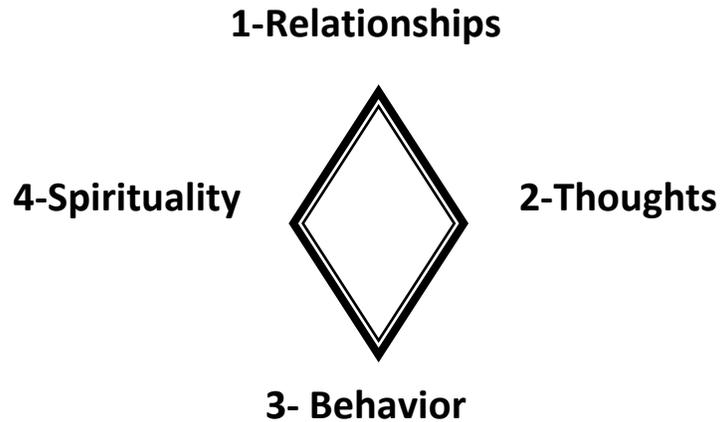


Understanding and Overcoming Depression: How to Help Yourself or a Loved One

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Step 1: Relationship Triggers:

(Identify situational triggers, and provide validation and support)

Types of Triggers:

- Grief – losing someone you love*
- Conflict – interpersonal or intrapersonal*
- Transition – significant life change, negative or positive*
- Lack of Interpersonal Skills – generating depressing interactions*

- Loss – losing something you care about*
- Abuse – physical, sexual, verbal, emotional – deadliest trigger*
- Disappointment – hopes and expectations not being met*

“Additive Impact” of Triggers Over Time:

- Current*
- Recent Past*
- More Distant Past*

Typically, the greater the number and severity of triggers, the deeper the depression.

Processing the Impact of Triggers (“Debriefing”)

- 1) *Talking to someone else (friend, family member, bishop, counselor)*
- 2) *Writing out your feelings (eg. 2 Ne. 4, “the things of my soul”)*
- 3) *Sincere, meaningful prayer (eg. Ps. 141, “I poured out my complaint”)*

Be careful with this – it is a first step in a process, not an end in itself.

Step 2: Thinking:

(Identify thoughts making the situation feel worse, and replace them with empowering, positive thoughts.)

(This change strategy is known as “cognitive therapy” – generating emotional relief through adaptation of attitude. See David Burns, “The Feeling Good Handbook” and/or Martin Seligman, “Learned Optimism” for more information)

(This is the first “agency-oriented” change strategy. You cannot always choose what happens to you – but you can choose your response to it – response that begins in the mind and attitude, making the situation either harder or easier to deal with.)

Replacing Common Depressive Thinking Errors:

Thinking Errors:

*All-or-Nothing Thinking
Negative Filter (seeing only the bad)
Self-Blame (or blaming others)
Should’s (toward self/others)*

Replacements:

*Continuum/Process Thinking
Appreciation (looking for the good)
“Blame Pie” (dividing responsibility)
“It would be nice if...but the reality is...”*

Scriptural Examples of Positive Attitude in Challenging Situations:

- Joseph Smith - D&C 121-122: “for thy good” “small moment/endure well/triumph”
- Paul - 2 Cor. 4:8-9, 16-18: “cast down but not destroyed”; “affliction > glory”
- Peter - 1 Pet. 1:6-9: “trial of your faith > joy unspeakable”
- James - James 1:2-4: “count it all joy > perfect and entire.”

Step 3: Behavior:

(Identify and eliminate self-defeating behaviors that make the situation worse, and replace them with positive behaviors that help you cope and grow thru the situation.)

(A truth about depression: It makes you want to choose depressing behaviors, and to eliminate uplifting behaviors. This is a temptation to be fought, actively and courageously, like any other temptation.)

(You do so by “acting as if” you weren’t depressed, thereby reaping the benefits of antidepressant behavior - even if you “don’t feel like it” at first.)

(This is the most powerful “agency-oriented” change strategy for depression – particularly when coupled with attitude change – cognitive-behavioral therapy)

Step 4: Spirituality and Relationships

(Identify and replace negative impact of depression on these crucial areas.)

Depression encourages a person to “turn against” or “turn away from” important people in their lives (including God) – which then adds to the severity of the depression, and the depth of isolation and despair that accompanies it.

Instead, depressed persons find relief when they learn to “turn toward” God and others –

- *to reach out to them for needed help & support; (receiving)*
- *to provide meaningful service and contribution; (giving)*
- *to enjoy deep and heartfelt fellowship. (communication/
shared experience)*

Principles for strengthening these crucial relationships:

- 1) *Don't expect perfection now, from yourself or from anyone else. Remember that we all grow “grace for grace” (D&C 93:11-12, 19-20), adding strengths and virtues a little at a time (1 Peter 1:5-7)*
- 2) *Recognize and appreciate the good things in yourself, in others, and in the circumstances of your life. Remember – a spirit of criticism and resentment drives away others - and drives away the Spirit. Instead, cultivate “an attitude of gratitude.” Look for, then express appreciation for, those good things.*
- 3) *Remember that no one is expected to save and perfect himself alone. Jesus Christ is the focal point of our hope and salvation. “For it is by grace we are saved, after all we can do.” (2 Ne. 25:23); and we become “perfect in Christ” (Moroni 10:32-33), not in and through our own efforts alone.*
- 4) *Remember that His central intent and mission is to save us (John 3:17); to advocate for us (D&C 29:5) , to “bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man” (Moses 1:39). That means you, too! No exceptions!*
- 5) *Remember that you have part in His saving work; for in overcoming your weaknesses and challenges, you change your family dynamics and can affect generations for good. (Isaiah 61:1-4, Isaiah 58:12)*
- 6) *Remember that even in the most difficult circumstances (“triggers”) of your life, “all these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good.” (D&C 122:7) “All things work together for good” (Ro. 8:28), even “all things wherewith you have been afflicted” (D&C 98:3). If we look to God in our adversities, He can transform even our most heart-breaking circumstances into our richest and most soul-stretching growth experiences:*

*“When through the deep waters I call thee to go,
The rivers of sorrow shall not thee o'erflow.
For I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,
And sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.” --(Hymns 85)*

Ezra Taft Benson, “Do Not Despair”

(Given in General Conference Oct. 1974, see Ensign, Nov. 1974, p. 65. Reprinted as a First Presidency message in Ensign, Oct. 1986, p. 5. Also found in Teachings of President Ezra Taft Benson, p. 401)

We live in an age when, as the Lord foretold, men’s hearts are failing them, not only physically but in spirit. (see D&C 45:26). Many are giving up heart for the battle of life...As the showdown between good and evil approaches, with its accompanying trials and desolations, **Satan is increasingly striving to overcome the Saints with despair, despondency, discouragement, and depression.** Yet, of all people, we as Latter-day Saints should be the most optimistic and the least pessimistic.

There are times when you simply have to righteously hang on and outlast the devil until his depressive spirit leaves you... To press on in noble endeavours, even while surrounded by a cloud of depression, will eventually bring you out on top into the sunshine...

“Salvation,” said Joseph Smith, “is nothing more nor less than *to triumph over all our enemies and put them under our feet.*” (TPJS, p. 297) **We can rise above the enemies of despair, depression, discouragement, and despondency by remembering that God provides righteous alternatives.**

To lift our spirits and send us on our way rejoicing, the devil’s designs of despair, discouragement, depression, and despondency can be defeated in a dozen ways, namely repentance, prayer, service, work, health, reading, blessings, fasting, friends, music, endurance, and goals.

Food can affect the mind, and deficiencies in certain elements in the body can promote mental depression. In general, the more food we eat in its natural state and the less it is refined without additives, the healthier it will be for us.

Boyd K. Packer, “Solving Emotional Problems in the Lord’s Own Way”

(From Oct. 1978 Welfare Session - see Ensign, Nov. 1978; also found in That All May Be Edified, p. 94)

We have succeeded fairly well in teaching Latter-day Saints that they should take care of their own material needs and then contribute to the welfare of those who cannot provide for themselves... **The principle of self-reliance or personal independence is fundamental to a happy life.** In too many places, in too many ways, **we are getting away from it.**

The substance of what I want to say is this: **The same principle - self-reliance - has application to the spiritual and to the emotional...**

We live in a day when **the adversary stresses** on every hand the philosophy of **instant gratification.** We seem to demand instant everything, including **instant solutions to our problems.** We are indoctrinated that somehow we should always be instantly emotionally comfortable. When that is not so, some become anxious, and **all too frequently seek relief from counseling, from analysis, and even from medication.**

It was meant that life would be a challenge. To suffer some anxiety, some depression, some disappointment, even some failure is **normal.** Teach our members that if they have a good, miserable day once in a while, or several in a row, to **stand steady and face them.** Things will straighten out... **There is a great purpose to our struggle in life.**