

# Getting it together

## Depression says we should take some time out to adjust

The blues the blues the blues popular names for the not-so-popular emotional state called depression. Along with its close cousin anxiety, the down feeling has been an unwelcome guest for all of us.

That said, that feeling that accompanies your first day back at work after a not long enough vacation that dull grey ache that comes after your young child moves from your home to his or her first apartment, we are all familiar with the faces of depression.

Few think of depression in positive terms, but in fact it is a natural, healthy mental process, a shock absorber of the mind.

By dealing our emotional stresses depression cushions us from the bumps of life. It takes some of the sting out of our major and minor disappointments. It keeps us

from being overwhelmed by our feelings. It helps us to baffle some of our more dangerous reactions to frustration, preventing us from acting impulsively when we first feel the sharp kick of disappointment.

WHEN YOU LOOK at depression like that it should be one of our mind's best friends. Human lives are filled with disappointments. Even the most successful person has a long list of things that just haven't gone his way. We are all subject to constant frustrations.

We design our present circumstances and our hopes, but life is often uncooperative. Important friendships end abruptly with death job changes divorces and relocations.

Fluctuating economic conditions topple job security. Lovers fall out of love. Thirty nine year olds turn forty. Our favorite possessions are destroyed by reality. We make catastrophic errors and even disappoint ourselves.

Trying to set a predictable course through an erratically changing environment, we are doomed to suffer frequent shocks. Depending on circumstances to remain stable, we are jolted when they change radically.

To survive with a reasonable degree of contentment, human beings must learn to weather disappointments, to realistically reassess circumstances after the world has kicked them in the face and to plot a new course, making the most of new conditions. And that's where depression comes into the picture.

In the slowed down feeling of depression there is an important message. You have just suffered a shock. The circumstances of your life are different now. You just can't go on as though nothing has changed. You must slow down for a moment and plan a new course. You need to look care-

fully at your new circumstances and plan your adjustments.

IN A WAY, depression is the mind's attempt to give you a subliminal, a timeout in most cases, this is exactly the right thing to do.

The problem is most people don't listen to the wisdom of their depression. Instead of taking time out to reflect and readjust their life, most try to fight their depression. They try to go on with their life as though all is the same.

Seeing depression as their enemy, they try to evade it. They look for distractions. They try to "lose themselves" in their work. They fill their lives with busyness, avoiding unscheduled moments when their depression comes to visit.


Others go too far in the other direction. It is all too often that we see the depressed person who seems almost to baffle in his discouragement. He reacts to life's uncertainties by totally giving up. In fact, he is almost adamant in his hopelessness, actually resisting the attempts of his friends to cheer him up.

Wallowing in the merciful numbness of his depression, he has become a "depressionaholic." He has come to abuse the pain-relieving function of depression in a way that is similar to the alcoholic anesthetizing himself with wine.

Both the depressionaholic and depression sufferer feel they have been passive victims of circumstances beyond their control. Instead of seeing that they can do something about their new life, they believe nothing can be done. They yearn for a return to their pre-disappointment life. They dream of vast, improbable changes in their present circumstances. But they don't do anything about their problem.

That is the most destructive aspect of the wrong approach to depression. It fosters passive surrender and protracts the

By  
**BOB TRENZ,**  
Ph.D.




misfortune which originally inspired the depressed feelings.

Next week, Getting It Together will discuss ways to make depression a constructive, healing process instead of just a "downer."

Bob Trenz is a Rochester marriage counselor and psychologist. Questions for Dr. Trenz may be addressed to the Rochester Observer & Eccentric, 410 N. Main, Rochester, 14602.

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## Volunteers

This column describing volunteer needs in Oakland County is sponsored by the Junior League of Birmingham and the Oakland County Volunteer Bureau.

Inquiries regarding volunteer need listed here should be made to the Oakland County Volunteer Bureau at 647-7272. Requests for volunteer listings also should be made through the volunteer bureau.

THE YWCA OR YOUNG WOMEN'S CLUB is in need of volunteers 18 and older as Big Sisters for children from six to 18. The two hours per week may be spent helping with studies, shopping, taking special trips, or sitting and talking with the main goal being that of providing companionship and friendship. Organized activities also are available through the YWCA for participants. Training is provided.

Also needed are organizers of Fall Saturday activities geared for ages 4-12. This program includes crafts, music, jewelry, and the showing of films.

Adults (especially teachers) are needed as organizers for Y-Teen groups. A leadership training group is provided as are some activities through the YWCA, but most of the planning and activities are left to individual groups. Such things as service projects, pajama parties, and trips to Cedar Point have been done in the past.

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