

# Managing Depression,

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1

## Core Symptoms of Depression

- Hamilton Rating Scale for Depression identifies 6 core symptoms that mirror the DSM-V for depression without psychosis or suicidality:
- Negative mood
- Loss of interest in previously enjoyed activity
- Psychomotor retardation
- Guilt
- Anxiety
- General somatic symptoms

2

Principle of Neurological Function:  
Neural Networks Tap Similar Emotions and Patterns of Thought

- We react to our moods – mood brings back affective or cognitive memory of conditions when mood was created: mood worsens, network enhanced
- Interpretations go to core themes of inadequacy and worthlessness
- A.N.T.S. – Automatic Negative Thoughts – patterns of thinking

3

## Interaction of Depression and Isolation

- Chronic (especially unpredictable) stress can result in depression
- Isolation is an outcome and, more importantly, a cause of depression
- Pandemic has both criteria
- Set up is prior mental health

4

## Identify Triggers

Get a sense for the origin of your depression – always there? Perhaps situational? *How is the pandemic situation triggering you?*

Use Tracking Apps like Daylio or T2Mood Tracker to identify triggers that send you into a funk or plunging into despair

See Shapiro's "Getting Past Your Past" and consider activation, even in the absence of PTSD

5

## **Immediate:** Metacognitions

### Purposefully Change the Network

- "I can think what I want. And I want to think I have many good traits."
- "I don't have to leave my negative brain on autopilot. I can use override to think something positive."
- "What I think affects what I do. I will think about using my strengths."
- "Even if I don't feel the energy, I can choose to do it anyway."

6

## **Immediate:** Plan To Get What You Want

- Plan to have better things to do
- Don't worry until it happens
- Visualize things working out
- Help people give you what you want/need
- Visualize yourself responding resiliently to a situation

7

## **Immediate:** Respond Differently to Situation-Induced Depression

- Ask for help from others – even if it is just to ask what they would do in your situation to handle with less impact on your health
- Feelings of being bereft can be helped with reconnecting to something greater than yourself - rejoin groups for spiritual or community connection

8

## Immediate: Interrupt Helplessness

- Helplessness is a big trigger when people have a history of trauma
- “Stop, Look and Listen!” What just happened? – did something in the situation trigger a memory of helplessness or fear?
- Is there a present, identifiable danger?
- Talk or write about what happened to help your brain learn the limits of how to protect you.

9

## Start Where You Already Are

With low energy depression, getting the client engaged in treatment means tapping into anything that can raise levels of interest, optimism, arousal.

Start with recognition of what they are doing already – *how* they are living, conducting themselves

Intensify their awareness of their actions and the benefits of that

10

## Focus On Strength: I Do What I Am

What I do changes how I feel about myself

Opportunities to do what we are good at creates genuine self-esteem.

Depressed clients forget they have strengths and positives. Work on this in therapy sessions:

1. Make a list of your best strengths, e.g., Hard worker, honest, kind, creative, disciplined
2. Make a list of opportunities to use your strengths
3. Each day, note: did I use my strengths? How?

11

## Increase Awareness of Positive Experiences

Access to positive experience is blocked by depression - causes avoidance of contact with positive experience.

First, increase **awareness** of positive experience: Track daily activities very specifically: "Write down what you are doing." Then answer,

- "Is it Pleasurable or Unpleasurable?" (If pleasurable, rate the degree of pleasure)
- Answer, "Did I accomplish something?" (If yes, rate the degree of accomplishment)

Notice what is already working

12

## When Getting a Break from Stress May Not Be Possible

- *Believing* no one else can/will do what you do prevents seeing options = May not take advantage of possible sources of relief
- Not taking care of one's own health – "I will do that when there is time." Including chronic conditions such as diabetes.
- Unrealistic pessimism interferes with problem-solving
- Isolating and eating, drinking, smoking and using drugs of abuse to relax

13

## Start Recovering from Stress

Even when the stress may be ongoing, you can take care of yourself and decrease the negative impact of stress.

Get A Burnout Buddy who will hold you accountable, and make any shift gradually:

- Make a self-care checklist and follow it
- Review impact of social media, constant news feeds

14

## Set Boundaries and Use Help to Manage Work and School from Home

- Set boundaries on work hours and time on kids' activities and plan strategy to implement these
- Set boundaries on email, text, social media and video-gaming
- Be aware of "Zoom Fatigue" set boundaries on Video conferencing time – especially therapists!!!!
- Boundaries will prevent "one day blurs into another."

15

## Start the Train Rolling – Challenge of Finding Reward

- Netflix, You Tube, etc., should not be only reward for accomplishing tasks
- What things make you feel positive about yourself?
- Make a list of rewards you are already giving yourself – what you are doing with your time even though depressed - try to find rewards that include interactive activities or accomplishments

16



## Help Yourself and Family to Be Productive

Mentoring and accountability are necessary steps, especially with adolescents/young adults

- Identify necessary tasks with all components (e.g., doing laundry or remote learning requirements)
- What is the largest step you can take?
- Reward yourself for taking it for 15-30 minutes, then do another step
- Be accountable to someone for doing it

17

## Jump Starts

- Timing tasks increases cognitive commitment to do them later: see how small they are.
- Break into lethargy. Pick any small activity you DO NOT want to do – brush teeth, file papers, empty dishwasher, pick up toys, garage cleaning, sorting – that can be done in increments. Pause a program for 3 minutes and do it. AMAZING productivity makes people feel better.

18

## Depression Disrupts Balance

1. Goals: Loss of motivation for happiness
2. Cognition: Thoughts unbalanced toward negativity.
3. Attention: Coupled with negative expectations, imbalance leads to misapprehension of:
  - Acts, intentions, emotions of others
  - One's influence on events and situations (Inattentiveness to interactions with others)
4. Affect: negativity must shift toward positive.

Clients need appropriate challenges of skills and abilities that they already possess

19

Remember and Repeat Positive Experiences – Balance Cognition and Motivation (Frederickson)

Repetition & Imagination are brain strengtheners.

- Focus on a recent positive experience, discuss each sensory component, include positive thoughts about it
- Commit to find a similar experience during the coming week – be accountable for it.
- Then commit to reflect on positives during the week and bring that into discussion with other people

20

## Practice Spiritual Life

- Sense of Purpose
- What is your answer to “Why?”
- Higher Power – connecting to something greater than oneself (a loving God)
- Creating time for Quiet, Silence, Reflection
  - Meditation (Benson, Henslin, Thich Nhat Hanh, Newberg, Siegel,)
  - Contact with spiritual leaders
  - Prayer (Eddie Ensley)
- Connect to Other People

21

## What’s the Disaster?

Ask oneself: What is the Disaster Here? Define it. Then:

- Is this a minor inconvenience?
- Is this a major inconvenience?
- Is this a major catastrophe?

Write out the reasons and the resources that are available to help

Contact people resources like a sponsor or friend to help evaluate BEFORE ACTING

22

## Be Less Absolute about Negative Assumptions

- This may be *unpleasant* but it is not *awful*
- I made a mistake, but didn't ruin *everything*.
- Alter "awful" "terrible" "unfixable" to "I don't prefer it" "it could be worse" "it will be better next time"
- Focus on "I learned something from this"
- Alter inadequacy "I can fix what has happened"

23

## Increase Your Flexibility

### Stop Reacting to Your Own Bad Mood

#### A) know it is happening

- notice what you are thinking, doing and feeling
- Are you planning to be mad or hurt? It is harder to be pleasantly surprised when you are in a bad mood.

#### B) develop interventions: Then H.A.L.T. (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired)

- Create a new image of you would look, say and what you would do.
- Notice the outcome of the above process.

24

## Manage Disappointment – Loss Must Be Grieved

Therapists may mistakenly treat disappointment as pessimism – that can drive affect underground, freeze the client's responses

- Identify the loss, express it, sit with the loss.
- Validate reality: not getting what one wanted is a loss
- Validate emotions: you would appropriately feel sad about any loss
- Ask: “What would you hope for if you were not afraid of being disappointed again?”

25

## Grief and Loss in the Post-Pandemic World

- The current pandemic has intensified existing depression, but adds loss and grief to the challenges
- We feel especially out of control
- Many are not recognizing this and identify feeling depressed
- Loss
  - Celebrations being missed.
  - Special trips that would have increased family/relationship bonding (and current situation either makes for too much closeness or distance)
  - Loss of work (identity, promotion, collegiality)

26

## When Depression Is Really Disappointment

Therapists may mistakenly treat disappointment as depression or pessimism – that can drive affect underground, freeze the client's responses

- Identify the loss, express it, sit with the loss.
- Validate reality: not getting what one wanted is a loss
- Validate emotions: you would appropriately feel sad about any loss
- Create a way to grieve it

27

## Rituals Allow for Grief/Meaning-making

- The Power of Ritual – to see how we have come to this point and take time to look at where we are going.
- Construct or participate in rituals that celebrate
  - Graduations
  - Proms
  - Bar/Bat mitzvah – confirmation – baptism - religious coming of age
  - Births
  - Cancer treatment recovery
- Allow for community – it witnesses the transition
- Reasons not to postpone – elder participation – moving forward

28

## Grieving Death

- For those who have family members dying during the pandemic, whether from COVID-19 or other causes
- What can be done to allow grieving, when in-person community is not possible?
- Establish as much connection within community as you can by voice, writing
- Pictures
- Zoom memorial until in-person can occur

29

## “Contain Grieving in Time” After the Immediacy of the Loss

- If feeling overwhelmed - Choose a daily time and place to grieve and create a ritual
- Choose objects that focus your attention on your grief/loss and place them where you can see them. Use ritual enhancers like specific music, candle, prayer reminders (rosary, prayer shawl, incense)
- Set a timer for a brief period of 5-10 minutes
- Allow whatever thoughts and feelings emerge to be present without judgment to allow expression of any stage of grief and when timer goes off, note if there is anything you want to remember
- During the day, say yes to the grief and redirect thoughts

30

## Begin to Make Meaning- This Too Can Occur in Stages

- Kessler writes meaning can take many shapes:
  - Gratitude for time with loved one
  - Ways to commemorate and honor loved one
  - Realize value of life to springboard a change. (The Stoics believed that when we're confronted with our own mortality, and grasp its implications, that can change our perspective on life quite dramatically. Any one of us could die at any moment. Life doesn't go on forever.) How do I want to live the remaining time I have? That is all that is in my control.
- What are small ways to bring this to focus daily? For me it is a visual memento or photo, but for you it may be music, something you do each day

31

## Learn to Live Fully Even in Restricted Circumstances – Savor the Positive

Every day, what can you savor?

Savoring is much more than feeling pleasure.

It is the capacity to

- Attend to
- Appreciate
- Enhance positive experiences

32



## Gratitude Assignments

1. Gratitude journal (Emmons and Lyubomirsky)– 3 blessings a day or each week journaling on the blessings
  - Daily is more effective
  - People were perceived by family as happier when they did this
2. Daily write down what went well and why
  - Increases memory of positives

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For Jack Hirose 2020

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## Resources

Options for excellent information obtainable over the Internet abound. They also change frequently; new resources are added at a remarkable pace. Therefore, the lists here are subject to change, but at least they are a place to start:

### APPS FOR MOBILE DEVICES •

The Anxiety Depression Association of America ([www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org)) provides a review of new mobile apps that you might find helpful.

- An excellent resource from Northwestern University is IntelliCare— a review of mental health apps for all conditions. Their website (<https://intelligcare.cb.its.northwestern.edu/>) Here are some apps I like that have been around a while.

Breathing: • Breathe2Relax • MyCalmBeat • Relax Lite

Worry: Stop, Breathe & Think, • MindShift • SamApp • Breathing Bubbles

Meditation: • Calm • Headspace • Simply Being

Sleep: • CBT- i Coach

WEBSITES Several helpful websites contain mental health resources, including those of the major universities and treatment facilities where research and training occur.

National Websites Related to Mental Health:

- Anxiety and Depression Association of America: [www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org)

- American Psychiatric Association: [www.psychiatry.org](http://www.psychiatry.org)
- American Psychological Association: [www.apa.org](http://www.apa.org) [www.Commonsensemedia.org](http://www.Commonsensemedia.org)
- National Library of Medicine: [www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov)
- National Alliance for the Mentally Ill: [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
- National Institute of Mental Health: [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
- The website of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine has significant information about sleep disorders: [www.aasmnet.org](http://www.aasmnet.org). If you want ideas for sleeping better, consult [www.sleepeducation.com](http://www.sleepeducation.com), which is sponsored by the American Academy of Sleep Medicine.

#### GUIDED IMAGERY AND RELAXATION

YouTube provides an endless array of choices for guided meditation and relaxation. I utilized video from [www.princeea.com](http://www.princeea.com). You can also check out some of the authors who offer guided meditation: Barbara Frederickson ([www.pursuit-of-happiness.org](http://www.pursuit-of-happiness.org)), Jon Kabat-Zinn (JKZ Series of Apps for Meditation in your Apps store), Kristin Neff ([www.self-compassion.org](http://www.self-compassion.org)), Daniel Siegel ([www.drdansiegel.com](http://www.drdansiegel.com)) and [www.tarabrach.com](http://www.tarabrach.com)