

Breaking Down

the walls of depression *naturally*

By Tamra Mercieca

Depression has been around me for much of my life, but it was not until I was 21-years-old, after my first suicide attempt, that I officially became a statistic and was diagnosed with severe clinical depression. I began seeing a psychologist, then a counsellor and started taking antidepressant medication.

The regular chats and pills helped, but they were no permanent fix. I wanted a cure, not a bandaid. A year after coming off the antidepressants I hit rock bottom. It was a wake-up call for me and I began experimenting with different natural remedies to ease the pain.

I found acupuncture to be a perfect replacement for the pills, treating me from a physical perspective - releasing endorphins while balancing my serotonin levels. I also began seeing a life coach who helped me work through all the mind rubbish and start turning the negative conversation I had with myself into more positive self-talk.

These were invaluable tools in my recovery from depression and I went on to live a life both depression and pill free. However, overcoming depression was more than tiny needles and learning how to reprogram the brain. I took a holistic approach, which included adequate sleep, soaking up the sunshine, laughing and connecting with others.

I took a close look at my diet and allowed food to be my medicine. Basically, the science of how food affects our moods is based on this equation: dietary modifications bring about changes in our brain structure, chemistry and physiology, which lead to transformations in behaviour!

I began tucking into serotonin-boosting foods, such as leafy greens, rice, oily fish, bananas, chilli, walnuts and garlic, while eliminating the three 'brain drainers' - alcohol, caffeine and sugar. I became something of a 'mood food' detective in order to keep the dark moods at bay.

What are you putting into your body each day and how can you make changes to include more serotonin-boosting foods?

Regular exercise was another key to my recovery, getting active helps counter stress on two levels. First, it acts as a distraction, taking your mind off your problems. Second, it burns off the stress-inducing hormones in the bloodstream produced by the body when you feel under pressure or threatened. Most importantly, when we exercise we produce endorphins.

Endorphins are neurotransmitters produced in the brain that reduce pain and make us feel alive, strong and energised. When the brain produces endorphins we feel high on life, but when it does not, the normal stresses of life can become increasingly unbearable.

If the idea of exercise puts you off, realise it does not have to be long, hard, demanding and unpleasant to be good for you. The trick is to find something you absolutely love and get excited about doing each day. Personally, I enjoy dancing and boxing.

What type of exercise do you enjoy that you can do four to five times a week?

Finding your passion can be your saviour on a dreary day. Think back to the last time you were really having fun. What were you doing? For me, drumming, writing and trips to the Dandenongs for scones are my best friends in times of unease. The more time you spend in a state of passion, the closer you get to discovering your purpose.

When we are truly passionate about something, we access a newfound energy. This explains why we can spend all day doing what we love and not be exhausted by the end of it, instead feeling alive and invigorated. Think about all the great people who have gone down in history - Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, each of them, without exception, loved what they did.

To find your true passions, ask yourself:

- What do I love to do?
- What do I do, say, eat, wear that excites me?
- What kind of people do I love to be around?
- If I had all the money in the world, what would I do? After I have bought all the toys and the house, then what would I do?

Once you have pinpointed your passions, carve out some time every day to do the things you absolutely love. This will give you something to look forward to when you are struggling to find the drive to get out of bed in the morning. It could be booking yourself in for a massage, taking a photography class or simply catching up with a friend for coffee.

When you are feeling happy and motivated, what are you doing? What really inspires you? How can you work more of these activities into your life?

Breaking the cycle of negative thoughts can be as simple as being more present. Instead of wallowing in the bitter memories of the past, the unfortunate circumstances, the bad timing and the setbacks, start to enjoy the moment. The present and the future are all you have; the past is long gone and cannot serve you anymore.

Learn lessons from your past, take action in the present and allow the future to inspire you. Depression comes about when your energy is turned inwards, but if you are able to focus that energy outwards, such as creating an inspiring future, the depression is unable to exist within the body.

This is where goal setting can help as they are vital in maintaining our health. They keep our chakras spinning which helps create balance, maintain health and provide us with a sense of direction. For a goal to be really effective, it needs to be both scary and exciting at the same time - something you feel really connected to and will do anything it takes to achieve.

When coming up with a six-month goal, ask yourself:

- What would I like to achieve?
- What really inspires me?
- What would motivate me to achieve this?
- How would I feel once I have achieved this goal?

What goal can you set that will provide you with the inspiration to keep motivated as you overcome depression?

Once you have your goal, you need to take action. Coming up with a detailed plan of the necessary steps needed to succeed is crucial. Action is the power tool for transforming wishes into reality. Start working

through your list of tasks immediately. Realise that progress comes step by step, not all at once. As you move towards your goals, you can enjoy the rewards of knowing you have designed your life.

What action steps do you need to take in order to achieve this goal?

If you find fear is stopping you from achieving your goals, consider this. We are taught fear at a very young age. It is a learned behaviour, therefore it can, if we wish, be educated out of us. Fear is a way of thinking that has the ability to hinder or help our life.

There is a place for fear. When fear shoots through our veins, constricting our blood flow, it places the body in survival mode. It keeps us safe and stops us from taking unnecessary risks. It is a primal and basic instinct to be honoured when it is needed and discarded when it is not.

However, when fear works against you it can be paralyzing. It can make you doubt yourself and come up with excuses to get out of things that you are too scared to deal with. When you lose faith in yourself, the doubting begins and the fear moves right in.

FEAR is nothing more than **False Evidence Appearing Real**. It is a mindset that can be your friend if you follow these steps:

1. *Identify the real issue:* Find out what it is really getting to you.
2. *Do a reality check:* Ask yourself, 'How likely is it that what I fear will actually happen?' and 'How bad would it be if it did?'
3. *Decide whether action is needed:* Ask yourself, 'Is there something I can do to solve this problem?'
4. *Take action to solve it:* If you answer was 'yes' to the last question, then do what is needed to solve the problem.
5. *Let the worry go:* You no longer need to hang onto the worry as you have either solved it, or realised it is beyond your control, so there is no benefit of carrying the worry.

Take the advice of former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt; 'Do something every day that scares you'. Step out of your comfort zone - the more you do it, the less fear you will feel the next time around. ❖

INSIGHTS INTO ME

Tamra Mercieca is an advanced NLP coach who is also trained in time-line therapy and hypnosis. For more information visit her at: www.tamramercieca.com
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<p>A double blind clinical test revealed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average weight loss of 9kg* in 8 weeks • Average loss of 16cm from waist, hips, thighs • Fat reduction of 7.35% • 12% drop in Leptin (<i>more leptin=more fat</i>) • Increased lean muscle mass • 90% more fat loss than placebo group <p><i>*One lady lost 12.5kg in 4 wks</i></p> <p>www.beautyhealthsupply.com/healthproducts.html</p>  <p><small>*Polysaccharides aid heart health, regulate blood sugar, remove plaque from arteries, balance cholesterol.</small></p>	<p>Learn: skin structure, cell histology and organelles, chromatherapy/colour energy, colour meanings- ailments, meditation technique, light therapy explained, charkas, animal charkas, treatments for: acne, cellulite, rosacea, scars, circadian rhythms.</p> <p>For info go to: www.beautyhealthsupply.com/colourtherapy.htm</p> <p><i>Bio-Beauty</i> Ask about Organic Hemp Skincare & Oxygen spray</p> <p>Ph: 1300 88 40 46 / 0410 621 747 www.beautyhealthsupply.com</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collagen production • Oxygenates tissue • Heals skin lesions • Cell rejuvenation • Anti ageing • Eases pain • Eye safe  <p><i>'I believe in this magnificent light. I've seen people recover who had given up hope of being well again'</i> - Dr Marta Fenyo, creator of the light</p>