

Natural Depression CURES



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Introduction

It is a fact of life that everyone has times in their life when things are not as good as they could be, times when people feel down and miserable. For most of us however, times such as these are transient, periods that we quickly come through before emerging from the dark times and into the light of 'normality' once again.

For a significant (and growing) number of people, their reality is unfortunately not like this. It is one where the dark times represent the norm, because they suffer varying degrees of unhappiness and anguish on an almost daily basis, and just getting through each day is a significant challenge for them.

The degree to which people can feel this way differs from person to person, but for those who suffer the most, genuine depression is the reality of the life that they face every day.

There is no doubt that there are millions of people all over the world who have a very serious problem with depression, and there is little doubt that most of these people are taking pharmaceutical drugs to deal with their problem. Indeed, according to [this website](#), it is estimated that nearly 10% of the population of the USA suffers from depression, which equates to nearly 20 million adults, so both the scale of the problem and the amount of pharmaceutical drugs being consumed is huge.

The saddest thing is, it is not always necessary to take drugs, because there is an abundance of completely natural ways that you can treat depression, many of which have every chance of achieving outstanding success.

In this book, you will read of many of these methods of banishing depression entirely naturally, but before beginning to consider what these natural remedies for this debilitating illness are, let us first analyze exactly what depression is in a little more detail so that we know we are working with the facts.

What is depression?

According to the WordNetWeb page of the [Princeton.edu website](http://Princeton.edu), depression can be defined as 'a mental disorder characterized by a pessimistic sense of inadequacy and a despondent lack of activity'. However, it is important to realize that while this definition is true in the most general sense, there are many different types of depression recognized by mental health care professionals, and all of them differ in terms of specific symptoms and causes.

On a general level however, depression is a mental health disorder that can affect every aspect of your life. It can change the way you sleep, the way you deal with other people, and the way you view life in general. It is an all-pervasive condition that is very different from a passing mood - something that does not simply go away, nor is it a sign of personal weakness or lack of courage.

Depression will affect every aspect of your life to some degree. Your body, mind, almost every individual thought you have is affected by depression, and it is not something that you can simply 'snap out of'. Without suitable treatment, symptoms of depression can last for months or years, and the severity of the symptoms can also vary extremely widely.

Section summary

- On a general level, depression is a mental illness that can affect every single aspect of your life.
- There are many different types of depression, and each has very different characteristics.

Major depression

Major depression (sometimes known as clinical depression, unipolar depression or unipolar disorder) is characterized by an all-encompassing low mood in combination with low esteem and a lack of pleasure in those aspects of life that are normally considered to be pleasurable.

Suffering a major depression (which is a depression that lasts for some time – usually, two weeks is the minimum period used to define the condition) is a thoroughly debilitating experience that adversely affects the sufferer's ability to lead a normal life, usually impinging upon their ability to work, to live a normal family and home life, sleep, eating and even their general health.

Specific symptoms of major depression

People who are suffering a major depressive disorder may suffer some or all of the following symptoms:

- Feelings of unbounded pessimism or hopelessness.
- A persistent anxious, sad or somehow 'empty' mood.
- Decreased energy levels and persistent fatigue.
- Consistent feelings of worthlessness and a lack of personal value.
- Persistent sleep disorders, such as insomnia or regular oversleeping.
- An inability to concentrate or remember things.
- Constant restlessness and irritability.
- Loss of appetite and associated loss of weight.
- Alternatively, persistent over eating and consequent weight gain.
- Thoughts of suicide and/or suicide attempts.
- Persistent physical maladies such as headaches and digestive problems that do not respond to the normal physical treatment that would banish these problems.

The diagnosis of clinical depression is based on the patient's own experiences as reported by them, the information supplied by family members, colleagues and friends, backed up by a [mental status examination](#) carried out by a qualified mental health professional. Even now, there is no recognized laboratory test for major depression, although in most cases, medical practitioners will test any accompanying physical problems in order to rule out physical causation of those problems.

The normal onset of major depression happens between the ages of 30 and 40, with statistics suggesting that the condition is likely to peak in severity somewhere between ages of 50 and 60. In the USA, clinical depression is reported in women around twice as frequently as it is in men, although men pose a significantly higher suicide risk.

What causes major depression?

While it cannot be said that we fully understand exactly what causes major depression, it is now widely agreed that it is caused by a combination of biological, psychological and social factors (the [biopsychosocial model](#)).

Furthermore, it is suggested by the [diathesis – stress model](#) that people who suffer major depression had a pre-existing vulnerability to the condition that has somehow been triggered by some of the more stressful events that occur in day-to-day life. To take this one stage further, the same model suggests that this pre-existing vulnerability can be either genetic or something that has been learned during the course of the sufferer's life.

Because it is believed that major depression is a biopsychosocial condition, it is one that is generally treated on three levels, with attention being paid to the biological, psychological and social conditions that have prompted the illness.

It is also worth noting that [research over the years](#) has indicated that some types of depression tend to run in families, suggesting that certain family groups have a 'hardwired' genetic vulnerability to depression. It also appears that some families have a tendency to suffer from depression generation after generation, and major depression is certainly a primary culprit in both of these situations. The importance of family background cannot therefore be underestimated or ignored.

Medical (biological) treatment for major depression

Psychiatrists and other physicians will usually try to treat major depression by prescribing [antidepressants](#), which are drugs that work by altering the levels of various [neurotransmitters](#) in the brain of anyone suffering from the condition. In turn, neurotransmitters are chemicals that relay information between the neurons of the brain and other cells.

The neurotransmitter that is most commonly affected by antidepressants is [serotonin](#), which is a neurotransmitter that controls and regulates the levels of other neurotransmitters in the brain. Low levels of serotonin are believed to result in equally low levels of [norepinephrine](#) in the brain, and it is this that is generally believed to cause major depression.

Consequently, antidepressants are designed to either increase the levels of serotonin or norepinephrine or alternatively the levels of a third neurotransmitter, [dopamine](#). Dopamine is a close relation of adrenalin which is the hormone that controls action and energy levels, so to a certain degree, the specific antidepressant to be prescribed will depend upon the specific symptoms the patient exhibits.

For example, if the primary symptoms are anxiety and irritability, then norepinephrine based antidepressants are more likely, whereas dopamine-based drugs are more likely to be prescribed when a patient reports lack of energy and enjoyment of life.

In addition to treating major depression on a biological level, psychiatrists will also treat the condition on a psychological level. Most importantly in this respect, it is believed that the ability of an individual who suffers major depressive attacks to deal with everyday events in a normal way is somehow impaired. For example, while most major depression sufferers are very quick to blame themselves for negative events, they are far less likely to take credit for positive ones.

Finally, you have the social aspects that are believed to contribute to major depression, such as social isolation, abuse or major deprivation.

The ability to deal with the social aspects of major depression causation will to a large extent depend upon whether those causes are in the past or still present. In the first situation, the social aspects can be dealt with by appropriate counseling, whereas in the latter situation, it could be considerably more difficult to do anything about the problem.

Sub-types of major depression

[Atypical depression](#): Is a condition where the sufferer is able to sleep and eat normally while enjoying life in a perfectly normal way. However, there is a general feeling of lethargy surrounding them almost all the time.

[Psychotic depression](#): This subtype is one where major depression symptoms are combined with delusional perceptions or psychotic tendencies or behavior.

[Melancholic depression](#): This occurs when the sufferer is specifically unable to feel pleasure, which may be combined with a loss of appetite, insomnia and general irritability.

Section summary

- Major depression is a serious mental illness that is likely to have a very significant impact on any sufferer's life.

- It is believed that it is a condition caused by a combination of biological, psychological and social factors, one that is most commonly treated with antidepressants.

Bipolar disorder (manic depression)

[Bipolar disorder](#) is a condition where the sufferer enjoys periods of abnormally elevated moods (which are clinically described as being mania) that alternate with periods of serious depression. Sometimes these things occur immediately, one after the other, but more commonly they are separated by periods of 'normal' behavior.

This is a condition that is generally believed to be far less common than other forms of depression, but it is one where sufferers undergo extreme mood swings.

Because these mood swings go far beyond the highest and lowest that non-bipolar disorder sufferers will ever experience, it is a condition that causes severe psychological problems that are likely to hamper the ability of a sufferer to enjoy a normal existence. However, it is important to appreciate that bipolar disorder is not simply a condition of manic and depressive episodes, because it is an illness that affects every aspect of the sufferer's life.

Nevertheless, it is a condition that is primarily characterized by extreme swings between manic periods (which can often see the sufferer get so 'high' that they begin to suffer psychotic symptoms), and depressive periods where the symptoms match those of major depression.

According to the '[Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders](#)' (DSM-IV) produced by the American Psychiatric Association, it is a condition that is identified by the occurrence of one or more manic or mixed episodes balanced with depressive interludes. Furthermore, the Association goes on to suggest that each of the extremes can be recognized from a series of symptoms that present clear warning signs of a manic episode.

Manic warning signs, and how to recognize a manic episode

There are a number of warning signs that someone who is suffering from bipolar disorder is in the midst of having a manic attack. These are as follows:

Mood changes: The sufferer is irritable or excitable, and can become hostile or aggressive if challenged. At the same time, they might suffer sudden explosions of extreme exhilaration and happiness to counterbalance the irritability.

Belief or perception changes: When the sufferer is undergoing a genuine manic episode (as opposed to a less severe episode of [hypomania](#)), they may become delusional and begin to hallucinate. It is not uncommon for the sufferer to become totally paranoid, and for

them to believe that they are capable of doing things which they are in fact totally incapable of.

Bad judgment: People who are suffering a manic attack are often incapable of making sensible judgments of the type that people would normally consider to be representative of nothing more than common sense. For example, they may be guilty of inappropriate or offensive behavior or humor. They are liable to behave extremely impulsively with this newly discovered impulsiveness often displayed through extreme financial extravagance.

Changed thinking: Manic people often become extremely creative and prone to free-flowing thought. Unfortunately, these thoughts are often left unformed and disjointed, so that you have something akin to a stream of consciousness that is never fully conscious. They are distractible with new ideas literally popping into their head every second, but never getting much further than that.

Changed speech: Someone who is undergoing a manic episode will probably be speaking extremely quickly and making very little sense. If their speech is not completely incoherent, the jumble of ideas in their head almost ensures that they do not make cogent, logical sense.

Heightened sexual energy: People who are undergoing a manic episode will often experience heightened levels of sexual desire, probably matched with inappropriate behavior.

Increased energy: Manic people never slow down because they have a surfeit of energy which they need to burn off. Consequently, they are likely to need considerably less sleep than normal, be far more restless than usual and do not ever seem to become tired.

Knowing that these are the kind of warning signs that would indicate a manic episode, how can one use this information? The answer is that it really depends on who it is that is suffering the manic period.

For example, if a member of your family or your partner is someone who suffers from bipolar disorder, you can use this information to help recognize when they are suffering a manic episode. Armed with this information, you can then help them to seek treatment at the most appropriate moments.

For instance, if someone in your life seems to get by on only a couple of hours sleep every night but nevertheless always seems to have excess energy to burn, it might suggest manic behavior. Be alert to increased levels of talkativeness, and watch what they are wearing, because it is a sign of someone in a manic episode that they will dress far more flamboyantly and colorfully than they would normally do.

All of these could be signs of manic behavior and should therefore be noted and pointed out to the person who is acting in this way.

However, care should be exercised, because remember that in these circumstances, it is not unknown for people to become aggressive and hostile and they have a great deal of energy at the same time. In short, pick your moment carefully, because otherwise it could be dangerous even if the person involved is your closest loved one.

For this reason, if you are in a situation where you share your life with someone who suffers a bipolar disorder, it makes sense to discuss their condition when you have a window of normal behavior.

Get them to agree that you should record evidence of manic behavior when it happens and be able to present it to them without risk of aggression or censure. There is no guarantee that this will work – when they are manic, they lose the ability to think logically and perhaps to remember what was previously agreed – but it is a start nevertheless.

Signs of a depressive episode

In the same way that there are clear indicators of a manic episode that is either in full swing or about to happen, there are equally clear indicators of when the mood cycle is about to swing in the opposite direction. Although some of these will be very similar to the symptoms of major depression, these are the things that you should teach yourself to look out for:

Physical changes: If someone who is a bipolar disorder sufferer starts to complain of unexplained aches and pains, this might indicate that they are beginning to feel sorry for themselves and that they have little natural resistance. Similarly, if their appetite booms or disappears and their weight increases or decreases as a direct result of eating more or less, it could be another indicator of a depressed episode.

Emotional maladies: Anyone who is depressed is going to be wracked with negative feelings about their life, so if someone is almost permanently sad or given to bouts of uncontrollable crying, you have a clear indication of a depressed episode. In the same way, if someone is suffering uncontrollable guilt, feelings of worthlessness, helplessness, hopelessness or despair, these feelings represent a sign that they are entering or have entered a depressed episode.

Difficult behavior and moods: Whereas a manic episode is often marked by irritability and/or aggression, the depressed end of the mood spectrum is more likely to be marked by extreme anxiety, worry and pessimism. It is quite common for a bipolar sufferer to swing between self-criticism and indifference about life in general, and although it is less common, they may also be irritable and/or aggressive.

Decreased energy and activity levels: If a bipolar sufferer suddenly exhibits decreased energy levels so that they no longer enjoy exercise (for example), this change should serve as another indicator of depression. They may become extremely lethargic and very easily fatigued, leading to reduced activity levels and possibly even social withdrawal as they no longer enjoy the things that they previously enjoyed.

Seeing death in everything: People who find themselves stuck in the depressive period of the mood cycle are often completely preoccupied with the concept of death, to the extent that some people actually feel they are dead already.

Changed thinking: Depressed people often find it extremely difficult to organize their thoughts, and the ability to make decisions is likely to desert them. They become increasingly disorganized and are unable to deal with questions about money, because the whole concept of money has already ceased to have any real importance for them.

How you use this ability to recognize the signs of a depressive episode will depend upon what your relationship is with bipolar disorder and who it is that is suffering from the condition. Assuming for example that it is a friend or loved one, then you need to be able to advise them about their condition so that they can seek the appropriate treatment.

Recognizing suicidal signs...

However, perhaps the most important thing about recognizing the 'depressive end' of the bipolar mood swing cycle is that when people are significantly depressed, the risk of suicide becomes very much higher.

Indeed, it is estimated that of the people who are diagnosed with bipolar disorder, around 30% of them are likely to attempt suicide at least once. In addition, because the rate of suicide amongst bipolar disorder sufferers is around 20 times higher than that of the general population, it is extremely important for anyone who is associated with someone who suffers from bipolar disorder to recognize the most common suicide warning signs:

Situational triggers: There are many situations which can trigger a depressive episode. In general, the 'depth' of this depressive episode will be dictated by the severity of the situational blow that the individual suffers, and it is the 'depth' of depression that dictates the likelihood of a suicide attempt being made. For example, if a loved one dies or a long-term relationship breaks up at a time of depression, this could very quickly throw someone into abject despair, pushing them to a level where suicide becomes a logical choice.

Verbal signs: If someone who is already depressed starts saying things like 'I wish I were dead' or 'What's the point of carrying on?' you should take that as a strong indication that suicide is something they are considering. Sometimes the verbal sign will be obvious (as in the first example above), and less obvious at other times (example two), but be on the lookout for spoken signs such as these.

Emotional lows: Some verbal signs will indicate that a bipolar sufferer has reached an emotional low from which they don't think they can bounce back, despair, hopelessness or helplessness being examples. Be sure to listen carefully for any hints that this is the way someone feels.

Changes in behavior: Behavioral changes that might indicate an increased propensity to take their own life might be obvious or less obvious. For example, if someone buys a weapon, it is a very obvious sign, but be wary if they start checking that their affairs are in order or that the insurance policies are fully paid up to date.

On the bounce: It is generally accepted that when someone is climbing out of a bout of depression, it becomes far more likely that they will consider suicide.

One possible reason for this is the fact that as the depression lifts, they have more energy than they have had for some time, (enough energy to carry the deed through), or perhaps it has something to do with the fact that having made their decision, they are completely accepting of and comfortable with the situation. Whatever the reason, this is a time to be on very observant and diligent 'suicide watch'.

Mixed bipolar states

A mixed bipolar episode is one where the individual concerned suffers both manic and depressive episodes very close together, or even at the same time. Although the aforementioned DSM-IV contains a very strict (and narrow) definition of what a mixed bipolar state is, most medical professionals accept that there are many other 'degrees' of mixed state that are not covered by the definition.

For example, the respected bipolar researcher Hagop Akiskal M.D presented [a clinical paper](#) to the American Psychiatric Association that suggested that mania with only a few depressive indicators represents the most common mixed bipolar state.

Bipolar disorder in children

Although bipolar disorder is a condition that is generally considered to be one that fully manifests itself in the teens and 20s, it is nevertheless a fact that even younger children can suffer from the condition. However, until recently, it was almost always assumed that what was in fact early-onset bipolar disorder was [ADHD](#), and consequently the

wrong treatment was often administered as a result of this misdiagnosis.

Nowadays, considerably more is known about early-onset bipolar disorder, and it is recognized that some of the behavioral patterns most commonly shown by children suffering from ADHD are matched by those of bipolar children too.

In their extremely well researched and definitive book '[The Bipolar Child](#)', Demetri Papolos M.D and Janice Papolos report that 80% of children who have bipolar disorder come from homes where there is an established history of mood problems and/or alcoholism on both sides of the family. Nevertheless, even when there is nothing in the family history to indicate bipolar disorder, it is still a fact that it is a condition from which children will suffer.

Once again, it is therefore a question of recognizing the most common symptoms that might indicate a child who is bipolar.

For example, it is extremely common for such children to have explosive temper tantrums that can last for several hours, to demonstrate excessive mood swings, irritability, hyperactivity and aggressive or impulsive behavior. These will all be common indicators of a child who was in the manic bipolar period, while lethargy, fatigue, anxiety and oversensitivity might be indicative of the depressed phase.

A bipolar child may demonstrate learning difficulties and be prone to excessive periods of daydreaming, while also demonstrating poor short-term memory. They can be compulsive and obsessive, bossy and destructive.

Any of these symptoms might indicate a child who is bipolar, so you should not immediately assume that they suffer ADHD when you see a child demonstrating symptoms such as these.

Section summary

- Bipolar disorder or manic depression is a condition where the sufferer swings between manic euphoria and the depths of depression.
- It is important for anyone who knows somebody who they believed to be a bipolar disorder sufferer to be able to recognize the signs that indicate both the ups and downs of suffering the condition.
- There are times when a bipolar sufferer might be in a mixed state, by indicating both manic and depressive qualities.
- Bipolar disorder can also be present in children but is often incorrectly recognized as ADHD.

Other types of depression

Dysthymia

The symptoms of [dysthymia](#) are broadly similar to those of major depression, but on a far less serious and debilitating level.

It is a condition that is likely to last for long time, but because of the lower level of severity, it is possible that anyone suffering from dysthymia will be able to lead a normal life most of the time.

Nevertheless, because of the condition, it is likely that a sufferer will not enjoy life anywhere near as much as other people in the same situation or that there is a persistent 'not so good' feeling and lethargy.

It is also quite likely that anyone suffering from dysthymia will go through bouts of far more serious depressive episodes (a [major depressive episode](#)) which may be more or less frequent depending upon the individual concerned.

Postpartum depression

[Postpartum depression](#) (PPD) is defined as a depressive episode that occurs within one year of childbirth. The condition, sometimes also known as postnatal depression, tends to affect women (although it is not unknown for men to suffer as well), and while there are no definitive figures for how many women suffer from PPD (because there is no universally agreed definition of what constitutes real depression as opposed to general 'moodiness'), some estimates suggest that PPD can be seen in between 5% and 25% of women who have recently given birth.

A new mother who is suffering from PPD may exhibit some or all of the following symptoms:

- Hopelessness
- Lack of self-esteem
- Sadness
- Disturbed sleep and eating patterns
- Exhaustion
- Low or no energy
- Feelings of inadequacy when looking after the baby
- High levels of frustration and irritability
- Heightened levels of anger towards others.

While there is no way of knowing exactly what causes PPD in individual cases, there is a significant list of factors that are believed to contribute to the likelihood of the condition occurring. These include:

- A previous history of depression
- Prenatal depression during pregnancy
- A history of childcare stress
- Smoking cigarettes
- Using formula milk rather than breast milk
- Low self-esteem
- Feelings of unattractiveness, often tied to increased weight
- Generally high levels of everyday stress
- Lack of social support or security (especially lack of money)
- Unsteady marital relationship
- Being a single parent
- Child temperament problems.

All of these factors (and more) are probably going to increase the likelihood of postpartum depression setting in.

Although it has been suggested that the profound variations in hormone levels that occur following pregnancy might have something to do with PPD levels, there is no hard evidence of this.

To a certain extent, whether PPD is a short lived problem or one that persists for a significant length of time will depend on the primary cause of the condition.

For example, if PPD is brought on by a lack of money or general insecurity, this causative factor is not likely to change any time soon. Hence, the condition is likely to persist for some time, whereas if PPD is caused by something that can be dealt with (e.g. increased weight leading to feelings of unattractiveness), the condition is likely to pass far more quickly, particularly if the sufferer is appropriately counseled.

Seasonal affective disorder

As the name might suggest, [seasonal affective disorder](#) (SAD) is a depressive condition that is triggered by the changing of the seasons, with the most common form of SAD being winter-onset depression. It is believed that up to half a million US citizens suffer a serious change of mood and depressive symptoms with the onset of winter every year.

Indeed, according to the [US National Library of Medicine](#), many people who suffer winter onset SAD “sleep too much, (have) little energy and crave sweet and starchy foods. They may also feel depressed. Though symptoms can be severe, they usually clear up”, presumably once the seasons start to change again.

It is believed that the condition is related to a lack of sunlight during the winter months, a view which is supported by the effectiveness of [bright light therapy](#) in reducing the worst symptoms of the condition.

Despite the notion that the condition usually clears itself up, it is nevertheless a serious condition with many of the symptoms mimicking those of major depression and/or dysthymia.

Indeed, one [report on SAD](#) suggests that up to 35% of sufferers will require hospitalization as a result of their condition at least once, and as with all depressive disorders, SAD increases the suicide risk.

Once again, according to [studies](#), there is some evidence that SAD is associated with a lack of serotonin, while others have suggested that the condition is caused by melatonin which is produced by the pineal gland in dim light.

Section summary

- There are several other forms of depression such as dysthymia, postpartum depression and seasonal affective disorder.
- Depending upon which particular kind of depression it is, the symptoms can vary from mild to serious and while some types of depression are temporary, others can be persistent and/or long-lasting.

Starting to seek natural cures for depression

The cure sometimes depends on the cause...

To an extent, the first step to finding a natural cure for a depression problem lies with the ability to discover what the cause of the problem was.

Having suggested that many experts believe that depression is caused by biopsychosocial factors, if specific factors can be isolated, then it may be possible to address those factors and deal with the depression problem.

For example, if it can be established that someone is suffering from depression because of an unhappy or abusive relationship, it should be fairly clear that getting out of that relationship could be a significant step in the right direction. Accepting the biopsychosocial argument would clearly suggest that there is probably more to a person's depression problem even in these circumstances (i.e. when there is a clear causative factor that can be handled or dealt with so as to remove the problem), nevertheless, making changes in this way would take a noticeable degree of the pressure off.

So, the first step towards finding a natural cure for a depression problem is to isolate what the causes of that problem are if at all possible. Armed with this information, it should be possible to decide whether there is any single step or series of steps that can be taken in order to alleviate the pressure that is causing the depression problem.

However, while this sounds simple in theory, it is likely to be far more difficult to put this into practice if you already have a depression problem, because accurate self-analysis is not likely to be the strong point of someone who is depressed.

Nevertheless, if you are able to analyze the problem sufficiently objectively to come up with an answer through your own efforts, this is likely to be the quickest and easiest way of getting to the root of your problem.

Can you, for example, pinpoint a time in your life when depression started to be a problem for you? If so, what was happening at that time?

Even when you are suffering, are there things in your life that still bring you pleasure and enjoyment? If so, is it possible to include more of those things in your life as a way of attempting to lift your depression?

Is it possible to make lifestyle changes that will help to relieve the pressure and stress that is causing depression? If so, then you should immediately consider whether making these changes is practical.

For some people, their depression might be so deeply rooted that it is impossible for them to come up with any sensible reason why they suffer the way they do.

In this case, it is almost certainly going to be beneficial to talk to a psychiatrist or psychologist so that they can help to analyze and isolate whatever it is that is causing the problem for you. Even if you would like to treat your condition in as natural a manner as possible, do not be anxious about consulting a professional in this way, because even if they do try to prescribe pharmaceutical drugs after you have consulted them, it is not absolutely necessary for you to accept their advice.

However, a consultation could be vitally important in helping you to isolate your problem, because once you have done so, then you can choose how you want to treat it.

Don't underestimate the importance of environment...

The environment that you live in and that surrounds you every day can be an extremely important factor as far as getting rid of depression is concerned. For example, consider seasonal affective disorder.

If winter-onset SAD is the form of depression that afflicts you, have you ever considered that there are many countries in the world where they have no winter?

For instance, in many countries in Southeast Asia, the temperatures never fall below 20°C and they have several hours of sunshine every day of the year (and they happen to be amongst the cheapest countries in the world to live in too).

Rates of depression are much higher in those parts of the world where they have long, harsh winters, so if this is the kind of depression that is afflicting you, why stay there?

As an example, the colder states of the USA have far greater numbers of people who suffer a vitamin D deficiency than the sunnier states like Florida and California. Vitamin D is extremely important for human beings for several reasons. It encourages the absorption of calcium in the body (vital for strong teeth, bones and a healthy nervous system) and helps to prevent certain types of cancer as well.

Most importantly, vitamin D also plays a vital role in regulating bodily hormones, and as we have already seen, it is believed that hormones and neurotransmitters play an extremely important role in controlling depression.

It is the effect of sunlight on your body which promotes the production of vitamin D, so without sunlight, you have the situation where so many people suffer a vitamin D deficiency. Without vitamin D, you have a hormone problem and you therefore have increased levels of depression - it's a natural step-by-step, chain reaction.

Even if you live in a colder climate, it is possible that you will see the sun from time to time, and whenever you do, you should get out there to get as much sun on your face as possible. Even as little as 15 to 20 minutes of sunshine every day can make a significant difference to the vitamin D. levels in your body, so you should do whatever you can to see the sun as often as possible.

It would make far more sense if you are a person who suffers from seasonal affective disorder to live somewhere that you can see the sun for several hours every day...

The alternative is to use artificial light sources like bright light therapy or full-spectrum lighting. There are plenty of online resources where you can buy the equipment you need to generate the right kind of artificial light to overcome problems caused by vitamin D deficiencies. Run appropriate Google searches using phrases such as 'bright light therapy':

The screenshot shows a Google search for "bright light therapy". At the top, it says "Web Shopping" and "Results 1 - 10 of about 297,000 for bright light therapy." Below this, there are several sponsored links. The first is "HD Light Therapy for SAD" from FullSpectrumSolutions.com, with a "Google Checkout" button. The second is "Latest in Light Therapy" from LightTherapy.com, with a "Google Checkout" button. The third is "LightTherapy by Verilux" from verilux.com, also with a "Google Checkout" button. To the right, under "Sponsored Links", there are three more links: "Light Box Therapy" from CatalogClearance.com, "Bright Light Therapy" from femsnutrition.com, and "SoLux Light Therapy" from SoLux.net. Below the sponsored links, there are shopping results for "bright light therapy" with prices and product names: "HappyLite Mini Ultra Sunshine Supplement Light" for \$89.95, "Day Light Bright Light Therapy System - Uplift" for \$199.84, and "Day-Light Bright Light Therapy System # Each 1" for \$149.99. At the bottom, there is a link for "Q&A on Bright Light Therapy".

There are 297,000 web pages called up by Google to this search term, and the majority of them are for companies who are selling exactly the kind of product you are looking for. There are still more web pages indexed by Google for 'full spectrum lighting':

Results 1 - 10 of about 598,000 for full spectrum lighting.

A significant proportion of these web pages have been published by companies selling the kind of product you want to buy.

This is all very well, but this is focused on a small section of the depression market (i.e. those with seasonal affective disorder), so you

might question what this would have to do with someone suffering from major depression, for example.

The answer is, nothing directly, but if you were to wake up to the sunshine every day knowing that the beach was just a few minutes away, wouldn't that naturally lift your spirits?

Granted, this change is not likely to banish your depression woes entirely, but it would certainly represent a very positive step in the right direction. To put it the other way round, it is going to be a lot easier to feel encouraged by life when the world around you is beautiful, sunny and warm every day as opposed to being bleak, grey and cold for at least half of the year.

Try to isolate what the probable cause of your depression is as a first step to seeking a natural cure for your problem.

Helping others will probably help you...

We have already established that people who are suffering from depression often have low self-esteem, no sense of their own worth and are pessimistic and constantly unhappy.

The next suggestion might therefore seem like a slightly strange one, perhaps a little bit 'new age' or off-the-wall, but it is an idea that will work, and will start doing so almost as soon as you implement it. It is almost certain that the quickest and easiest way of starting to feel better about yourself is to make someone else feel better.

Even if you feel that you have very little energy, this does not have to be something that is work or a chore, all it needs is a little thought. For instance, if you have a sick neighbor, offer to go to the store to get their groceries for them.

Something as simple as this will clearly make you see that you do have value to other people, that you do serve a positive purpose and that there are people who are far worse off than you (so why so pessimistic?).

Alternatively, offer to help at a local homeless shelter or animal shelter. Most towns and cities have charitable organizations crying out for volunteers, so here is a chance to prove both to the world and to yourself that you really do have a valuable contribution to make.

Not only will this improve your self-esteem, it will also introduce you to interesting new challenges and a new group of people who have no knowledge of your previous depression problems. Consequently, these people will not prejudge you, nor will they be interested in asking you about your problems (they don't know about them, so how can they?) like so many long-term acquaintances will probably do.

If people stop asking about your problems, then the chances are that you will push them further and further to the back of your mind.

The truth is, no matter how bad you feel, you do have a value in the world and a contribution to make, and here is a terrific way of proving it to everyone concerned.

Start to take your life back through words...

Another healing device that you should start to utilize is to keep a regular diary. The best way to start this diary is to write down your interests, but depending upon your state of mind at the time, it may be very difficult to think of anything that genuinely interests you.

This should not however represent an insurmountable problem. If you find yourself in a situation where you have almost lost interest in everything, try to think of the things that used to interest you or go back as far as your childhood to find something to write about.

Try to remember the things that you used to enjoy doing as a youngster, or focus on what you wanted to be back then. Where were the places that you wanted to go to, and did you ever get there? If so, write about your experiences, but if not, write about why not.

What you are trying to do here is get yourself out of the rut of doing the same thing every day, completely repetitively following the same routine. This is something that almost all of us are guilty of one time or another, so much so that we almost forget that the purpose of life is to 'live'. Writing things down in this way helps you to rediscover lost dreams and ambitions, and even if you can only rediscover some of those dreams, you can do something about chasing after them.

Once you have written down a few dreams or ambitions, decide which you can prioritize that are realistic, and then start to do whatever necessary to go after them. This will give you a purpose and it will help you to rekindle interests or passions that you have probably forgotten about.

Even if you feel sluggish or lethargic at the beginning, keep pushing ahead with the project, because as you do so, you will begin to shed the bonds of depression and become far more energized and lively as a result.

Try to find other people with similar interests and hobbies. There are lots of forum sites on the internet where you can find suitable people (check whatever you are interested in at Big-boards.com or Forum Showcase) and you can look in the local papers to see whether there are any appropriate groups in your local town that you can join. There may also be a local web-based directory site, so check online for local

information too. Expanding your horizons and your social scene in this way can be a very significant step towards rehabilitation, simply because being with like-minded people can be therapeutic.

Depression is a cry for a change...

Suffering depression is your mind's way of telling you that you need to institute changes, and while a major change like moving to a different state or even a different country would be a huge step in the right direction, for many people this is simply not possible. That does not, however, mean that you cannot make changes to your environment which can help you to start getting over your depression problem.

For example, if you are stuck in a stale, boring relationship, it is not doing you any good. Now is as good a time as any to get out.

If you have been sitting around the house for ages and have not done any kind of housecleaning since you can't remember when, now is the time to turn over a new leaf by spring cleaning from top to bottom. Sure, the lethargy that is often part and parcel of being depressed will make it difficult at first, but you have to start making an effort at some time, and now would seem like as good a time as any.

Get rid of the junk that is cluttering up your environment; give yourself some space to move around and be yourself.

Cleaning out your life in this way (both physically and metaphorically) enables you to move on so that you can pursue the important things in life. Get back in touch with old friends, and if there are bridges that need to be rebuilt, set about doing so.

If work is getting you down or you are struggling financially, start searching the job market to see there is anything else out there that is better, or give some thought to starting your own business.

For instance, take a look at some of the online moneymaking opportunities, because increasing numbers of people are giving up the 9-to-5 to become online entrepreneurs, and working for yourself might just be the change that you need.

All of these actions are both fulfilling and liberating, and they might just be the 'shake-up' that you need to make in order to break away from whatever has been pulling you down and holding you back for so long.

Turn the negatives into positives...

Anger, sadness and guilt are all part of being depressed. However, by following the advice that you have read of it so far in this chapter, you should be able to turn these negative emotions into positives that drive you forward and enable you to break free from the shackles of depression.

Take the process of rebuilding your life one step at a time, but do so in a way that gradually becomes increasingly ambitious. With a bit of luck, you should find that most of the tactics you have read of in this chapter will help you to start moving away from being depressed in an entirely natural and life asserting manner.

Section summary

- Depression is the way that your mind and your emotions tell you that it is time to make significant changes in your life.
- In order to make the changes effectively, it is necessary to know what you need to change. Follow the advice in this chapter, and you should be able to establish exactly what needs to be done.

Other simple, natural ways of dealing with depression

Using exercise and yoga to get rid of depression

Over the past two years, many studies have indicated that exercise can help people overcome depression, for many reasons.

For example, as highlighted in this [about.com](#) expert article, becoming fitter will improve your self-esteem, and as we have already seen, low self-esteem is an ever present symptom of depression. In addition, it can help you to shed weight (which may be something that will also help your self-esteem), it will give you an outlet for channeling your irritability and aggression in a positive and energizing way, and exercise also helps you to sleep better.

As the article highlights, it may not appear to be that easy to take up exercise when you are lethargic and forever tired as a side effect of being depressed, but it is not necessary to aim to be an Olympic athlete in the space of a week.

You can start off as slowly as you like and as long as you set realistic and achievable goals, you should start to enjoy a feeling of achievement very soon. If you can find other people to exercise with, it can also help you to break out of the dull routine of your everyday life and to take your social life back at the same time.

It is also believed that regular exercise releases natural chemicals in the brain that make you feel better, and so there are many ways that exercise can help you break out of the vicious circle of depression.

In a similar way, practicing yoga can also help you to take your life back. By combining meditation, deep breathing and yoga poses, you can attack one of the primary root causes of depression, which is the feeling that you are not in control of your life.

Consequently, if a more strenuous exercise routine is not your cup of tea, try a program of 20 minutes of meditation (there are many different types of meditation, many of which you will find described in detail on [this site](#)), followed by 30 minutes of practicing the five yoga asanas described on [these pages](#).

Practicing yoga is not a replacement for other forms of depression treatment, but it can nevertheless help you to relax and focus on the positive aspects of your life which all too often get lost in the humdrum of routine daily existence.

Hypnotherapy to treat depression...

Hypnosis and hypnotherapy have long been established as highly effective methods of reducing the severity of depression, and there is no shortage of online resources where there is information available about hypnotists and hypnotherapists who can provide appropriate services, all over the world:

The screenshot shows a Google search for "depression hypnosis". The search bar contains the text "depression hypnosis" and the search button is labeled "Search". Below the search bar, there are links for "Advanced Search" and "Preferences". The search results are displayed under the heading "Web" and show "Results 1 - 10 of about 4,870,000 for depression hypnosis". The results include several sponsored links and organic search results. The sponsored links are: "Depression Symptom Relief" from www.MoreForDepression.com, "Hypnosis for Depression" from www.HypnoShop.com, "Depression" from KnowMyDepression.com, "rTMS for depression" from www.biolasertherapy.com, "Hypnosis Works" from www.besthypno.com, "Over 150 Hypnosis Session" from thinkhypnosis.com, and "Top Depression Treatments" from www.HelloMater.com. The organic search results include: "Depression and Hypnosis" from www.depression-hypnosis.com, "Can Hypnosis Relieve Depression?" from health.msn.com, "Clinical hypnosis can be used to treat depression" from www.medicalnewstoday.com, and "Get Out of Depression with Deep Trance Hypnosis" from an unspecified source.

As highlighted in [this article](#) from the MSN Health pages, it is common to suggest that the primary benefits of using hypnosis or hypnotherapy to address the depression problem are felt because of the ability to decrease the severity of some of the symptoms, and this is broadly true. For example, hypnotherapy can boost self-confidence, enhance self-esteem, and increase the skills necessary to deal with stressful and upsetting events.

If there is an established biological reason for depression, it is unlikely that either hypnotherapy or hypnosis will be able to do a great deal about redressing the chemical imbalance that underlies the biological cause of depression. That does not, however, mean that you have to revert to antidepressants, as you will read later.

Acupuncture for treating depression

Acupuncture has been a central aspect of Traditional Chinese Medicine for many centuries, and is now used as an all-round resource for treating depression. Acupuncture is able to address all of the aspects of depression (the mental, physical and emotional aspects) because applying acupuncture to different parts of the body can bring relief to other areas of the body in many different ways.

Traditional Chinese Medicine is divided into many individual approaches, each of which is focused on combating a particular 'element' of a

problem, and this is as true of depression as it is with any other aspect of TCM.

In particular, each of the different elements of Chinese Medicine focuses on a different underlying reason for depression, although it should be pointed out that there is a degree of cross fertilization between each of the individual elements.

Consequently, before applying acupuncture as a treatment for depression, a trained acupuncturist would try to ascertain the underlying reasons why a particular individual is suffering from depression.

For example, it maybe because an individual sufferer is a person who likes to retain control, someone who is therefore frustrated and angry because of their inability to do so. Alternatively, it could be someone who is suffering depression because of 'lost love' and heartbreak, or someone who is depressed because of loss or grief.

Of course, in most of these situations, there will be elements of many reasons causing depression, but by isolating the major characteristic that is causing the problem, the acupuncturist can then decide upon an appropriate course of treatment using either traditional needles or electric probes.

Emotional freedom technique

[Emotional freedom technique](#) (EFT) was invented in the mid-1990s, and while there is some argument about the effectiveness of the technique, proponents suggest that it is capable of relieving many psychological ailments, including depression.

On the other hand, critics suggest that the theory behind EFT is pseudoscientific at best, and that there is no proven research behind the notion.

Nevertheless, many of the techniques behind EFT are based on principles similar to those used in acupuncture, and there are various proprietary products on the online market that you can try to see whether EFT works for you.

There is one such [product here](#), but before taking a look at the product information page, I would recommend that you view this free [YouTube video series](#) produced by the product designer which should enable you to establish whether this product will work for you. Many of the voluntary testimonials imply that the system works, so it is probably something worth trying.

There is also a list of many free [EFT resources here](#) that includes many practitioners all over the world, plenty of free EFT reports and so on.

Section summary

- There are many different pro-active steps that you can take to help reduce the severity or to start getting rid of your depression.
- Exercise, yoga, hypnotherapy, acupuncture and EFT are all worth trying, although it should be borne in mind that their effectiveness will vary from individual to individual.

Natural ingested remedies for depression

As suggested earlier, the primary method of medically treating depressed patients is with antidepressants, most of which work by increasing levels of serotonin in the brain. However, many of the leading brands of antidepressants have acknowledged side-effects, as highlighted about halfway down [this page](#) of the National Institute of Mental Health site.

And many of these side-effects are unpleasant as you can see from this screenshot:

What are the side effects of antidepressants?

Antidepressants may cause mild and often temporary side effects in some people, but they are usually not long-term. However, any unusual reactions or side effects that interfere with to a doctor immediately.

The most common side effects associated with SSRIs and SNRIs include:

- Headache—usually temporary and will subside.
- Nausea—temporary and usually short-lived.
- Insomnia and nervousness (trouble falling asleep or waking often during the night)—may occur during the first few weeks but often subside over time or if the dose is reduced.
- Agitation (feeling jittery).
- Sexual problems—both men and women can experience sexual problems including reduced sex drive, erectile dysfunction, delayed ejaculation, or inability to have an orgasm.

Tricyclic antidepressants also can cause side effects including:

- Dry mouth—it is helpful to drink plenty of water, chew gum, and clean teeth daily.
- Constipation—it is helpful to eat more bran cereals, prunes, fruits, and vegetables.
- Bladder problems—emptying the bladder may be difficult, and the urine stream may not be as strong as usual. Older men with enlarged prostate conditions may be more affected painful to urinate.
- Sexual problems—sexual functioning may change, and side effects are similar to those from SSRIs.
- Blurred vision—often passes soon and usually will not require a new corrective lenses prescription.
- Drowsiness during the day—usually passes soon, but driving or operating heavy machinery should be avoided while drowsiness occurs. The more sedating antidepressants are and minimize daytime drowsiness.

Because of these side-effects, most people would prefer to use natural solutions for depression. It is therefore interesting that in Germany (which has outstanding medical care), while Prozac (a leading antidepressant brand) is prescribed to only 2% of depressed patients, a totally natural herbal remedy is prescribed to 50%!

St John's wort

[St John's wort](#) (*Hypericum Perforatum*) is the natural herbal remedy in question. The plant is a small yellow flower (although some deem it to be a weed) that grows all across the world, one which has been used as an ancient folk and herbal medicine for 2000 years.

Most importantly, as you can read on [this page](#), recent tests have indicated that using St John's wort to treat depression is every bit as effective as prescription antidepressants, but with significantly fewer adverse side-effects, hence its popularity as an alternative to antidepressants in Europe.

According to [this information](#) presented by Wikipedia, it is still a little unclear as to why St John's wort is such an effective natural antidepressant, but it is believed that it acts in pretty much the same way as pharmaceutical antidepressants by ensuring that more of the body's natural serotonin stays in circulation within the body.

While St John's wort is a prescribed drug in various European countries, in the USA it is treated as an alternative treatment or herbal supplement. Consequently, while in those countries where it is used as a prescription drug, the ingredients of St John's wort-based preparations are carefully controlled, in other countries (such as the USA, where it is outside the scope of the FDA), it is not.

Hence, although there are plenty of places where you can obtain St John's wort on the net, it makes sense to do your research thoroughly to make sure that you know what you are buying.

For example, buying research grade St John's wort extract tablets [such as these](#) is a safe and sensible option, and you should also note that you can buy [serotonin tablets](#) from the same site. Taking these tablets in addition to using St John's wort to minimize serotonin uptake is therefore a sound double pronged attack on the causes of depression.

Omega-3 fatty acids...

Omega-3 fatty acids are essential nutrients that every human needs for normal brain function. However, because the body does not make these particular essential fatty acids, they must be obtained through diet.

Cold water fish such as anchovies and salmon are the richest natural source of Omega-3 fatty acids, but we do not eat enough of these fish to satisfy our daily requirements in the West. It is therefore no coincidence that countries which consume a fish rich diet, like Japan, have national depression rates that are 10% of those in North America!

The problem with increasing the amount of fish in your diet is that fish nowadays have commonly ingested mercury and other harmful chemicals before they reach your dining table. It is therefore preferable to include purified fish oil capsules in your diet rather than increasing the amount of fish borne pollutants you eat in order to take in the necessary Omega-3 fatty acids.

Folic acid

Folate or folic acid is a B vitamin that is often lacking in those who suffer from depression. It is to be found in leafy green vegetables, beans and fruit, as well as being available in B-complex vitamin supplements.

It is also suggested [on this page](#) that a lack of vitamin B12 can also contribute to depression, primarily because some research has indicated that folic acid and vitamin B12 enable antidepressant medicines to be more effective. Whether this is also true of St John's wort (which is believed to act in exactly the same way as pharmaceutical antidepressants) is not mentioned, but supplementing your diet with additional vitamins can never do any harm.

Sam-e

Sam-e is short for S-adenosyl-L-methionine, which is a naturally occurring chemical in the human body which is believed to increase levels of both serotonin and dopamine. In most Western countries, Sam-e is sold as a dietary supplement that is available in health food stores, drug stores and online.

Despite the fact that it is one of the more expensive ways of fighting depression, Sam-e nevertheless remains popular, although you should be aware that nausea and constipation are two possible side-effects of taking this particular supplement.

Watch your diet

There are several changes that you can make to your daily diet that can help to counteract depression. These are:

- Make sure that you take in sufficient magnesium from nuts, legumes, green vegetables and whole grains. Most people do not get enough magnesium, which is essential for the production of serotonin.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine, as they are both noted mood dampeners. While caffeine boosts energy levels and alcohol generates a 'buzz', both of these are short lived effects after which most people suffer a downer. Both can exacerbate mood swings, depression and anxiety.
- Avoid too many sweet foodstuffs, because while sugar also generates a short-term 'buzz', you almost certainly feel worse once it wears off.

Additional herbal remedies

[Lemon balm](#) can be used as a [mild sedative or calming agent](#) when taken in the form of a tea or tincture.

While [kava](#) is used throughout the western Pacific as a natural tranquilliser, it is often used as an herbal medicine to counteract stress and anxiety in the West.

[Ginkgo](#) is a prime constituent of Traditional Chinese Medicine which is believed to have the ability to prevent memory loss and enhance

concentration levels. It is also able to inhibit the adverse effects of things like blood clotting on the central nervous system which could possibly reduce the effectiveness of neurotransmitters like serotonin.

Section summary

- There are many natural antidepressants that can be ingested, but there seems little doubt that most effective of them is St John's wort.
- Nevertheless, as everything in this chapter of the report is entirely natural and without known side-effects (apart from Same), you should try everything that you read here to find out what works for you.

Conclusion

Depression is a terribly debilitating and damaging mental illness, one that Western medicine almost invariably insists on treating with pharmaceutical based antidepressants (with the notable exception of some European countries).

However, as you have now discovered, there are many ways that you can tackle the depression that you or someone else close you is suffering from, in a completely natural manner. Given the acknowledged side-effects of pharmaceutical antidepressant drugs, using the natural treatment tactics and strategies that you have read in this report is good sense, something that should always be the option of first choice.

Having said that, it has to be acknowledged that there are cases of depression of such severity that no amount of natural treatment methods is going to make a great deal of difference.

In these situations, pharmaceutical drugs and sometimes even more drastic action like [electroconvulsive therapy](#) or surgery might become necessary, but fortunately, the cases that fall into these categories are mercifully small.

If you are reading this report, then it is unlikely that you would fall into any of these categories. Consequently, if you or a loved one has any kind of depression problem, I would urge you to consider using natural treatments before you embark upon using pharmaceutical antidepressants (with their known side-effects), and to start doing so right away.