



Depression

“In a Nutshell”

Depression can change your life for the better!



What to avoid:

- Joining the gym for the first time in 15 years! Although exercising produces endorphins that are beneficial to depressive moods, it is important to be realistic.
- Pushing yourself - one of the symptoms of depression is the tendency to make extreme judgments about yourself such as “I am a wimp because I did not go out” You are unwell, that is all and berating yourself is useless and mentally cruel.
- Being with people who bring you down. These are friends who always make you feel worse about yourself, they make you feel guilty about feeling happy and seem to know why you are upset. These people never give anything back to you or your friendship – stay away from these people!
- Comparing yourself to others, even worse is comparing yourself now to when you were well. *Depression changes you into someone you do not recognise, but there is a point to it all. Just do not undo its good work by using your old standards. Throw them away they do not work, or you would not have become so unwell in the first place.*
- Wishing it away – do not waste the depression. It will give you clues about the way you are living your life and what needs to change. Used properly it could be the best thing that ever happened to you.
- Refusing to have fun – depression is not a bundle of laughs, but you do not have to be down every minute. You see a beautiful tree, a funny film...do not deny yourself the enjoyment of these things.
- Making big decisions - one of the illusions of depression is that at last you are seeing things as they really are, so now you can make the drastic changes you need – do not be making big decisions at this time, they can wait a little longer.

Always remember:

- It cannot harm you. Depression is hell, but it cannot hurt you unless you give it permission to. Treat yourself kindly and it could change your life.
- It will end - the fact that it is almost impossible when you are down to believe this, it is crucial to try.
- It is a sign to change things - turn detective. Your mission is to find out what needs to change in your life. What does the depression stop you doing? Perhaps going to work, thinking too much, being hyperactive and refusing to have fun. What does depression force you to do? Go for walks, waste time, watch TV, do jigsaws - leave the past behind and so forth.
- Make yourself feel good. Anything that makes YOU feel good, anything that lifts your mood, do not slop to the post office in your pyjama bottoms. Pick up your favourite sweater, paint those nails, do your hair! Seemingly, trivial cosmetic matters will do more for your recovery than you thought possible.

How to live with a depressive – do not get depressed yourself.

However much you love them, the clinically depressed are party poopers. They have no energy and see the down side of everything. Whatever you do you cannot save them.

The best you can do is feed them and field the phone calls, but do not follow their moods; you have to allow others their pain. If you look after yourself, you are more likely to be of help!



Do not let them take it out on you.

Depressives should not be held to account for the way they feel, but they should for the way they behave. If they are being critical and blaming you for everything they should be called to account. They may feel wretched and angry but making your life unbearable will not help them or you in the long run.

Know when not to push.

Most depressives have tried goading him or herself into action so the added pressure of you doing so is not helpful. Your acceptance of their condition could speed recovery. That said, sometimes they need a little push. There is an addictive side to being depressed and people should not get too fond of their cocoon. A bit of whip-cracking from time to time can encourage a reality check of what the depressed person can do as opposed to what they feel like doing- which is often nothing!

Understand how tiring it is.

The person doing the looking after gets a poor deal, as they have to live with the illness without the purgative experience of getting better. Depression takes its toll on anyone who encounters it and requires patience. The carer needs to get out and talk to people who are well to remind them what it is like to be with the living.