

DEPRESSION

~ by Debi Hugel ~

Common Grounds 1/12/08

Has anyone ever been caught in an undertow?

What thoughts come to your mind at the thought of being in one?

Undertow: a strong subsurface flow of water returning seaward from the shore resulting usually from wave action, moving in a direction different from that of the surface current

How to survive an undertow:

1. If you get swept into the ocean, **don't try swimming against the current**. Tread water, breathe deep and get your bearings. If you do nothing else, the rip current will carry you outside the breaking waves **where rescue workers can reach you**.
2. Another option in a rip, if you can make out what's happening, is to **swim sideways until the current eases**. Then head to shore along the edge, where the rip stops and the waves start.
3. If a wave looks like it's going to break on you, **take a deep breath and dive under it. Don't try to go over it**.
4. If an undertow pulls you down, take a deep breath and **wait it out**. You'll come up naturally in a few seconds.
5. Above all, **don't give in to panic**. This is easy to say and hard to do, but that alone, **staying calm**, is probably what's going to save your life.

What does an "undertow" have to do with "Depression?" The experience is the same, and the reaction to depression should be the same as that to an undertow; don't panic, don't FIGHT it, "swim" until it eases, and seek help.

Depression Defined

Depressive disorders affect approximately 18.8 million American adults or about 9.5% of the U.S. population age 18 and older in a given year. This includes major depressive disorder, dysthymic disorder (chronic depression, but with less severity than a major depression), and bipolar disorder.

Def: Depression is a natural response to some of life's crises such as the loss of a loved one, divorce, financial ruin, etc. This situational depression usually runs its course and the people are able to get on with their life after a reasonable amount of time passes. But for some, this natural depression lingers or worsens into a condition which is called **clinical depression** (a depression which is so disruptive that it must be treated by therapy); a condition of general emotional dejection and withdrawal; sadness greater and more prolonged than that warranted by any objective reason; a depression so severe as to be considered abnormal, either because of no obvious environmental causes, or because the reaction to unfortunate life circumstances is more intense or prolonged than would generally be expected; a natural response to some of life's crises such as the loss of a loved one, divorce, financial ruin, etc. clinical depression - so disruptive that it must be treated by therapy

Scripture points to many issues of sin or conflict that can affect your emotions; most counselors would agree that depression can result from other underlying issues. Don't just worry about the depression itself; check to see what other problems need attention.

Aim to work on the causes of your depression, not just the symptoms.

DEPRESSION

Causes & Symptoms

genetic, familial, biochemical, physical, psychological, medicines and social causes

* See your family doctor to rule out underlying **medical conditions**, such as chemical imbalance, thyroid disease, diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and other possible contributing conditions or medication contraindications

- Sudden loss of interest in personal hygiene
- Change to an alternative, uncharacteristic lifestyle
- Staying in bed for many hours a day
- Loss of energy, always tired, possible symptoms of physical pain
- Early waking, unable to get back to sleep
- Systematic alienating of friends and family members
- Uncharacteristic loss of interest and performance at school or at work
- Withdrawal from social contact and social functions
- Sudden weight gain or loss
- A compulsion to do something to the point of excess
- Procrastination of day-to-day tasks to the point of disrupting lifestyle
- Confusion - asking for advice when the answer seems apparent
- Forgetfulness concerning important dates, promises or commitments
- Lethargy (everything seems just too much trouble to do)
- Disturbed sleep (early waking, difficulty getting to sleep)
- Waking up tired after normal night of sleep
- Lack of concentration
- Irritability
- Exhaustion
- Lack of sexual drive
- Sensation of utter despair
- Sense of hopelessness or uselessness of everything
- Fear of death
- Phobias
- Obsessional behaviour
- Permanent sense of anxiety
- Feelings of wanting to cry, but inability to
- Thoughts of suicide, or fear of committing suicide
- Change in appetite and weight

Treatments & How You Can Help (Practice and Encourage Others With...)

Evaluation Testing (consult your family doctor)

Medication (if determined necessary or advisable)

Therapy and Counseling (get recommendations)

Education (understanding the causes to not feel inadequate for not being “cured”); learning new behavior patterns and appropriate responses; changing routines and trying something new; learn about it through reliable books, internet, www.christiananswers.net

Learning techniques to boost self-esteem and a sense of competence

Safe and positive relationships to speak truth in love to you, to encourage and help build you up, to be an ear when you need to talk about it; learning how to identify one and function in one

Safe, supportive and non-judgemental group environment

Exercise, healthy eating, proper rest and fun activities (especially outdoors)

Spending time with people

Meditation, prayer and relaxation; fostering spiritual beliefs and a sense of purpose and sharing them with others

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SUMMARY

I believe God, and God alone is behind my depression; every aspect of it. He knew before I was born what my needs would be.

What has helped me in the past...recent past, at that!

I chose to speak on this topic because outside of my family, it's what I know most intimately. And it has a large impact on how I move through life. I have been experiencing a stubborn depression since the Fall of 2007. Likely, it was related to me entering the "Empty Nest" when my last child headed off to college. I stayed connected to people, kept busy, actually took on new responsibilities, cried out to God while seeking His comfort in the Word...but it still snuck in.

Two Important Lessons I've Learned about Depression...

Stay connected! (from 20/20, aired on 1/11/08) *"If you could only know one thing to understand human beings it would be this; human beings are social animals. Almost every one of our greatest sources of joy is a social source of joy, something about our interaction with or relationship with another person."* ~ Harvard professor and author of "Stumbling on Happiness," Daniel Gilbert

But every time God brings me into the desert, I learn something new about Him (and me) and a new way to rely on Him. Just two weeks ago, I woke up on New Year's Eve with my depression lifted. My husband and kids were still home, parties were over (easy depression-starter) and yet from seemingly out of nowhere, it was gone. During my quiet time that morning, God helped me to see my depression in a new way...like a cold. Every time in the past, I would search and search for what was causing my depression and what could I do to make it leave! God showed me this time HE is the One that makes that decision. I couldn't control how it came. And I couldn't explain how it left. Well, it wasn't long before God tested me with my new-found lesson. My daughter headed back to college less than a week ago and slump, I was back down again. But this time, I didn't fight it. I rested in God that entire day, took it easy, didn't beat myself up for being down, and opened up to my son that I was down. I treated it like a day of convalescence. My prayer to God is to help me not fight it so hard; that He would help me bring to mind the action steps that I can take to help me move through it and out of it.

It was the best day of depression I have ever journeyed through! There is always hope! And my hope is in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior!

"Never Alone" by Lysa Terkeurst, Proverbs31.org

"Jesus loves me. It's just a simple little song that I learned all those years ago. Very simple yet so powerfully profound, that one statement grounds me in the truth of who God says I am. Friends can't make you feel accepted all the time. Accomplishments will never truly make you feel secure. Having lots of people around you does not mean you won't ever feel lonely. And chocolate, while it is deliciously distracting, is just a little too temporary. So, I turn to the One who is Everlasting, Prince of Peace, and Emmanuel - God with us. I draw close to Him so He can help me separate solid truth from shifting emotion. And I remember I'm never alone."

Websites:

depression.com

christiananswers.net

christian-depression.org

nlm.nih.gov