

Surviving Depression

Current estimates suggest that 1 in 6 of the population will suffer from depression at some point in their lives. For some it may be mild but for others it can be extremely debilitating, affecting eating and sleep patterns while causing fatigue, poor concentration, an inability to experience pleasure and social withdrawal.

The underlying causes of depression are numerous: while for some depression may be a response to particular circumstances, for others the triggers may be far less obvious, sometimes rooted deep in the past. Every person's experience of depression is unique and best explored through counselling to identify its source and develop ways to manage it effectively. Rather than serving as an alternative to counselling, this 'survival guide' provides some practical tips that have helped many to function in the midst of a period of depression.

"If you are depressed, you are living in the past. If you are anxious, you are living in the future. If you are at peace you are living in the present."
Lao Tzu

Resources

- *Overcoming Depression* by Paul Gilbert (2000) Robinson, London. ISBN: 9-781-84119-1-256
- Aimed primarily at students, Students Against Depression (SAD) provides a series of modules with practical suggestions to help manage depression: www.studentsagainstdepression.org/self-help/
- Depression UK promotes mutual support among those suffering from depression: <http://depressionuk.org/>



Dr Paul Fairchild

Some practical suggestions

- If your low mood persists, make an appointment with your GP to discuss whether medication might be helpful
- Try to develop a daily routine that you can rely on to help you manage your time without needing to make choices and decisions
- Set modest goals each day that you consider to be achievable within your current circumstances and identify somebody to whom you would be willing to be accountable for achieving them
- Try expressing some of your feelings and emotions: how might you describe your experiences to someone who had never had depression?
- What other media might lend themselves to conveying the depth of your feelings? Might metaphor, music, art, ceramics, mime or poetry give voice to your emotions?
- Consider taking regular walks in the countryside. Depression inevitably creates a sense of isolation which feeling connected with nature may help to counter
- Try to identify any benefits, however small, of being depressed: how hard will it be to relinquish them in order to get better? Could it be that the costs of getting better are responsible for holding you back?