



FINDING HOPE AGAIN

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NORTHSTAR INSPIRATION

*Emotional
Health Insights
from a Christian
Perspective*



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Wherever you look, there are stories of extreme loss, hopelessness, pain, and spiritual defeat. When these feelings become ingrained in the body and soul, it often develops into a severe depression. The overwhelming sense of sadness, darkness, heaviness, and emptiness can seem insurmountable. It is an ache in the soul that crushes the spirit.

Depression is debilitating, yet many who suffer do not seek help. Christians often hold the mistaken belief depression is exclusively a spiritual problem; that mature Christians should not suffer depression. To seek help feels like an admission they are living in sin, so they try to pull themselves up by the bootstraps and “get over it.”

There are many causes for depression. The symptoms are similar, but the underlying cause may be very different.

Physical Symptoms

- Low energy level
- Sleep disturbance
- Low activity level
- Loss of appetite
- Aches and pains
- Diminished sex drive

Mental and Emotional Symptoms

- Sadness
- Despair
- Irritability
- Suicidal thoughts
- Negative thought patterns
- Isolation and withdrawal

DEPRESSION DIAGNOSIS

The following questionnaire may help you determine if you or a loved one is suffering from depression. Circle the number that best describes you. It is most accurate if you take it when you are not in crisis.

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 be 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	Withdrawn	1	2	3	4	5	Involved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")

Results: Temperament and personality can affect individual items on the inventory. By adding up the circled numbers and comparing them with the following scale, you can get a rough idea of your depression level.

45-75 Likely not depressed

25-34 Depressed

35-44 Mildly depressed

15-24 Severely depressed

SOURCE:

Anderson, N.T. & Baumchen, H.A. (1999) *Finding hope again*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books.

Just as physical pain indicates a body's health, emotional pain shows the health of a soul. If you experience depression symptoms, it is important not to ignore these important warning signals. Depression is painful for everyone and you don't want to take painful emotions out on those around you. It is appropriate to acknowledge the pain and then seek out the cause and cure for your pain.

THE SEARCH FOR ANSWERS

Both Scripture and science are necessary in this process of discovery. We now have important, valuable, and helpful knowledge about brain chemistry. The truths of Scripture and God's message to us in times of need are also available. In a search for answers, pay attention to both.

REDUCING DEPRESSION

1. Be aware of the cause of your depression and choose to be optimistic about the future. Remember that ultimately, our hope is in God, and He is always faithful.
2. Be aware of your negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones. Focus on God's promises.
3. Get socially active and find good emotional support. Make a weekly schedule showing the activity for each day, including social events. Explore a hobby or two. Finding connections at church may be helpful.
4. Exercise daily. Physical activity can improve your mood.
5. Set realistic goals. Accept that everyone has different abilities. Focus on your unique characteristics and positive accomplishments.



6. Know and develop your strengths. Focus on what you can do for others.
7. Get professional help if depression symptoms persist. Therapy for depression can help increase problem solving skills, examine and change a negative pattern of thinking, find adaptive behavior patterns, resolve relational conflicts, and teach social skills.
8. Consider using an antidepressant medication if you do not see improvement. Contact your physician for appropriate diagnosis and treatment.

THE TRUTH ABOUT OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

Believing lies about our Father God can greatly hinder us from walking by faith. We are to have a healthy fear of God, an awe of His holiness, power and presence, but we are not to be afraid of Him. Romans 8:15 says, "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'"

I renounce the lie my heavenly Father is:	I joyfully accept the truth my heavenly Father is:
Distant and disinterested	Intimate and involved
Insensitive and uncaring	Kind and compassionate
Stern and demanding toward me	Accepting, filled with joyful love toward me
Passive and cold	Warm and affectionate
Absent or too busy for me	Always with me and always eager to spend time with me
Never satisfied with what I do, impatient and angry	Patient, slow to anger, and protective of me
Trying to take all the joy and fun out of life	Trustworthy, wanting to give me a full life. His will is good, perfect, and acceptable
Controlling or manipulative	Full of grace and mercy, He gives me freedom to live as I choose, even if I am wrong or fail
Mean, cruel, or abusive	Loving, gentle, and protective of me
Condemning or unforgiving	Smiling as He thinks of me, proud of me as His growing child, I am the apple of His eye.



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.