapy tools to help you start to overcome your sadness and negative thinking so that you may begin to experience a lighter, more energetic and optimistic state of mind.

## CONNECT WITH US TODAY TO GET STARTED ON IMPROVING YOUR MOOD/DEPRESSION.

**Call us:** (516) 732-0273

**Email us:** [info@lipsychologist.com](mailto:info@lipsychologist.com)

**Visit our website:** [lipsychologist.com](http://lipsychologist.com)

**Meet with us at either of our two offices:**

721 Franklin Ave, Garden City, NY 11530

100 N Village Ave, Rockville Centre, NY 11570

**We also offer remote therapy sessions.**