

Overcoming Depression

By Paul Meier, M.D.

Jesus said he came so we could experience life, and experience it abundantly. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. So God obviously intends for us to be happy, even though our primary goal in life is to serve Him, not to be happy. And yet, at any moment in time, about 20% of Christians worldwide experience enough depression to interfere with their lives. Non-Christians have about a 20% higher rate of depression than Christians. So applying biblical principals obviously does reduce the depression level.

About 10% of the population of the world inherits either a steady lifelong “dysthymia” (mild to moderate depression), or reoccurring depressions (mood swings), or extreme genetic perfectionism (obsessive-compulsive disorder). If these people applied every single biblical principle and received intensive counseling, they would still have depression because they inherited it. Another 30% or so have inherited depression that shows up periodically, but not all the time.

Nearly 100% of depressions are managed in this modern era, unless there is severe brain damage from substance abuse or brain trauma. Those who inherit dysthymia, mood swings, or OCD can take modern medicines and live a normal life with a normal amount of “chronic joy.”

“I tried an antidepressant and it didn’t work for me,” they may still argue. I explain to them that each antidepressant works about 75% of the time. Most people get too low of a dose of an outdated antidepressant from their family doctor, so it doesn’t work for them. Or the doctor may have them on a beta blocker for high blood pressure and that sometimes keeps people depressed. Steroids can make people depressed or even psychotic. Some women react that way with hormone replacement. Others have a low thyroid, and will remain depressed all their lives, even with the best antidepressants, until they also get the right amount and kind of thyroid medicine.

Proper nutrition is important because people have to keep phenylalanine and tryptophan in their diets along with enough vitamin B6 and C.

Nearly one hundred percent of depressions are manageable. One out of several thousand may not recover on any antidepressant, so I try a combination of other new mood stabilizers or dopamine medications. Once every few years I get a patient who doesn’t recover even after I have tried several medicine combinations. I don’t do shock therapy (ECT), but I will refer this rare patient to a psychiatrist who does, and I believe ECT should be the very last resort, but it nearly always works.

Eighty percent of patients who come to Meier Clinics around the USA do not get medicine. They get over their depressions by learning and applying biblical principles, like:

- No grudges (Eph. 4:26, 27)
- Confession to other humans (James 5:16)
- More fellowship (Hebrews 10:24, etc. etc.)
- More assertive confrontation of people who take advantage of us (Leviticus 19, Matthew 18, etc.)
- The Great Commandment (learning to love God, others as well as yourself).
- Spiritual warfare (the epistles)
- Grieving past losses or abuses (sexual, physical, verbal, or even religious abuses)

So, in summary, about 80% of depressions are situational—the result of either your sins (grudges, etc.), unresolved grief (abuse victims), or stressful life situations. Some of these need antidepressant meds for one year then can quit the meds after counseling has brought them to recovery. The average depressed person needs about 9-12 months of weekly counseling (45 minutes once a week), or else intensive counseling like that provided through our Day Programs. This intensive counseling program runs approximately six hours a day, five days a week, for an average of fifteen days. After the major portion of the recovery process is achieved, clients follow-up with a month or two of outpatient counseling. But some situational depressions, and nearly all genetic depressions, require the right dose of the right medicines for the unique needs of the individual.

May God bless you on your road to recovery. Please don’t give up!

For a deeper understanding of depression and recovery from it, read *Mood Swings, Happiness is a Choice, Happiness is a Choice for Teens, or Unbreakable Bonds*. **For more information about Meier Clinics, call toll free 888-7CLINIC (888-725-4642) or visit us at www.meierclinics.org.**

