

## The Many Don't of Depression

DON'T be caught unaware without a plan of action for when the next depression hits. You need a check list to prepare yourself just as if you are going on a trip. Because depression is a trip that you need particular things for that will help you get out of it as soon as possible. Your pro-active behavior when depression hits determines how long it will last.

Choose three thoughts that you are going to think instead of the thought 'I am depressed.' The sooner you stop thinking that thought the quicker you will get out of depression. Since the brain doesn't know how to NOT THINK something, you have to choose to think something else INSTEAD of the thought 'I am depressed.' You could choose a nursery rhyme like 'Row, row, row your boat,' or some mantra, or just a neutral or nonsense word like 'green frog,' or hippoty-hop.'

Also choose, ahead of time, three small chores to do when you are depressed. Do them while you are thinking one of those three thoughts. Keep going. Keep thinking your chosen thought. Keep doing your chores. Think about what you are doing and not about what you are feeling. Often you can segue from small chores directly into your regular routine as you take the edge off the pain and your depression starts to fade

DON'T ignore that early warning negative or downer feeling that usually precedes a full-blown depressive episode. Confront your depression right away. 'Oh I know what this is.' This is depression. Okay now I have to do what's on my depression check list.

DON'T do the habitual things that you always do when you're depressed. Habitual depressive routines help you maintain a direct neuronal connection to your depression. Break this connection by not doing the depressive behavior.

If you usually go to bed when you get depressed, DON'T go to bed. If you usually don't wear any makeup when you get depressed, Put it on. If you usually close all the curtains, leave them open.

Your body will be screaming at you to go to bed, to not put on make-up, to not open the curtains. Scream back a neutral thought in your mind while you do those very things. DON'T do what your depression wants. Depression is a bully. Face it down.

DON'T isolate yourself. Call a friend, go to the park, go to the movies, or just take a walk in a local park. Depression wants you to disengage from everything and everyone else and pay attention only to depression. DON'T do what your depression wants. Force yourself to re-engage with other people and other things. Doing depression takes no effort. NOT doing depression takes effort. Make the effort.

DON'T remain immobile-move around, do any kind of walking-around, jiggling yourself kinds of exercises; jog; do a few jumping jacks. The less you move your body, the more your depression has a chance to settle itself in on you. Dance a bit. Not because you will feel like dancing but because depression hates it when you dance.

DON'T talk in a weak, sad, voice. Get some jokes off the Internet and tell them to somebody. Or tell them to yourself. Laugh out loud. It doesn't matter if it is a fake laugh. Fake laughs break your neuronal connection to depression.

DON'T let yourself look like you are in pain. Go to the mirror and smile at yourself. Make funny faces. Laugh at them. You won't feel like laughing, of course. You will feel like being depressed. Laugh anyway. You are not laughing because anything is funny. You are laughing because it breaks your neuronal connection with depression. The longer you can laugh, the bigger the break.

DON'T pay attention to your depression. Paying attention to your depression maintains a direct neuronal connection to your depression. Paying attention to anything else breaks the direct neuronal connection with your depression for as long as you can pay attention to something else.

DON'T Self-focus. DON'T think about yourself. That sounds preachy, I know. Don't think about yourself, yadda yadda. But thinking about yourself maintains the mind-set of depression. You are not really thinking about yourself you are just thinking about your depression. The way you don't think about yourself is to think about someone else. Send someone a healing. Pray for someone.

DON'T give in to your depression. Any physical action or thinking that you do other than thinking about your depression will help to weaken your depression because depression is the idea that you are helpless and nothing will work. Work works. Singing works. Friends work. Jogging works. Praying works. Going to the movies works. Maybe not perfectly but anything works better than thinking about your depression so DON'T think about your depression. Think anything else.

DON'T make the mistake of thinking that depression is present reality. There's nothing that seems realer than depression. But depression is thinking about how bad you feel. Any thinking about feelings is replaying as present, the feeling that you had that has already past. You always experience feelings 'after the fact.'  
Depression is old stuff masquerading as present reality.

So another way to get out of depression is to get to live in the NOW. Get into present reality. Depression is self-focusing so you want to outer-focus. Depression is subjective so you want to think objective thoughts. Look around and connect to present reality by noticing the color of the wall, the pattern of the sofa.

DON'T make the mistake of thinking you can't concentrate because you are depressed. You forget that you are already concentrating beautifully--on your depression. So the way out of depression is to concentrate on something else other than your depression. Concentrate on a neutral or nonsense word. Concentrate on some small tasks. DON'T use depression to get out of work. Use work to get out of depression.

DON'T believe your depression. Your life is not really terrible, you just feel terrible. Your depression wants you to think that nothing is working. When you get to work and do something other than your depression, your depression is already weakening.