

Depression: A Self-Generated Problem

9:06 AM PST, December 18, 2006, updated at 6:27 AM PST, January 6, 2007

Mention that you feel depressed and anyone will know what you're talking about. Feeling down-in-the-dumps, miserable, negative, overwhelmed or worthless, are all symptoms of what we commonly refer to as being depressed. Certainly, these are symptoms we've all shared from time to time. That's because getting depressed is a normal, inescapable part of being human. Getting depressed is not the same as a clinical depression.

Traditionally, a clinical depression refers to any depression that meets specific criteria described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual published by the American Psychiatric Association. Far from being something imagined or "all in your head," a clinical depression is a whole body problem with both biochemical and emotional underpinnings. With symptoms like sadness, crying, fatigue, appetite disturbances, decreased sexual desire, worry, fear, difficulty concentrating, and feelings of hopelessness, it's obvious that a clinical depression can be a serious problem if left untreated. And yet, as devastating as a clinical depression can be, it's often left untreated.

The reason is that for some, depression is a shameful label. They feel embarrassed and humiliated because they feel they can't cope or because they're just too weak. They say, "I should be able to handle this." Or, "There's no reason for me to be depressed. If I wait long enough, I'll just snap out of it." And yet for others, it's just a matter of ignorance, as they perceive their depression to be an inevitable part of life. There's a menacing bias about depression that is deeply rooted in the culture. In the classic 1948 film *The Snake Pit*, Olivia de Havilland portrayed a woman institutionalized in a crowded state hospital due to a breakdown following depression. The snake pit of the title is the hospital's room of horrors, an open ward in which the hopeless cases are confined. This groundbreaking film, along with many others that followed, have contributed to our perception and fears of depression. Self-Coaching challenges this dark and ominous perception that depression is an illness and that we are victims of depression.

Think of yourself standing next to a large machine with a crank protruding out one side. You begin to turn the crank and as you do, sparks begin to fly in all directions. The sparks represent your depression. Rather than an illness, begin to think of depression as a self-generated problem--one that you sustain by cranking out thoughts of negativity, self-doubt, and hopelessness (thoughts that collectively wind up altering and depleting your chemical balance). Once you begin to understand that your depression depends on you turning the crank of insecurity and despair, Self-Coaching will point you toward the ultimate solution: What am I doing that sustains my depression and what can I do to stop it?

 [Comment](#)

Why is Self-Coaching Different?

6:39 AM PST, December 18, 2006

Self-Coaching isn't a regurgitation of other self-help methods, it's a unique approach that has evolved over the past thirty years working with my patients. As I see it, positive thinking and positive affirmations are only 50% of the equation; the other 50% has to do with positively believing what you tell yourself. Bottom line, if you aren't able to embrace and live what you're telling yourself, there will be no change. Self-Coaching, by restoring your atrophied trust-muscle, will allow you to create and choose the life you want.

Aside from being a motivational, coaching approach, Self-Coaching reduces all conflict (especially anxiety, panic, and depression) to two words: insecurity and control. This is the core of my program and what makes it stand apart from other methods (coaching or psychological). By understanding how, because of reflexive, habits of insecurity, you've gravitated toward a life of control (i.e., worrying, rumination, perfectionism, compulsion, etc.) you are in a position to begin seeing exactly what can be done to eliminate psychological friction from your life.

The key to psychological well-being is learning what you're doing that feeds the reflexive habits of insecurity (i.e., worry, doubts, fears, and negatives) and what you can do to starve these habits. Self-Coaching not only explains psychological struggle in a new light, but it also offers a pragmatic technique for extricating yourself from the needless enslavement to insecurity and a life of struggle.

 [Comment](#)

Are you a worrywart?

6:08 AM PST, December 16, 2006

Most people will tell you that worrying is an unfortunate, unavoidable part of life. From a Self-Coaching perspective I say this is poppycock! There's never a good reason for worrying. Bottom line, worry doesn't solve problems, it creates them! So what's the answer when you're walloped by one of life's challenges? The answer lies in understanding the difference between being worried and being concerned.

Here's the difference. Being concerned has to do with actual, factual, life circumstances. If your doctor tells you that your cholesterol is high, this is a fact. In which case, it's good common sense to be *concerned* about your health and to begin a diet and exercise program. No problem here. Given the same data, a worrywart may also start out demonstrating the same good common sense, vowing to start an exercise and diet regime, but then, driven by reflexive, insecure thinking, the worrywart abandons the factual (i.e., dealing with high cholesterol) and begins to ruminate about things that are not factual, "What if I have a heart attack?" Since you're not having a heart attack--and may never have one--this must be considered nothing more than a fictional projection of insecurity, which is as good a definition of worry as I can come up with.

Worry is insecurity's tendency to project doubts, fears, or negatives into the future (i.e., "What-iffing"). Since the future doesn't exist, the projections of the worrywart must be seen as fictions. Mark Twain got it right when he said, "I've worried about thousands of things in my life, most of which have never happened." From now on remember, it's okay to be concerned with life's factual challenges (facts), but not okay to worry about them by projecting negatives (fictions).

What about you? Are you a worrywart, guilty of projecting fictions of insecurity? Are you a "what-iffier?" And finally, ask yourself, are you living your life dealing with facts or with fictions? I'd love to hear from you to discuss this and any other question you may have regarding a Self-Coaching approach to solving life-struggles.