

Depression

A Quick Self-Help Guide.

This is a Self-Help Guide I made, based on my own research. I share it free to help others.

Always seek medical advice.

Sorry if anyone thinks I am infringing copyright or selling anything. I just threw this together in a hurry to send to someone on an internet forum who needed help and thought I would share it free with anyone who needs it.

This Guide was produced as a condensed version of a book I wrote. *There is a video you can watch in which I talk about the book and my reasons for writing it, but I withdrew the larger edition for technical reasons – however, the core knowledge is in this guide as I simply can't afford to take time to do a total rewrite, so this is a cut-down version till I can fund myself to edit the book and re-publish in full. (some people may find this version simpler anyway).*

Here is a link to a video of me talking about some of the concepts I wanted to get across in the original book. <http://youtu.be/Mcoi4oBMoBk>

All I can tell you is ALWAYS check with your Doctor but this information helped me take care of myself.

WHAT IS IN THIS GUIDE?

- 1. HOW THE BRAIN IS AFFECTED TO CAUSE DEPRESSION**
- 2. THINGS YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE THE BALANCE OF YOUR BRAIN**
- 3. THINGS YOU SHOULD AVOID**

Stress – Anxiety – Depression.

Okay people, first things first... depression is NOT your fault.

Depression is most often temporary, so don't do anything permanent that is the wrong thing to do.

Depression often follows periods of stress such as;

Loss of Job/Home/Work/Marriage/Loved ones, etc.

(This is why the evaluation forms used by Doctors to assess the level of depression asks about these things.)

Okay, you feel ...

Lost, Helpless, Hopeless, Unworthy, Useless, Guilty.

Did it ever occur to you that that is false signals coming from your brain?

This can be due to

(a) A Chemical imbalance in your hormones

(b) A physical change in the brain in perhaps 2 areas.

Please Let me explain...

(1.) The Hippocampus may shrink.

This area controls mood and is governed by the hormone called "**Serotonin**" (*Also known as the "Happy Hormone"*) It is this that is the prime target of drugs called antidepressants, but low serotonin levels can lead to low melatonin levels (the Sleep Hormone)– as that secondary hormone is produced from serotonin.

So you are not happy and you are probably not well sleeping either which is further wearing you down. If you are also stressed you are probably even more exhausted. No wonder you feel so bad!

The Hippocampus is the part of the brain responsible for producing new brain cells, which is a NEW discovery that contradicts previous beliefs that the brain did not regenerate. The process has a name and it is Neurogenesis. New 'neurons' are made in the hippocampus and migrate to areas where they attach and grow. This process can be interrupted or even halted altogether during depression. This situation can be reversed – it takes about 6 – 12 weeks to grow new neurons, which is roughly about the same amount of time it may take to feel the benefits of antidepressant medicine.

(2.) The Amygdala may get swollen.

This is a different problem **as the Amygdala has a unique role in survival which is to warn us about our mistakes – even social errors.** It is the source of our anxiety and even guilt.

(who knew guilt was a chemical message?)

A swollen amygdala is “nagging” you with EXTREME negative signals, right in the very primitive control centre of your mind – so you think these are your own thoughts.

Maybe it helps to think about it as a smoke alarm that is melted into the Panic setting.

The damnably perverse thing about it is that only YOUR amygdala knows YOUR faults, so the experience is uniquely personal, which is why we each of us believe that WE are a failure and don't realise this is the symptom of a clinically recognised illness.

The person whose marriage breaks up feels the same symptoms as the person who lost their job, or the person who is suddenly bereaved. The outcome is the same, but the thoughts are very different. They all can lose energy, drive, motivation, happiness and long to feel normal.

There is a whole branch of counselling which helps people to recognise “become ‘Cognisant’” of this negative thinking which is NOT necessarily valid thoughts and you can learn to recognise this over time. This is called “Cognitive Behavioural Therapy” or CBT.

CBT can be very helpful, but my own view is it is best combined with other treatment and the self-help tips I outline in this book.

Okay, so what can we DO?

It turns out there is a LOT you can do to help yourself get better.

First and foremost go and see your Doctor and explain that you are not feeling normal and have lost your peace and motivation. We humans are not trained to recognise the symptoms of illnesses, so we often don't realise what is happening to us.

This also goes for friends and family who are totally ignorant of the symptoms of "invisible" health disorders and may just say "Pull yourself together" when, generally – we can't no more than we can heal a broken leg by forcing ourselves to walk on it – though everyone wants to sign your plaster nobody wants to know about depression. Try bringing the subject up and see how many people shut you down. This is because they are not trained – though people who have experienced it may be much more sympathetic.

It is cruel that people let us down at the time we need them the most. It is not your fault, it is not their fault. They just don't understand the reality of this illness.

Seek Counselling.

Please can I persuade you to get counselling? I know some people may have preconceptions, or a difficult past and don't want to get the drains up, but often counselling can be a major help, even if only to review your current situation and way up your options objectively. Sometimes we made immature decisions as a child just out of sheer panic when we were out of our depths or frightened, and it can actually help to revisit those and review our ingrained "coping skills" as an adult who has more capacity to understand the bigger picture.

Please read this next section and try to understand it and do your own research, it is crucially important.

- **Ensure you are giving your body the nutritional 'building blocks' to allow it to produce Serotonin.**
- **Avoid things making it worse**
- **Exercise**

You need SIX key nutrients to make Happy Hormones

This means eating wisely, I have given you some basic information on the next 6 pages, there are MORE tips following this stuff on “Food and Mood”

it is not about dieting to lose weight, but it is often the case that most of us are simply not educated in how to get the essential nourishment to sustain our important brain hormones.

Here comes a list of crucial components your body needs to produce happy hormones.

There is a video link after this section which will help you to really understand how crucial nutrition is to mental health.

Number 1 Niacin/Vitamin B3

- You **cannot** produce Serotonin if you are short of Niacin. (Vitamin B3)
- This water soluble vitamin cannot be stored in body fact **so we need it daily.**
- It is SO vital to our health that lack of it can cause a disease called 'Pellagra'.
- There is no antidote – except to take niacin.
- The disease can be fatal.
- The mind is the first thing to go.

Serotonin production is sacrificed so your body can produce Niacin. All the resources that would normally be making happy hormone will be diverted to niacin production if it is short.

Niacin can be found in Yeast Extract, not everyone finds this a pleasant food, but I eat a smear of it on my toast every day because I know it helps. Proprietary products are Marmite and Vegemite.



Dr Saul says that 30% of depression sufferers may feel better within 10 minutes of taking niacin. (you can also get it as a food supplement from health stores, or online – do your own research, it also causes a niacin 'flush', but this is not actually much of a problem, just a temporary red skin.)

Watch this 2 minute Video

Dr Saul speaks about Niacin.

<http://youtu.be/7K2tqxKf2EE>

Look for more of his stuff, he is very interesting.

Number 2

The next essential vitamin is **Vitamin C**, again lack of this can cause a potentially fatal disease called 'Scurvy' if not addressed.

Again this is a water soluble vitamin and cannot be stored in body fat, so again, we need to take it daily.

Smokers need twice as much.

Obviously it is found in citrus and other fruits, like Lime, Orange, Lemon, etc. and Goji berries, etc.

The collage features several elements related to Vitamin C:

- High Vitamin C Fruits:** A bar chart showing the milligrams of Vitamin C in various fruits. The data is as follows:

Fruit	Miligrams of Vitamin C
Peaches, frozen, 1 cup	235
Papayas, raw, 1 cup	88
Orange juice, orange, 1 cup	124
Cranberry juice cocktail, 8 fl oz	127
Strawberries, raw, 1 cup	59
Grapefruit juice, raw, 1 cup	96
Kiwi, one medium	76
Mango, 1 mango	75
Pineapple, raw, 1 cup	74
Carrots, raw, 1 cup	35
- Essential Amino Acids:** A table listing essential amino acids and their functions. The table is partially obscured but includes:

Essential Amino Acid	Function
Alanine	Energy production
Arginine	Protein synthesis
Asparagine	Protein synthesis
Aspartic acid	Protein synthesis
Glutamic acid	Protein synthesis
Glutamine	Protein synthesis
Glycine	Protein synthesis
Isoleucine	Protein synthesis
Leucine	Protein synthesis
Lysine	Protein synthesis
Methionine	Protein synthesis
Phenylalanine	Protein synthesis
Proline	Protein synthesis
Serine	Protein synthesis
Threonine	Protein synthesis
Tryptophan	Protein synthesis
Valine	Protein synthesis
- Lowest Vitamin C:** A table listing various foods and their Vitamin C content. The table is partially obscured but includes:

Food	Vitamin C (mg)
Asparagus	26
Avocado	10
Banana	10
Broccoli	51
Carrot	6
Cauliflower	20
Cheese	0
Citrus fruits	50-100
Corn	10
Cucumber	8
Egg	0
Garlic	1
Green beans	10
Kale	100
Kiwi	76
Lentils	10
Mango	75
Peas	10
Pineapple	74
Spinach	10
Sweet potatoes	10
Tomatoes	10
Yogurt	0
- Foods Sources:** A list of foods that are rich in Vitamin C, including citrus fruits, kiwi, strawberries, and bell peppers.
- Vitamin C:** A large graphic of the letters 'VITAMIN C' with various fruits and vegetables integrated into the letters.
- Other Images:** Various images of fruits like oranges, lemons, kiwis, and vegetables like bell peppers and broccoli.

Number 3 Perhaps even more important is magnesium

This is vital for over 300 bodily processes, including helping absorb vitamins.

70% of us are 50% short of this

It is the central element of chlorophyll, so obviously it is found in green plants.

We need about two cupfuls of green leaves every day, (Kale, Cabbage, Lettuce, etc.)

Top food sources of magnesium

MAGNESIUM IN FOODS

Food Sources of Magnesium

Common measures of highest-magnesium foods	Percent of RDA
Burdock Root (100g)	60
Red Beet (100g)	50
Spinach (100g)	40
Alfalfa (100g)	30
Chickpeas (100g)	20
Black Sesame (100g)	15
Dark Chocolate (100g)	10
Walnuts (100g)	8
Almonds (100g)	7
Avocado (100g)	6
Spinach (100g)	5
Dark Chocolate (100g)	4
Almonds (100g)	3
Walnuts (100g)	2
Avocado (100g)	1

Magnesium Rich Foods

Magnesium content of selected foods

Food Item	Portion size	Magnesium (mg)
Quinoa	1/2 cup	170
Soybeans, mature, boiled	1 cup	140
Wheat germ, toasted	1/4 cup	90
Molasses, organic, cooled dry	2 tsp	80
Chocolate, semi-sweet	1 oz	60
Peanut, dry roasted	1 oz	50
Tuna, canned in water, light	3 oz	30
Whole wheat bread	1 slice	24

There ARE other sources of magnesium.

You can even get magnesium as a supplement, but it is mildly laxative, so most of it is not absorbed.

You can **bathe** in it if you buy Dead sea Salts or Epsom Salts and put some in your bath to absorb it through your skin.



Number 4 Next you need Iron

Red Meats, Blood products like black pudding, etc. Pate, tomatoes etc.

Iron is the most commonly deficient nutrient.

The IRON List...

Food Item	Iron Content (mg)
Black pudding (per 100g)	127
Red meat (lean, per 100g)	2.6
Dark leafy greens (per 100g)	3.5
Lentils (per 100g)	6.6
Fortified cereals (per 100g)	4.5
... [many more items]

Table 9 Percentage contribution of Food groups to iron intake by age, gender, race/ethnicity class, and location (Source: National Health Service)

Age Group	Gender	Race/Ethnicity	Class	Location	Cereals (%)	Meat (%)	Vegetables (%)
16-19	Male	White	High	Urban	18.2	28.5	15.4
20-24	Female	Black	Low	Rural	12.8	15.2	8.1
25-29	Male	White	High	Urban	16.5	24.8	14.2
30-34	Female	Black	Low	Rural	11.2	14.1	7.5
35-39	Male	White	High	Urban	15.8	23.9	13.8
40-44	Female	Black	Low	Rural	10.9	13.6	7.2
45-49	Male	White	High	Urban	15.4	23.5	13.4
50-54	Female	Black	Low	Rural	10.5	13.2	6.9
55-59	Male	White	High	Urban	15.0	23.1	13.0
60-64	Female	Black	Low	Rural	10.1	12.8	6.6
65-69	Male	White	High	Urban	14.6	22.7	12.6
70-74	Female	Black	Low	Rural	9.7	12.4	6.3

IRON-RICH FOODS

- Spinach (100g): 2.6mg
- Swiss chard (100g): 3.5mg
- Beetroot (100g): 3.5mg
- Lentils (100g): 6.6mg
- Fortified cereals (100g): 4.5mg
- Dark leafy greens (100g): 3.5mg
- Black pudding (100g): 127mg
- Red meat (lean, 100g): 2.6mg

Meat Sources of Iron

Meat Source	Iron Content (mg)
Clam, canned, 3 oz	110
Turkey giblets, 1 cup	82
Chicken giblets, 1 cup	57
Duck, roasted, 1/2 duck	31
Oyster, raw, 6 medium	31
Beef liver, pan fried, 3 oz	29

Number 5 You need Selenium

Selenium has been proven to be associated with depression by its lack.

You can find it in Nuts, seeds, grains.

Selenium Supplement Facts

Directions: Take 1 capsule daily with food.

Selenium-rich foods

- Brazil nuts
- Almonds
- Grains
- Fish
- Meat
- Vegetables
- Fruits

Selenium

Food Source	Selenium Content (µg)
Brazil nut (100g)	543
Almond (100g)	1.2
Wheat (100g)	0.1
... [many more items]

Number 6 Zinc

is the final ingredient your body needs to make happy hormones

You can get that in shellfish, and Pine Kernels.



So, to conclude about dietary advice;

- I suggest you get used to the idea of having a big bowl of Muesli in the morning, to this add Pine Kernels, dried fruit and nuts and pumpkin seeds.



- Chase that down with a big glass of orange juice.
- Do ALSO have a biscuit or piece of bread or toast with some yeast extract.

I often use peanut butter and raspberry jam to mask the marmite, but it does help me feel more alert and energised, so I have this first thing in the morning every day. I wouldn't take yeast extract at night though as it might stop you sleeping.

- Then have a BIG salad for lunch, perhaps with some lean protein meat like chicken or fish. For your evening meal that is when to take in the carbohydrates you need, like pasta, breads, rice, etc.



That is the basis for a very simple diet which actually doesn't need much in the way of cooking skills as breakfast and lunch can be totally flung on a plate raw. (except of course the meat) Raw vegetables & fruits maintain their natural enzymes which would be destroyed by cooking. Processed foods are very low in nutrients, they often have to add artificial vitamins by law because of this. This is called "fortification".

Artificial vitamins can be helpful, but they are not as readily absorbed as food, and some are even toxic, like cobalamin deteriorates rapidly so to enhance its shelf life span they bind it to cyanide and call it "cyanocobalamin" (check it out) your body then has to cleave off the poison and get rid of it. smokers are already taking in cyanide, so getting even more.

Okay, so that is just some basic advice to help you build serotonin by getting the 6 key ingredients. Vitamin B3 (niacin), Vitamin C, Magnesium, Selenium & Zinc. Please look up other sources of these essential nutrients.

Okay, ...what else?

Stuff that makes depression worse.

These are the four main things that will either bring on depression, make it worse, or make it last longer.

1. Alcohol
2. Smoking
3. Caffeine
4. Sugar.

ALL of these deplete vitamins and minerals you need for good mental (and physical health), between them they will deplete ALL of 22 different nutrients that are key to good health and building good brain chemistry.

Caffeine is “routinely used to induce anxiety in lab animals” this is because it is an artificial stress hormone, now remember depression sufferers got that way through stress, so they are already burned out and extra sensitive to stress hormones, so avoid stimulants.

Many people find if they stop drinking their depression goes away.

Magnesium deficiency is actually associated with a craving for alcohol (and 60 + disorders)

Please watch this video which explains the relationship between lack of nutrition and depression as well as some things that deplete precious vitamins and minerals you need for good mental health. <http://youtu.be/qg2syORShKg>

On Antidepressants.

I have read that they are only 1% more effective than placebo.

There is increasing evidence to indicate that they may cause more problems than they solve. My own limited understanding is that younger people are more susceptible to the negative effects of antidepressants, but 50% of patients will experience side effects.

I cannot advise anyone about medication that would be irresponsible of me – only a Doctor can do this, so please do your own research.

They are designed to target Serotonin levels by preventing it from being broken down by the body and recycled.

Helpful Supplements.

Check out 5HTP, this is a pre-cursor to serotonin, basically just a simple natural protein found in beans. **DO NOT TAKE THIS IF YOU ARE TAKING ANTIDEPRESSANT MEDICATION**. You can obtain it in most health stores, and, of course, on the internet.

I found 5HTP (5 Hydroxy-Tryptophan) very useful, take the recommended dosage at night and next day I feel my mood has improved, so I only use it as a kind of stand by. I prefer to manage my diet.

There is a perverse balance between serotonin and dopamine, if you boost one you decrease the other, so the balance may shift and be noticeable over time. The precursor to dopamine is tyrosine.

Here is a simple page about boosting dopamine. <http://www.wikihow.com/Increase-Dopamine>

And one on increasing serotonin. <http://www.marksdailyapple.com/serotonin-boosters/#axzz321MX1tKE>

Melatonin.

This is the natural sleep hormone your body may not be able to produce if you are low on serotonin, my theory is it must also preserve serotonin.

If I am really low I take both melatonin and 5HTP, but maybe just for a couple of days while I look back over my diet and see if I have missed taking muesli, fruit juice and yeast extract and greens.

St John's Wort

Is a herbal alternative – well worth checking out, this is more accepted by some than others, but may be all you need. **Do NOT cross-medicate with antidepressants (SSRI's or MAOI's)**

Lastly, Exercise has been proven very beneficial to helping recovery.

There is evidence that it improves serotonin levels by 100%.

Clinical Depression in Women by Amount of Daily Exercise

Amount of Daily Exercise	Relative Risk (95% CI)
0-15	1.00
16-30	0.82
31-45	0.78
46-60	0.69
61-75	0.65

Clinical Depression in Women by Amount of Television Viewing

Amount of Television Viewing	Relative Risk (95% CI)
0-15	1.00
16-30	1.14
31-45	1.21
46-60	1.34

Long-Term Impact of Exercise vs. Medication on Depression

Group	Recurrence Rate (%)
Exercise	~15
Medication	~35
Combined	~25

Recurring Depression

Treatment	Recurrence Rate (%)
Medication only	33
Exercise only	8

The Long-Term Benefit of Exercise for Depression

Treatment	Percentage of Patients in Remission at End of Four Months	Percentage of Remitted Patients Who Relapsed in Six-Month Follow-up	Percentage of Patients Depressed at End of Ten Months
Zoloft alone	69%	38%	52%
Zoloft plus exercise therapy	66%	31%	55%
Exercise therapy alone	60%	8%	30%

Reduce Depression

Exercise is the most potent and underutilized antidepressant... and it's free

Okay, it may be the last thing you feel like, but if you can even take a brisk walk or any exercise that makes you breathe hard, like walking up a hill or even put on the music and dance around your living room it will potentially help you feel better. Magnesium will be more effective if you exercise, you sluice out those toxins and get the oxygen moving around your body and start to get access to the vitamins you stored as fat.

If you are unaccustomed to exercise, then take it easy – don't give yourself a heart attack!

A target of 20-30 minutes brisk exercise every day is best.

The key to this whole philosophy is that if you improve serotonin levels it will help restore the balance of brain hormones, which will in turn reduce the swelling in the amygdala and help regrow the hippocampus and kick start new brain cell growth. It takes around 6 – 12 weeks. You should also find your sleep improved and be better rested.

Notes:-

I do realise (and concede) that every individual will have different life experiences, traumas, histories and problems. I obviously cannot get into each case – this information is clearly meant as a generic way to improve your overall health and subsequent mental health. I am afraid this is my best endeavour to try to help as far as I can.

Final Notes.

You can see I have just thrown together this document from snippets of internet information, (which, I hope will encourage you to do your own research), but the information took me years to research. I have simply got to the stage where I have retyped it so often on help pages that I thought I would just put this together and can then just give out the link to it.

I hope it helps, please share it if you think it is useful.

- **Don't feel bad or guilty about needing time off to recover, depression is a medically recognised clinical condition.**
- **Don't feel demoralised because you are not the strong person you think you should be.**
- **Be gentle with yourself and be kind to yourself.**
- **You are not Superman. You are only Human.**

You are not the only one who ever felt like this, it is more common than you probably imagine, I've been there, got the T-shirt, ate the pie, made the movie... and wrote the book.

Ultimately this document is prepared in good faith by an ex-sufferer, but nobody should attempt to self-treat depression based on information in this and I cannot be held responsible for the results. However, it is very unlikely that a good healthy diet is going to do anyone any harm – beware of your own allergies to nuts, etc.

All interventions for any diseases should only be carried out by a qualified medically trained professional.

Disclaimer follows;

The Author (and any publisher) cannot be held liable for taking or not taking anything mentioned in this document, this is the responsibility of the reader, this is provided for information purposes only and does not constitute medical advice.

ALWAYS check with your Doctor!!!

All interventions for mental health should only be undertaken with suitable advice from qualified medical practitioners.

Do not cross-medicate prescription medications or food supplements or herbals.

Additional Material

Following my recovery from the big bad D, I was invited to join a study group which provided some CBT (Cognitive Behaviour Therapy) the core principles of which are to recognise negative thinking - a profound symptom of the illness.

We would often be invited to share things that had affected us. The strangest thing gradually dawned on me was that often a person would be describing something for which they were mentally berating themselves and feeling disproportionately guilty.

The rest of the group would be reassuring them and seeing the thing more objectively - but each of us were prone to severe self-criticism - it is in fact a **symptom**. It can actually be coming from part of the brain that is temporarily not functioning properly - the Amygdala.

"When we make a mistake that has serious consequences our brains don't let us forget it easily. The amygdala makes sure we remember the unpleasant emotional experiences, (fear, embarrassment, shame) that result from mistakes that led us into danger or social calamity."

The fact is that stress can cause this organ to swell up - which I happen to think causes it to send out even more negative thoughts than usual. It is stress that leads to burn out and depression.

Going back to that CBT course, part of it was to learn to be 'kind' to ourselves, even learning to forgive ourselves - after all, we are only human. Sometimes it is good to let yourself off the hook and not be too hard on yourself.

Also remember if part of your brain is physically swollen and expanded no wonder you are going to be getting spurious signals ("thoughts") that trouble you.

If this happens concurrently with another part of the brain shrinking then you're in trouble, this part is the hippocampus, which is responsible for making new brain cells.

The lack of serotonin is the problem and will rebalance these brain centres, which is why it is the 'target' of antidepressants.

Another approach is to simply give your body the essential building blocks it needs to produce this "Happy Hormone" and, as a consequence, also raise levels of sleep hormone (which is made from serotonin) you need niacin daily to produce serotonin and today most of us are short of many key vitamins and minerals, getting only about half of what our grandparents did.

Blame junk food, processed food, and of course the chemical stressors which only make things worse.

....Like caffeine which is an artificial stress agent,

....alcohol which depletes vitamins and may cause depression - though many of us self-prescribe alcohol for the temporary relief it appears to bring.

Sugar and Nicotine are other stimulants and vitamin depleters.

Here is a picture of a Puppy.

