



Overcoming Depression

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NORTHSTAR COMPASS

*Navigating
Toward Better
Emotional
Health*



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WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is a disturbance or disorder of one's mood and emotional state. It is characterized by persistent sadness, heaviness, darkness, or feelings of emptiness, usually accompanied by thoughts of hopelessness and sometimes suicide. The depressed often believe life is bad and will not improve. Their thoughts are colored by negative, pessimistic views of themselves, their future, and the circumstances surrounding them.

WE ARE IN THIS TOGETHER

There should be no shame in feeling depressed. It is an inevitable part of our maturing process. Approximately 18 million people in the United States (about 10 percent of all adults) will suffer from depression in any given year, according to the National Institute of Health. Only a third will seek treatment for their depression. Pride often prevents people from seeking the help they need, and the consequences are often predictable and tragic.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Depression can start very slowly. Others may notice changes in the depressed person before they see or feel them. Eating or sleeping habits, weight, or energy

levels may change. Feelings about sex, being with other people, or about their own future may shift. They may cry more than usual, and sometimes, think about hurting or killing themselves.

It is important to understand the symptoms of depression to better understand the cause. A proper diagnosis is necessary before appropriate treatment can be considered.

SEEKING A HOLISTIC ANSWER

In one sense, it does not make a difference if the precipitating cause for depression is physical, mental, or spiritual. Like any other sickness of the body and soul, depression is a whole-life problem requiring a whole-life answer. Depression is related to our physical health, to what we believe, how we perceive ourselves, our relationship with others, and the circumstances of life.

DEPRESSION DIAGNOSIS

Are you depressed, or do you know someone who may be? Try taking the questionnaire on the following page, which can serve as a rough evaluation for depression and help determine whether the condition is mild or severe.

DIRECTIONS

Circle the number that best describes you or the person you are evaluating. For instance, on line 1, circle number 1 if you are exhausted all the time and 5 if you are normally a high-energy person. Circle 3 if you are generally neutral, having neither high nor low energy. If you are applying this inventory to yourself, taking it when you are not reacting to a crisis will give the most accurate picture of your general condition.

Some mild depressions are a reaction to temporary setbacks or depressing circumstances that may last for a few hours or days. It is best to wait after such episodes before taking the inventory as they can momentarily skew the results.

RESULTS

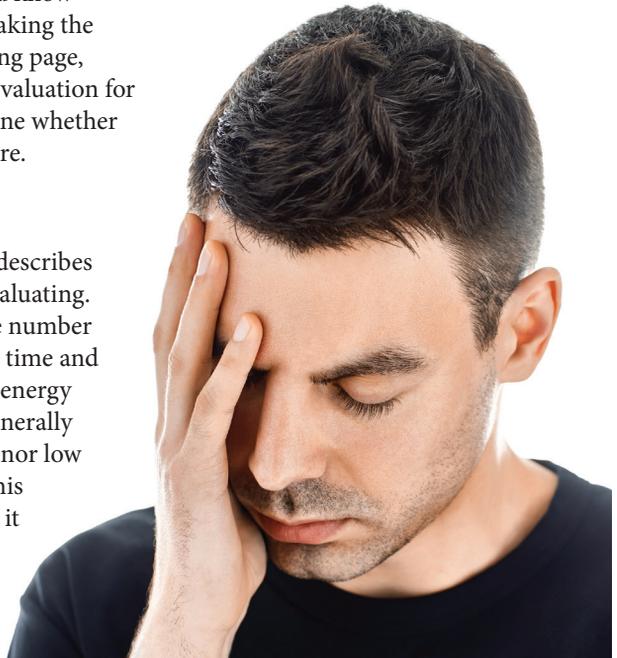
Temperament and personality can affect many of the individual items on the inventory. You can get a rough determination of your depression level by adding up each of the circled numbers and compare the total with the following ratings:

45 – 75 Likely not depressed

35 – 44 Mildly depressed

25 – 34 Depressed

15 – 24 Severely depressed



DEPRESSION QUESTIONNAIRE

| | | | | | | | |
|-----|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 1. | Low Energy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | High energy |
| 2. | Difficulty sleeping or sleep all the time | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Uninterrupted sleeping patterns |
| 3. | No desire to involved in activities | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Very involved in activities |
| 4. | No desire for sex | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Healthy sex drive |
| 5. | Aches and pains | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Feel great |
| 6. | Loss of appetite | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Enjoy eating |
| 7. | Sad | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Joyful |
| 8. | Despairing and hopeless | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Hopeful and confident |
| 9. | Irritable (low frustration tolerance) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Pleasant (high frustration tolerance) |
| 10. | Withdrawn | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Involved |
| 11. | Mental anguish | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Peace of mind |
| 12. | Low sense of self-worth | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | High sense of self-worth |
| 13. | Pessimistic (about the future) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Optimistic (about the future) |
| 14. | Negative (perceive most circumstances as negative or even harmful) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Positive (perceive most circumstances as positive and as opportunities for growth) |
| 15. | Self-destructive ("I and others would be better off if I weren't here") | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Self-preserving ("Glad I'm here") |

SCORING THE TEST

If you most often circled numbers 3 through 5, you are not struggling with depression. Most of the fluctuations on the right side of the scale can be explained by general health, differing temperaments, and growing levels of maturity. A person of average health and maturity, having an introspective or generally pessimistic temperament, would likely circle many 3's, and not be depressed. A person of good health and maturity with an optimistic and outgoing personality would likely circle 4's and 5's.

My score is _____.

REDUCING DEPRESSION

- Try to be optimistic about the future. Be aware of what causes your depression and makes it worse.
- Be aware of your negative thoughts and replace them with positive ideas. Focus on your positive experiences.
- Get socially active and find good emotional support. Make a weekly schedule of your daily activities, including social events and get-togethers. Find a hobby or two. Do some volunteer work to help keep yourself active.
- Exercise daily
- Set realistic goals. Learn to accept that everyone has different abilities, and focus on your unique characteristics and positive accomplishments.
- Know and develop your strengths.
- Get professional help if depression symptoms persist. Therapy for depression can help increase problem-solving skills, examine and change negative thought patterns, find more adaptive behavior patterns, resolve relational conflicts, and teach social skills.
- Consider using an anti-depressant medication if you do not see improvement. Contact your physician for appropriate diagnosis and treatment.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hal Baumchen, PsyD, LP, LADC is the President and Clinical Director of NorthStar Regional. He is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist (LP) and a Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC) with over 30 years of counseling experience.

He received his Master's Degree from Wheaton Graduate School, his Doctorate of Psychology (PsyD) from the Illinois School of Professional Psychology, and his Certificate in Co-Occurring Disorders from Adler Graduate School. He serves frequently as a seminar leader, and has taught workshops in the USA, Canada, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and India.

He is the author of *Journeys* and *Destinations*, two books on co-occurring disorders treatment, and the co-author of *Finding Hope Again: Overcoming Depression* with Dr. Neil T. Anderson.

This information in this publication is not intended as a substitute for professional help or to be used as a diagnostic tool. If you have serious difficulties with anxiety, depression, or other mental health issues, please seek professional help.