DEFEATING DEPRESSION

Trying to figure out if you have depression, and what can be done about it, is like trying to figure out a kaleidoscope. There are too many opinions and too many self-help books out there to get a clear picture. And the entire mental health profession is discordant about this very issue. You want some answers to trying to figure out if you have depression, and what can be done about it. Really! The diagnostic manual for mental disorders, which is the authoritative book for the entire profession, has more than 60 pages on depression, and the entire section looks like it was put together by a committee. There are so many directions and diversions and exceptions listed there, that I would like to present an approach here which is a little more direct.

When people want to begin treatment with me, and they say they have depression, I tell them I don’t believe in depression. I believe in feelings. MOST people who experience low energy or are out of touch with their feelings, can too easily conclude that they are “depressed.” I encourage people to work on the disturbing feelings, and see if the “depression” stays around. It often does not.

When there are unresolved feelings

It is always helpful to try to use feeling words to talk about what seems like depression. Label the feeling. Is it grief, loss, sadness, aloneness, or isolation? We can work with feelings like those. Name it, and review the times in your life where that particular feeling has muddied your water. Bring it to the green pasture by the quiet water, and let the Good Shepherd restore your soul. Shake it out, talk it out, breathe it out, and dwell in the green pasture until your feelings lose their intensity. That’s what the Good Shepherd seeks to do with our feelings. He gives strength and peace, and that restores our soul.

When you are physically fatigued

When someone’s body is burned out, it does not remember to eat, sleep, or exercise. So it is best if you can keep up these regular health habits all of the time. That will help you stay strong. You will, then, be able to tell if your body is feeling the effects of fatigue or even physical shutdown. This experience can come from adrenal shutdown, so here is a good plan to overcome this, if you believe you may have it.

SLEEP

1. Get lots of sleep, and avoid late nights which leave you sleep-deprived.
2. Darkness is essential. The less light the better, for about eight hours at a time. You can obtain yellow goggles for extra “non-blue” light during the hours before bedtime.
3. Cut way back on stimulants, like caffeine and nicotine. Cut them out if possible. This will aid your sleep and help you feel more natural energy during the day.

NUTRITION

1. Watch out for “low blood sugar” as well as “sugar highs.” Protein snacks between meals will help, as will being consistent with meal times.
2. Eat real food, cutting way back on sugars, salt, and additives. Increase vegetables, and then, increase vegetables some more. Eat lots of veggies. J. J. Virgin says to completely cut out sugars, carbs, eggs, milk, peanuts, wheat, and soy. *New Sugar Busters!* agrees with J. J. Virgin: It does not work to count calories. Base your diet on food groups, not calories. If you are on a special diet, check with your doctor before changing your nutrition plan.
3. Beef up on turkey and red salmon. (Like the pun?)
4. Enrich on foods with Omega-3 and Magnesium. Avocados, bananas, tree nuts, and whole grain breads provide these. Check the label for “whole grains.”

EXERCISE

1. *This is the “make or break” aspect for the entire* plan. Walk or cycle or exercise somehow for 30 minutes daily, 6 or 7 times every week. This helps your brain with bilateral stimulation, and promotes nerve activation.
2. Increase your stamina, pushing yourself each day, to where you are at least a little out of breath. Your feel-good hormones will like this. Weight training is good too.
3. Get moving! Start anew each day. Today is the only day which you will have, to overcome your burn out.

When feelings do not get better and your body stays fatigued

A few people may carry out the feeling work and take better care of their body, but will still feel as though they are stuck at zero – they do not climb up into the positive numbers. It may help to visit a psychiatrist to see if mood stabilizing medication may be needed. This is a genetic trait, which shows up somewhere on the bipolar spectrum, and needs to be helped by meds. Some approaches provide a dietary plan for mood disorders. I cannot say I have confidence in the dietary scheme, but I have seen rather dramatic improvement for some people with mood stabilizing meds.