



Notice the Clues and Manage Your Depression

By Julie Donley, RN ~ Success Expert & Author of [Does Change have to be so H.A.R.D.?](#)

There were several cues to my depression. I was becoming increasingly moody. I was having trouble making even little decisions, like what to wear on any given day. I was sleeping a lot. The day seemed to get away from me. I found myself seeking out motivational materials, things I know all too well. Yes, I read other motivational people's work but lately, I felt a *need* for it rather than a *curiosity* about it.

I have come to a turning point in my life. Is it a mid-life thing? Maybe. My 46th birthday is fast approaching.

Part of it is that I have too much time on my hands and my mind was drifting into negative territory. The hospital I work at as a psych nurse has been closed for renovations for the past three months. With the added space in time and no distractions, I have the ability to look more closely at my life.

And sometimes I just think too much!

So I am in this funk. It is what it is. It will pass. But as an upbeat, positive person on any given day, I'm not used to feeling this way. I work with depressed individuals all of the time, however, and am all too familiar with its subtle and destructive nature. So I thought I would share about it today.

Depression is a funny thing. Everyone experiences depression at some point in life. It is important to recognize it and identify what you need in order to take care of yourself. There are a few things you can do to ensure you come through it quickly and remain healthy. Depression can become 'clinical depression', where medical treatment is needed. You need catch it quickly and manage it responsibly. Here are some tips to get you through.

1) Gather support.

Let your family and close friends know what you are going through. Don't assume they know what you are thinking or feeling. People are not mind readers! Inform them AND ask for what you need. If you need them to check in on you daily or every few days, ask them to do that. You have to reach out for help.

Many people find prayer helps. Returning to a place of worship provides the supportive community that adds some security and positive emotional energy.

If you do not have positive people in your life, hire a therapist or locate a free support group. Most workplaces offer an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Do not use the excuse that you have no one. If you are reading this, then you have me! If you truly love yourself and want help, help will be provided you only need to look for it and ask.

The one thing you hear me say often is 'don't go upstairs without adult supervision'. What that means is that we can easily get stuck our head trapped in our thoughts. Don't get lost up there! You need to have others who can help you sort through what thoughts are real and what is imagined.

2) Observe yourself.

Notice the negative thoughts. They are not truth but if given enough attention they run your life. Become a master observer. Self-awareness is an essential life skill.





Depression shows up in the present and affects your mood but the thoughts that produce the depression are often about the past or a negative outlook on the future. Observe the thoughts behind the sadness. The best way to do this is using a journal.

Negative thoughts build on themselves often creating a negative spiral. You have to find ways to question and challenge these thoughts. But first, you have to notice them.

3) Envision success.

Envision how you want to be. How do you normally behave? What is your normal mood? Remember this. Keep it in the forefront of your mind. This is what you are working to regain.

Knowing how you want to feel is essential to not get stuck. Find moments of positive emotional states either by thinking about it or by embracing the moment. Revel in those moments. Remember that emotion is brought on by thoughts; you can conjure positive emotions by thinking about positive emotions and then feeling them.

4) Practice good self-care.

Be gentle with yourself. Be careful what you feed your mind and who you spend time with, especially during this time. Read success books and articles. Read positive and motivational materials. Commiserating with others will only add fuel to the fire.

Exercise. Yes, even though your energy may be low, push yourself to care for your body. This releases endorphins that are necessary for recovery.

Take a bath. Read a novel. Get a message. Listen to music. Go dancing. Have sex (safely). Watch a funny television show or movie. Do something to shift your energy and allow positive energy to flow in.

5) Look for what is good.

This is often difficult during a depressive episode however, noticing what is good about your life will help you challenge the negative thoughts and balance them with more positive and realistic perspectives.

Your observations during this time should include the good in your life: What are you grateful for? What do you enjoy? What is positive and healthy about you and the things you have done in life? What are you looking forward to in the future?

Seek balance in your thinking. Trying to be overly positive won't help because your brain cannot process it while you are in a depressive episode. But small doses of realistic assessments about life and love and happiness - or at least what is NOT bad - will help to temper the negative thoughts.

6) Get out of your own head.

Depression causes us to become self-absorbed. We retreat into ourselves. Not a bad thing necessarily; but be careful not to get lost there. Sometimes, shifting the focus of your thoughts and actions on how you can contribute to others can help you. Other times, people fall into depression because they have not been giving themselves enough attention. In order to know how to best care for yourself, you must identify the message the depression is sending you.





Depression is like any other emotion. It's a message. It lets you know that something in your life is not working the way you like or that something needs attention. Honor this. What is the message? Is there some way you are living - or not living - that you need to correct or change?

Talk to your supports do you get out of your own head and gain new perspectives and ideas. Don't trust that your current thinking is 'right'. You do not want to become consumed by negativity; this is why we seek support, journal, get a therapist/counselor or even a coach to put you in action. You have to remain vigilant and use your coping skills to pull you out of the funk.

And remember, This Too Shall Pass. Change is inevitable. Whatever you are going through will pass. It will change. You will find your way.

As a nurse, I can tell you there are times when medication is helpful. If you cannot seem to shake the emotional state, if you are crying too often, if the mood or depression becomes overwhelming that it interferes with your ability to conduct your daily affairs, then reach out to your doctor. Your primary care physician may not be as skilled at dealing with depression as a psychiatrist. If you feel it is necessary, then ask for a referral to a specialist.

Whatever you do, don't just let it go. Depression can take on a life of its own. Be with it. Acknowledge your emotions. Get support. Trust that answers will come and that it will pass - because it will - but you will still need to work through it. As Buddha said, "You, above all, deserve your love and affection."

Julie Donley, RN BSN MBA is a psychiatric nurse, success expert and author of several empowering and motivating books including [Does Change have to be so H.A.R.D.?](#) and [The Journey Called YOU: A Roadmap to Self-Discovery and Acceptance](#). After losing over 45 pounds, she now helps others burdened by their overweight condition become a thinner, healthier version of themselves in just 26 days with BestChoiceChanges HCG weight loss program and coaching! Contact Julie@JulieDonley.com for a personal consultation. For self-help resources, to purchase her books and to subscribe for inspirational articles, visit www.JulieDonley.com and be your best today!

