

THE WHAT, WHY & HOW OF DEPRESSION

WHAT

1. **DEFINITION:** Depression is *a gap between who you are (ego) and who you think you should be (ego ideal)*. When you think that you are a few “shoulds” short, and, therefore, do not measure up, you get depressed.
2. **SYMPTOMS:** As depression is anger turned in, many of the symptoms essentially punish you for being “bad”. Most common are:
 - *Difficulty sleeping*, where you wake up in the middle of the night and cannot get back to sleep.
 - Or, where you *do not feel like eating*, and have recently lost over 10 pounds.
 - Others are *difficulty concentrating*, as you are dwelling on your failures, often accompanied by
 - *Crying and a pessimistic attitude*.
 - You may also *withdraw from friends and fun*, nothing seeming to pick up your spirits.
 - The ultimate, and most upsetting, sign of anger at self is *suicidal thinking*.

WHY

DYNAMICS: Who we think we should be is largely determined by parents. Often, they unwittingly set unrealistic expectations for their children, communicating that love is conditional upon getting a home run in baseball, good marks in school, a good job, or a good spouse. So, when you get an F in spelling in 4th grade, or do not get that promotion you were counting on, you feel like you failed, and get depressed. *As the connection to pleasing your parents is long lost, you could have transferred your desire to please to a substitute parent, such as a teacher, employer, or spouse*. Should you fail to please this person, or should that person no longer be there to praise you, you get depressed.

HOW

1. COUNSELING:

- Overcoming depression is *a matter of accepting yourself, of looking for validation from within rather than from without*. This does not mean abandoning your goals, but rather striving for them because you “want to”, not because you “have to”.
- Amazingly, your negative thinking is probably so ingrained that you would fight your therapist, claiming that you are, indeed, a failure.
- The therapist then does not try to balance out a negative parent by telling you how good you are, for that only means that your self-worth still comes from outside yourself. Instead, the therapist elicits your own inner strength, getting you to challenge your negative thoughts, and replace them with more positive ones.

2. MEDICATION:

- When you are depressed, there is a decrease in the brain of neurotransmitters, such as serotonin. What that means is that you think slower, and get stuck in your negative thoughts, dwelling on them. Antidepressant medication increases these neurotransmitters so as to help you think quicker and get “unstuck”.
- However, they often take 3-4 weeks before they begin to work, so be patient.
- The current antidepressants are so much better than the older ones because they lift depression without the side effects associated with previous drugs, such as a dry mouth or drowsiness.

The Reverend Peter K. Stimpson

STATISTICS

17-20 million Americans each year become depressed

1 out of 5 adults will become depressed during their lifetime

30,000 + Americans commit suicide each year (60% with firearms)

Every 18 minutes a person commits suicide in America

Suicide is the 8th leading cause of death in the United States