

Don't Go Gentle into Depression

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Don't give in so easily to your first feelings of depression. When forcefully encountered, onset feelings of despair and helplessness can be alleviated. Then full-fledged depression will let you alone. In a very real way, bully though it is, depression is like living in a room of pain. And you can learn how to leave the room.

Depression only happens in the subcortex, the feeling part of the brain. There is never any depression in the neocortex, the thinking part of the brain. You can brainswitch out of your subcortex into the neocortex by using simple mind exercises. Doing the exercises repetitively can actually form neural patterns in the brain that you can use on purpose, instead of remaining stuck in the painful habitual neural patterns of your depression.

You can actually build a neural bridge from your feeling brain to your thinking brain thanks to the brain's neuroplasticity. A new book, "TRAIN THE MIND, CHANGE THE BRAIN" by Sharon Begley, the science editor of Time Magazine gives a wide over-view of the latest research in the ability of the brain to modify its cellular connections as a result of new thinking and new behavior.

The book "THE MIND AND THE BRAIN: NEUROPLASTICITY AND THE POWER OF MENTAL FORCE" by Dr. Jeffrey Schwartz shows plasticity as a long-recognized key component to learning and memory. Now neuroplasticity is seen as an important adjunct to cognitive behavioral therapy that can bring an end to depression.

The Book BRAINSWITCH OUT OF DEPRESSION focuses more specifically on neuroplasticity and its practical application for depression. In this book mind exercises show how to thoughtjam depressive focus, spark up neural activity in the neo-cortex, and power down the depressive neural activity in the subcortex.

Depression is like the bully who terrifies you as long as you are afraid, but fades at any real resistance. When you focus your attention on painful feelings, your fear keeps triggering the fight-or-flight response which continues to pump stress chemicals like adrenalin (epinephrine) and norepinephrine into your brain, causing the chemical imbalance feeding your depression.

Simple mind exercises like singing a nursery rhyme, or repeating some mantra like yes, yes, yes, yes, yes for five or ten minutes immediately starts to lessen pain in the subcortex by enhancing cognitive focus in the neocortex. Even though the exercises are simple, dumb even, in the beginning it is hard to do them. That's because it is difficult to

withdraw your attention from your pain and actually do something else other than thinking the thought, "I am depressed."

Simple mind tricks seem so lame compared to the immense pain of depression. But if you persevere and do the thinking techniques, you will immediately brainswitch neuronal activity from the subcortex to the neocortex and give yourself some immediate relief from the pain.

Any neutral distraction helps to lessen your habitual reaction to the first downward spiral that plunges you into depression and despair. Having a few mind exercises "at the ready" for when depression hits is a great deterrent to simply rolling over and giving in to those first downward tendrils of despair.

Don't be caught unaware. Have a plan of action for the next time depression hits--a check-list to prepare yourself as if you are going on a trip. Depression is a trip you don't want to take. You need particular things to get out of it. You need some little mind tricks that can help you re-wire your brain out of your pain.

Choose three thoughts you are going to think instead of the thought "I am depressed." It could be a nursery rhyme like "Row, row, row your boat," a favorite poem or prayer like "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want," or a mantra such as "Yes, yes, yes, yes."

Then when that terrible feeling hits, don't go gentle into your depression. Fight back with your chosen mantra or exercise. Like any bully, depression will start to fade away at the first sign of committed resistance on your part. Don't ignore that warning downer-feeling. Confront your depression right away. "Oh, I know what this is. This is depression. Okay, now I have to do my exercise."

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