

Depression

My Story

Easter of 2003 was the beginning of my journey. The week following Easter found me in my doctor's office scared to death. By the end of the following week I was meeting with a Christian counselor as well as taking medicine for depression. Over these two weeks I was diagnosed with depression, OCD, and anxiety disorder. I won't go into all of the gory details of what I thought and felt. Just know it was enough to make a grown man turn into mush. I thought I had known fear before, but I quickly learned what fear was. I am forever thankful for a good family Doctor who prescribed my medicine and encouraged me, for a good Christian counselor who met with me for a month and continually told me that I was going to be OK, for a loving wife who understood and supported me, and for the prayers of pastors and churches from within the North Spartan Association.

What I have learned

- Depression is real and is no respecter of persons (Biblical examples abound)
 - Jonah (Jonah 4)
 - Job
 - Elijah (I Kings 19)
 - King Saul (I Samuel 16:14-23)
 - Jeremiah
 - King David (Psalm 38: 6,8)
- Christians often want to simplify the problem to a need for more prayer, bible study, and church attendance. These items are good, but do not always fix the problem...no more than they would fix a bad heart, a broken bone, or wreck injuries.
- Depression can leach all of your spiritual appetite from you. It can become a chore to pray, read the bible and attend church.
- The root cause of depression can be as simple as fatigue or as complicated as a dysfunctional childhood or marriage, medical issues, unconfessed sin, disobedience to God, reaction to medicines or foods, or a combination of issues.
 - Sexually abused as a child
 - Worked multiple jobs
 - Ministry, school, and family
 - Lack of time off
- Be open and honest about the issue (but don't dwell on it and continually talk about it)
- Take time for yourself
- Spend time with loved ones
- Rest
- Get a pet (they love you regardless!)
- Don't feel obligated to please everyone else
- Take your medicine (But, medicine is not magic! You will still have some lousy days)
- Talk with a Christian counselor if needed
- Understand depression is not a sign of a weakness
- Depression is not necessarily a spiritual issue

Suggestions From Others

- Writing
- Walking
- Listening to Praise and Worship music
- Giving yourself permission to rest in God's grace
- Vitamin D3 supplement

- Walk, hike, bike ride, take a gym class
- Talk to a trusted friend
- Get out of the house
- Spend time in the sunshine
- Believe scripture that tells us God knows where we are and what we need.
- Pray
- Focus on our loved ones
- Get confirmation from others
- Spend time with grandkids
- Take prescription medicines
- Keep Christmas simple
- Sing hymns to self
- Have something to focus on (craft, hobby, etc)
- Coloring or other forms of art
- Make your bed first thing in the morning
- Watch only positive TV shows
- Hot bath, dim lights, and soft music
- Take a trip to a sunny and warm place (for winter months)
- Use a SAD lamp
- Ask for prayer from other believers
- Watch birds at the feeder
- Snacks such as Mountain Dew and Oreos
- Deer hunting
- At Christmas remember the reason for the season
- Stay away from negative people
- No action shows at night on TV
- No computer/smart phone/etc for 2 hours before bed time.
- Volunteer (nursing home, hospital, mission projects, etc)
- Stay busy
- Music, movies, walking, spending time with family and friends
- Focus on our family during holidays
- Go camping
- Making up songs to familiar tunes
- Good Youtube videos
- Give yourself grace...don't beat yourself up
- Don't pressure yourself to attend every event you are invited to
- Coffee, writing, and reading
- Read bible and devotional books
- Don't procrastinate. Deal with tough issues quickly.
- LAUGH...often and loud! Laugh at yourself and your problem! Laugh with others.
- For some a change of food diet helps...less sugar, caffeine, carbs...more fruit, nuts, veggies
- Health supplements such as chamomile
- Running

Do know that I am NOT a doctor, psychiatrist, psychologist, nor counselor (I have stayed at MANY Holiday Inn Expresses!) Therefore, what you have read is simply my take on depression and what others like me have suggested. I make NO claim to how effective any of this may be for you.

I'm sure there are MANY other tips that could be shared that I have not heard yet. Please feel free to email any additional tips to add to this list.

May God bless you as you journey through this world while dealing with this problem. Do know that you are NOT alone. Many suffer in silence either too afraid or too ashamed to tell any anyone. Maybe your being open and honest will help them to come to grips with where they are.

Allow me to leave you with 4 scripture passages to encourage you...

1 Peter 5:7

Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

Philippians 4:6-7

6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Deuteronomy 31:8

And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.

Psalms 23

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 16-18

8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

17 For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory 18 While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

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The following is from a recent FaceBook exchange....

OK...many of you have heard my testimony about depression. Many of you have not. Whichever...please take a couple of minutes to read this. Depression is not new to my home. My wife of 40 years has dealt with depression since 3rd grade. I've dealt with for the last 13 years. To read some of what is written about depression and suicide is mind boggling. I can't fathom some of the thoughts expressed and with such certainty. Here are a couple of items to think about...

1. I grow weary of over simplified answers for depression. Take this pill, read this verse, study this book, go to this seminar, pray this prayer, just find joy and peace. If only it was that simple. Depression can be the result of unconfessed sin or a dysfunctional family or a chemical imbalance or stress or bad health or genetic...or a combination of any of the above. Over simplified answers do more harm than good. They cause those who suffer with depression to feel like dirt because they tried what was said and still they are depressed. So, something really bad must be wrong with them.

2. Dealing with depression is an ongoing process that some days is simple and some days horrible. For 13 years I've taken my daily pill. I began with Christian counseling that first year. I've had to change meds three times in these 13 years. I've recently come to understand that food (chemicals/preservatives/fats/sugars) also contribute to depression. Only recently have I finally listened to what my Dr. told me 13 years ago...exercise! As I've started trying to jog and got back to hiking I feel better. You see...it's not either or...but a combination of many factors that have to deal with depression.

3. There is indeed a spiritual element to depression. There were nights and days that the only thing that kept me going was my faith. I laid in bed and quoted scripture such as The Lord is my shepherd...and such as Come quickly Lord Jesus. But, I was not in some deep, hidden sin that led me to where I was. Please don't be Job's friends and say surely there is more to your problem than you have shared!

Things Not To Say To Someone With Depression

(Taken from Health.Com)

Believe me, I know how you feel. I was depressed once for several days.

Just get on with life

You need to have more faith

There is always someone worse off than you

No one ever said that life was fair

Stop feeling sorry for yourself

So you are depressed. Aren't you always?

Try not to be so depressed

It's your own fault

I think your depression is a way of punishing us

Haven't you grown tired of all this "me, me, me" stuff yet?