

Making Everything Easier!™

Managing Depression with Mindfulness

FOR
DUMMIES[®]
A Wiley Brand

Learn to:

- Heal and recover from depression mindfully
- Understand the relationship between thinking, feeling, mood and depression
- Reduce your depression with effective mindfulness practices
- Implement positive changes and prevent relapse

Robert Gebka



*Managing
Depression with
Mindfulness*

FOR
DUMMIES
A Wiley Brand

by Robert Gebka

FOR
DUMMIES
A Wiley Brand

Managing Depression with Mindfulness For Dummies®

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.**, The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, www.wiley.com

This edition first published 2016

© 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Chichester, West Sussex.

Registered office

John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 8SQ, United Kingdom

For details of our global editorial offices, for customer services and for information about how to apply for permission to reuse the copyright material in this book, please see our website at www.wiley.com.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except as permitted by the UK Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Designations used by companies to distinguish their products are often claimed as trademarks. All brand names and product names used in this book are trade names, service marks, trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners. The publisher is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: WHILE THE PUBLISHER AND AUTHOR HAVE USED THEIR BEST EFFORTS IN PREPARING THIS BOOK, THEY MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH THE RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS BOOK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ANY IMPLIED WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. IT IS SOLD ON THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PUBLISHER IS NOT ENGAGED IN RENDERING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AND NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR THE AUTHOR SHALL BE LIABLE FOR DAMAGES ARISING HEREFROM. IF PROFESSIONAL ADVICE OR OTHER EXPERT ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED, THE SERVICES OF A COMPETENT PROFESSIONAL SHOULD BE SOUGHT.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at (001) 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002. For technical support, please visit www.wiley.com/techsupport.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015960747

ISBN 978-1-119-02955-7 (hardback/paperback) ISBN 978-1-119-02957-1 (ebk)

ISBN 978-1-119-02957-4 (ebk)

Managing Depression with Mindfulness For Dummies®

Visit

www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/managingdepressionwithmindfulness to view this book's cheat sheet.

Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[Introduction](#)

[About This Book](#)

[Foolish Assumptions](#)

[Icons Used in This Book](#)

[Beyond the Book](#)

[Where to Go from Here](#)

[Part I: Understanding Depression and Befriending Your Life](#)

[Chapter 1: Your Journey to Wellbeing](#)

[Befriending the Black Dog of Depression](#)

[You Are Not Alone – One in Four Have Depression](#)

[Anxiety and Depression – Always on the Same Bus](#)

[Healing Is Possible – But It Takes Time](#)

[Finding Inner Peace through Mindfulness](#)

[Chapter 2: Understanding the Anatomy of Depression](#)

[Understanding Depression – A Balanced View](#)

[How Bad Is It? Severity, Intensity and Frequency](#)

[What Type of Depression Do I Have?](#)

[Making Sense of My Symptoms – Self-CheckList](#)

[Exploring Your Own Experience](#)

[A Word of Caution – Extra Support](#)

[One Thing You Can Do to Continue Healing](#)

[Part II: A Journey into Healing with Mindfulness](#)

[Chapter 3: You Really Can Heal and Recover!](#)

[Healing and Recovering from Depression](#)

[Scientific Evidence for Using Mindfulness for Depression](#)

[Neuroplasticity – We Can Change Our Brain](#)

[Regaining Perspective](#)

[What Is Mindful Healing?](#)

Chapter 4: Understanding Mindfulness

[Developing the Willingness to Learn a New Way of Being](#)

[Defining Mindfulness in a Practical Way](#)

[Responding Rather than Reacting Habitually](#)

[Putting Mindfulness into Practice – The ABC technique](#)

[Mindfulness: Simple, But Not Easy](#)

[The Benefits of Being Patient and Tolerant](#)

Chapter 5: Exploring Our Mental and Emotional Landscape

[The Idea of Responsibility: Being Able to Respond](#)

[Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy](#)

[Using CBT Language: The Basics](#)

[Cultivating the Compassionate Observer](#)

[What Is It All About?](#)

Chapter 6: Understanding the Rhythms and Qualities of the Mind

[Mindlessness – Being Lost on Autopilot](#)

[Getting Back into the Captain's Chair](#)

[Decoding the Layers of Experience](#)

[Yesterday Is History, Tomorrow Is a Mystery, But Today Is a Gift](#)

[First and Second Arrow – Pain Is Inevitable, Suffering Is Optional](#)

[Thoughts Are Just Thoughts – They Are Not You](#)

Chapter 7: Reconnecting with the Heart of Self-Compassion

[Exploring the Nature of Self-Compassion](#)

[Exploring Compassion and Self-compassion](#)

[The Three Musketeers: Self-esteem, Self-confidence and Self-compassion](#)

[Working with Resistance and Difficult Emotions Mindfully](#)

[Trying a Self-Compassion Meditation](#)

Part III: Living Mindfully and Connecting with Happiness

Chapter 8: Five-Minute Mindfulness Practices

[Discovering Your Own Way](#)

[Things to Consider before Doing a Mindfulness Exercise](#)

[Three Types of Posture: Sitting, Lying and Standing](#)

[Five-Minute Breath Meditation](#)

[Five-Minute Mood Enhancer Meditation](#)

[Five-Minute Music Enjoyment Meditation](#)

Chapter 9: Discovering the Blessing within Depression

[Making Pearls: Gaining Strength from Your Depression](#)

[Moving beyond Depression Is Possible](#)

[Moving beyond Depression: The Four Pillars of Happiness](#)

[Understanding That the Power Is in the Now](#)

Chapter 10: Living Mindfully Every Day

[The Joy of Going against the Grain](#)

[Nine Mindful Attitudes: The Protectors of Happiness](#)

[Happiness Embraces Unhappiness](#)

[It's a Bad Day, Not a Bad Life](#)

Chapter 11: Taking the Next Step

[Remembering You Don't Need to Do It Alone](#)

[Considering a Mindfulness Course](#)

[Taking a Mindful Approach to Antidepressant Medication](#)

[Trying Out Natural Healing Methods](#)

[When Not to Use Mindfulness in Depression – Contraindications](#)

[When to Seek Emergency Help – A Note on Suicidal Thoughts](#)

Part IV: The Part of Tens

Chapter 12: Ten Tips for Preventing Relapse and Staying Well

[Take Time to Care for Yourself](#)

[Develop a Regular Mindfulness Practice](#)

[Have a Crisis Plan: Hope for the Best, Prepare for the Worst](#)

[Consider Community Involvement](#)

[List Your Triggers and Possible Ways to Manage Them](#)

[Do Some Mindful Exercise](#)

[Be Mindful of Your Thoughts](#)

[Support Yourself with Music and Creativity](#)

[Know and Respect Your Limits](#)

[Planning Your Day and Having a Routine](#)

Chapter 13: Ten Tips for Getting the Most Out of Mindfulness

[Once a Day Do an Activity Mindfully](#)

[Think and Reflect on Mindfulness as Often as You Can](#)

[Do the Practice – A Little Practice Is Better Than None](#)

[Get Used to Nurturing Yourself](#)

[Remind Yourself That You Have a Choice – You Can Be Mindless or Mindful](#)

[Go Slowly and Gently](#)

[Recognise Your Own Progress](#)

[Attend Mindfulness Practice Groups](#)

[Talk about and Share Mindfulness with Others Skillfully](#)

[Be Flexible](#)

About the Author

Cheat Sheet

Connect with Dummies

End User License Agreement

Introduction

This book is for you if you are interested in exploring how mindfulness can support you in your efforts to regain, as well as maintain, your sense of wellbeing and happiness.

I wrote the book drawing upon my clinical experience as someone who has professionally supported people with depression both as a mental health worker in a psychiatric hospital as well in private practice. More importantly, though, I wrote this book drawing forth on my personal journey of having not only suffered from depression but also having healed through it now living life of meaning and happiness.

When you are in the midst of the storm of depression, it is incredibly difficult to see the possibility of happiness. It is my intention in this book to share ideas and practical techniques that are not only scientifically proven to work but that will help you regain your ability to manage your condition more effectively. This in turn will hopefully help you reconnect with your own sense of happiness and wellbeing. Above all, I trust that this book will offer you a beacon of light no matter where in your journey of healing.

I share the following words of inspiration from a client of mine who joined our 8-Week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction course. She now works with autistic children and uses the mindfulness skills she learned to help others.

I had suffered with depression on and off for years. Anxiety was a feeling I fought daily. I have taken antidepressants and tried different therapies but nothing really worked for me. I attended a mindfulness seminar with a friend and although felt very uncomfortable at first there was something immediately that excited me, and I experienced a connection never felt before. I attended several classes and joined the 8-Week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction course. The tools and experience have totally changed my life, and now I love sharing this with others. Learning to notice your thoughts and acknowledging them rather than challenging or attaching is such a powerful tool. When faced with uncomfortable feelings, being able to believe and trust in yourself that by breathing into them you can reduce their intensity is very reassuring. It's also comforting to know that by focusing your mind on your physical body you can calm yourself. Three years on and mindfulness is a massive part of my life, and I'm so grateful for it finding me.

I invite you to take this journey with me as we explore what mindfulness is and how you can begin to embody it in your life.

About This Book

This book is for you whether you are suffering from depression yourself, caring for someone who has the condition or are a health professional wanting to know more about how mindfulness can support your clients recover from low mood and chronic unhappiness.

Scientific studies now show that you can use mindfulness to change the way your brain works. Regular mindfulness practice makes you smarter and wiser and so better able to deal with what life

throws at you. When you are depressed you can often feel like you have no control and no say in how and what you think and feel. With regular practice you can gain back the control and learn to live your life with more compassion and skill where your mind is your friend rather than your enemy.

Use this book in a way that works for you. You can read it chapter by chapter or dip into in and out of it as you like. It is important to remember that this book is simply an introduction to mindfulness and I hope that you will eventually find the inspiration to seek out a mindfulness teacher or join a mindfulness course to help you explore a daily mindfulness practice. Above all, don't put any pressure on yourself to remember any of the ideas covered in this book but rather do what comes naturally and easy for you.

Following are just some of the topics I explore in this book to help you understand what mindfulness is and how you can use it to support your own sense of wellbeing:

- ✓ The anatomy of depression as well as some of the common symptoms and types of depression
- ✓ How to begin to recover from depression mindfully and explore some of the barriers to recovery and how to work through them these
- ✓ The basic mechanics behind mindfulness as well as how the mind works from a mindfulness perspective
- ✓ Self-compassion and how to develop loving kindness towards yourself
- ✓ The blessing within depression and how you can find meaning amidst difficulty
- ✓ Nine mindful attitudes that will help you live a happy and meaningful life and prevent depression from coming back

Foolish Assumptions

I assume, or rather I trust, that you or someone you know or care for has some experience with depression. I also work on the understanding that you have reached out and are exploring ways to help yourself heal through depression mindfully. In other words, I trust that you feel ready to help yourself recover from depression and regain your sense of wellbeing. I understand that it is possible that you know nothing about mindfulness or that you might have some knowledge of the subject. It is also possible that you have already explored other approaches and want to deepen the way you work with your own mind and life using mindfulness.

I also assume that you are not currently clinically depressed, or that if you are, you have other psychological support in place to supplement your healing and recovery.

Note: If you are currently suffering from severe or clinical depression, contact your chosen health professional before trying any of the exercises in this book.

Icons Used in This Book

Like other *For Dummies* books, this one has icons in the margins to guide you through the information and help you zero in on what you want to know. The following paragraphs describe the

icons and what they mean.



This information is useful and worth keeping in mind when working with your experience of low mood and depression.



The text next to this icon is particularly useful information offering quick and effective ideas to support your learning about mindfulness.



I include some examples to help demonstrate and clarify different ideas and models that I present in this book.



This is an opportunity for you to try a practical exercise which will help you develop a greater sense of awareness leading to wellbeing.

Beyond the Book

This book is bursting with content, but you can go online and find even more. Check out the book's online Cheat Sheet at www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/managingdepressionwithmindfulness. And you can find a handy bonus article related to managing depression with mindfulness at www.dummies.com/extras/managingdepressionwithmindfulness.

Where to Go from Here

Although you can certainly get loads of guidance by reading from [Chapter 1](#) through to the end, I designed this book so that you can dip in and out as you like, reading bits that you find most useful at any given time. If you feel you need some quick and easy-to-implement tips on how to enhance your sense of wellbeing, go directly to [Chapters 12](#) and [13](#). If you feel you need to gain some motivation to help support you directly on your journey to healing mindfully, [Chapter 3](#) might be a good start. To help you locate relevant material easily elsewhere in the book, I use cross-references as well as a comprehensive index, so feel free to explore these tools too.

The biggest benefit of mindfulness comes when it becomes a daily way of life. It might also be useful to remember that you don't need to struggle alone learning it. It is best learned with the support of a teacher or coach. I hope that this book will support you to eventually reach out and connect with a person or mindfulness-based group for the purpose of learning, growing and healing.

Above all, see this book as an exploration with nothing to lose but everything to gain.

Understanding Depression and Befriending Your Life



For Dummies has great info on lots of different topics. Check out www.dummies.com to find out how you and learn more and do more with *For Dummies*.

In this part ...

- ✓ Discover how to befriend the black dog of depression and learn to turn off negative thoughts.
- ✓ Explore the major types of depression, as well as some possible causes.

Your Journey to Wellbeing

In This Chapter

- ▶ Getting to know your big black dog of depression
 - ▶ Knowing that you're not alone in your depression
 - ▶ Seeing the link between depression and anxiety
 - ▶ Understanding that recovery from depression has ups and downs
 - ▶ Finding inner peace through the practice of mindfulness
-

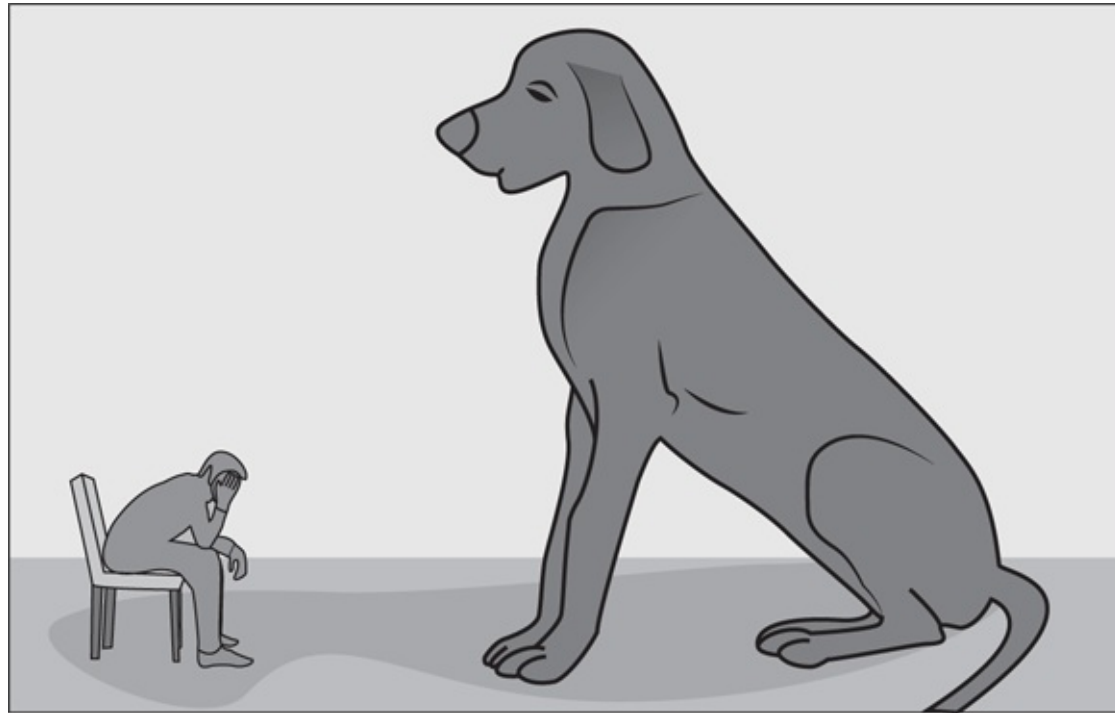
If you are reading this book, then it is very likely that either you or someone you know is affected by depression. I know from personal experience having lived with the condition myself that it can be very tough and that often it's difficult to get out of bed, to say nothing about reading a whole book. In my own experience, I have been where there was no hope and no guiding light at the end of the tunnel with very dark thoughts about my future constantly on my mind barking like hungry dogs that haven't been fed for days. You might or might not relate to this. I am writing this book both as someone who has first-hand experience living with depression as well as someone who has counseled many people affected with this condition both in private practice as well as within an inpatient psychiatric hospital setting. More importantly, I am writing this book as someone who recovered from the condition.

Above all, I am writing this book as a happy person, a truly happy person. I am not bragging about my happiness, not at all, but I like talking about wellbeing and happiness as this is the other side of the deep and wide river, the other shore, so to speak. This is where you too want to get to, don't you? The other side of the river where there is more light, more hope, more freedom to live your life as you want and desire. Recovery from chronic unhappiness has many stages and it's an up-and-down process, but I know that it is possible. This book offers a practical guide which will empower you to navigate the often confusing landscape of your own mind and give you plenty of tools for working with it in a way that can help you enhance your sense of mental and emotional wellbeing and happiness. I hope you will enjoy this journey with me.

Befriending the Black Dog of Depression

Having depression is in many ways like having a black dog. No offence to black dogs as they are lovely animals. However, you can use this as a metaphor for how difficult life can be when you are depressed.

This black dog of depression isn't just any black dog. It's a big and scary dog (shown in [Figure 1-1](#)), and having this dog around is a pain.



© John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Figure 1-1: Depression as a huge black dog.

This black dog of depression looks extremely sad. Whenever he shows up he can make you feel completely empty of any happiness. He makes you feel slow, tired and not wanting to do anything except sleep. He can make you feel old, useless and hopeless.

Everyone else seems to be enjoying life, but you are only limited to seeing the world through the black dog's dark sunglasses. Life looks dark and bleak. Things that you used to enjoy don't give you any pleasure anymore. This black dog of depression robs you of your concentration, and you seem to not only forget things but you don't remember what it feels like to be happy either.

Doing normal daily tasks seems impossible as you are dragging this heavy dog behind you. You know that you have this black dog always with you even though others might not see it. The thing is you are really afraid that others might find out. It is likely that you might feel a deep sense of shame, and so you try to hide it from others, afraid that others will judge you if they ever found out.

This can make you feel like you are false, like you are a fraud in some way. Having the black dog probably ruins your appetite, and you either don't feel like eating at all or you overeat to try and shut him up. It's possible that he wakes you up at night and barks all the negative thoughts viciously into your fragile mind, making you stay up at night.

Above all, the harder you try get rid of the black dog of depression the bigger he becomes. You try to run away, but he follows you. You try to self-medicate, but that doesn't always help either.

Below are the some of the ways the big black dog can make you feel. In other words, these are some of the symptoms of depression:

- ✓ Moving or speaking more slowly than usual
- ✓ Change in appetite or weight (usually decreased, but sometimes increased)
- ✓ Lack of energy and extreme tiredness

- ✓ Lack of interest in sex
- ✓ Feeling hopeless and helpless
- ✓ Continuous low mood or sadness
- ✓ Feeling guilt-ridden
- ✓ Difficulties in concentrating and making decisions
- ✓ Using excessive alcohol or drugs to help you cope
- ✓ Isolating yourself and staying at home for days on end
- ✓ Taking part in fewer social activities
- ✓ Losing a sense of connection with the people around you

Go to [Chapter 2](#) for the complete list of symptoms and possible causes of depression.



Things can get better, and you can recover from depression. The fact that you are reading this book means that your journey to healing has already begun. Mindfulness can help you not only make sense of this black dog of depression, but also give you ways to get your life back by helping you to manage your thoughts and emotions more effectively.

You Are Not Alone – One in Four Have Depression

When you're depressed you may feel like you are the only one who has the problem and that everyone else is happy and normal. This kind of feeling, although very normal, can cause you to feel extremely isolated and causes you to suffer in silence. The truth is that many people who look happy are in fact also depressed and chronically unhappy. There are more of us than you might think.



Looking at it this way can sometimes help you feel a little bit better about your situation, knowing that you are not alone in with your problem.

The World Health Organization predicts that more people will be affected by depression than any other health problem by the year 2030. It is no surprise then that about one in four people suffers from some kind of mental health difficulty such as depression.

You might find it interesting that many famous people have suffered from depression as well. This just shows that depression is more common than you might think. Below are a few names of famous people who suffered from depression at one point in their lives. You might recognise some of them:

- ✓ Stephen John Fry, English actor, presenter, and activist
- ✓ Charles Dickens, British writer

- ✓ Eric Clapton, English musician
- ✓ Eminem, American rapper
- ✓ Bob Dylan, American singer-songwriter, poet and artist
- ✓ Ruby Wax, American comedienne
- ✓ Robbie Williams, British pop singer
- ✓ Sir Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister
- ✓ J.K. Rowling, British writer



You might think that you are less of a person or in some way bad because you are depressed. This is not true! Depression is an ‘equal opportunity condition’ and affects all classes of people. Anyone can develop depression. Practising mindfulness regularly can not only prevent depression, but it can also help to treat it. So there is hope you can recover and, with time, regain your sense of wellbeing and happiness.

The biggest challenge with depression is to reach out for support. Research shows that people who ask for help recover much faster than those who don’t. It can be hard to reach out, but you can do so safely by speaking to your doctor, a trusted friend or a counselor.

Anxiety and Depression – Always on the Same Bus

According to the UK Mental Health Foundation, around half of those people who experience depression will also experience anxiety. This means that to some extent depression and anxiety go together. They are like two best friends always on the same bus.

Anxiety and depression are not the same, but they often occur together. People with depression often experience anxiety, and people with anxiety often become depressed.

For many people having the two conditions can be a temporary situation. For example, you can experience

- ✓ A temporary bout of depression after a severely stressful or anxiety-provoking event
- ✓ Temporary anxiety following an episode of depression

However, some people suffer with both of these difficulties at the same time for most of the time.

The link between anxiety and depression is so strong that most antidepressants are used to treat both anxiety and depression at the same time. This is partly because research suggests that the same neurotransmitters may also play a role in causing both anxiety and depression.

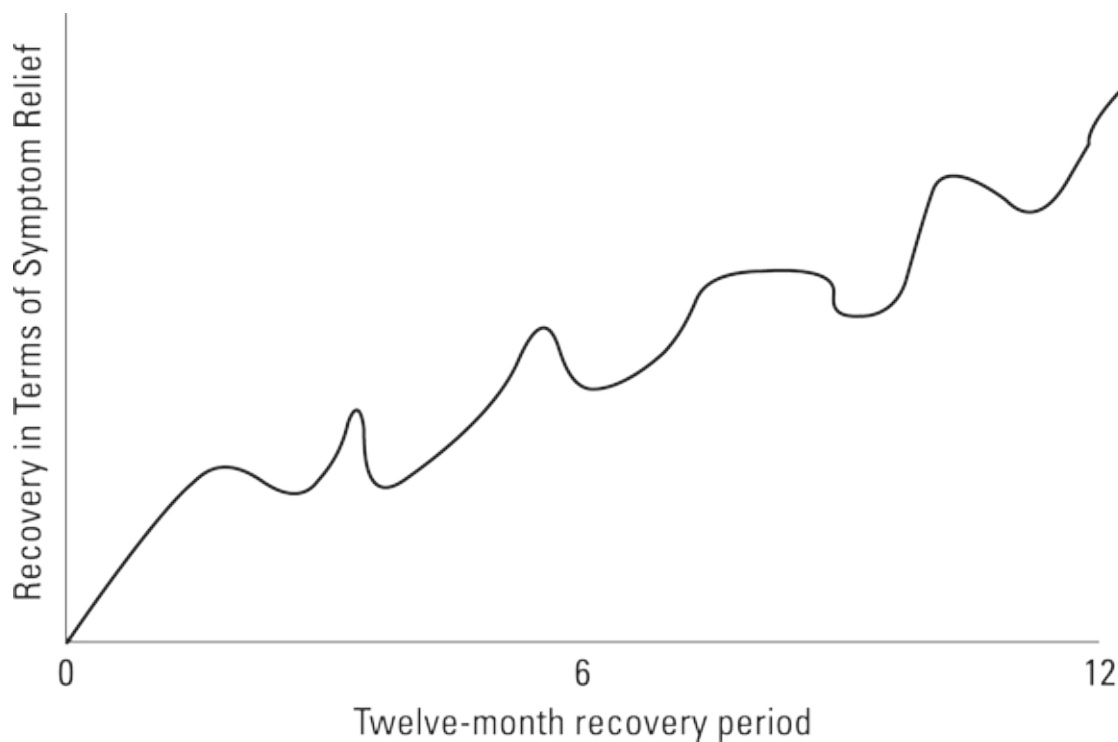


Practicing mindfulness helps with both calming the mind as well as helping you to balance

your mood. Research shows that mindfulness practices can significantly reduce anxiety and depression. Not only that but Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) is significantly more effective than antidepressants alone in preventing relapse from depression.

Healing Is Possible – But It Takes Time

With the right support recovery from depression is possible. It is useful to remember that any healing through depression takes time and is often met with an up-and-down process of lows, highs, stable periods, lows again, then more stable times leading to another improvement and feeling better (see [Figure 1-2](#)).



© John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Figure 1-2: Recovery is a bumpy journey.



As much as we may want it to, wellbeing often does not happen overnight. It is normal to want to speed things up or to worry that you will never feel better. The thing to remember is that with time and the right support your symptoms will improve, and you will feel better.

Very often we do not notice any improvement, mainly because we can't see how far up the line of recovery we actually travelled. It's human nature not to notice positive changes. Also it is possible that each time we feel low on our journey to recovery we mistake it for failure rather than an opportunity to reflect and learn from the experience.



As hard as it can be sometimes, try to remind yourself that Rome wasn't built in one day. It has taken a long time for your condition to materialise, and it might take some time for you to learn mindfulness skills that will help you manage your mood more effectively and feel better. Seeing things this way can help encourage the feeling of hope.

[Chapter 3](#) explores some of the difficulties that you are likely to encounter when recovering from depression and offers ideas how you can begin to enhance your sense of wellbeing.

Finding Inner Peace through Mindfulness

In many ways you can say that mindfulness is a state of mind as well as a state of being. In other words, mindfulness is how you truly relate to your very own life and existence. Mindfulness meditation originates within the Buddhist reflective tradition and is translated as awareness. Awareness of your inner and outer life. In other words, it's the awareness of what happens.

- ✓ Internally, in terms of your thoughts, feelings, sensations, and memories
- ✓ Externally, such as the things you see, hear, smell, taste, touch, or anything that you come into contact with in the outside environment.



It is useful to know right from the start that any explanation of mindfulness only points you to the door of actually experiencing it. You cannot think yourself into being mindful. You can only experience it by going through a process of doing an actual mindfulness exercise.

Using mindfulness to turn off from negative thoughts

Another way of looking at mindfulness is using the example of when you are lost in worry or when you are lost in some painful emotion. You probably have experienced this at one point or another in your life.

You wake up in the morning and just know that it's not going to be a good day, right? Do you know this feeling? I bet you do! Your mind is racing with fearful thoughts, your body feels tight and sore with painful sensations and you feel anxious, sad and somewhat irritable.

What happens then is that you may end up trying to think yourself out of the situation and so you go round in circles hoping to resolve the problem. However, the worry or struggle simply persists and you feel worse for it.

This kind of compulsive thinking is called *negative rumination* or *brooding* or *negative self-talk*. Research into depression shows that negative rumination is both a symptom of depression as well as the very thing that contributes to making it worse.

So what this means is that you have to find a way to reduce this obsessive negative self-talk. By doing so you can then enhance your chances of not only reducing depression but also enhancing your sense of wellbeing, happiness and inner peace.

Following are just a few examples of negative self-talk or rumination thoughts (we all have our personal ones):

- ✓ I am useless and hopeless.
- ✓ I will never get better.
- ✓ I am stupid and will never find happiness.

✓ The man in the bank looked at me funny because he knows that I am worthless.

So how does mindfulness come into play? How can you begin to find inner peace and freedom from worry, stress and depression through the practice of mindfulness?



Note here that I said ‘through the practice’ not through the thinking about mindfulness.

On a most basic level mindfulness helps you to step away from this negative rumination and shift your focus and attention to the five physical senses.



In order to find inner peace, you have to be willing to drop the thinking and the struggle and experiment with this technique. In other words, mindfulness helps you to return your attention to the body where you can experience more stability and balance.

Most of us in the modern society are stuck and lost in our heads, constantly analyzing and planning or going through the past dwelling on things. People with depression dwell more on the past rather than frantically planning for the future. Any future planning is done in a negative defeatist way, thinking and feeling that your future might be hopeless and pointless.

Mindfulness can help you bring more balance to this obsessive quality and help you live more in the present, where the real power and happiness can be found.

Why is this so? Why is it that you can begin to find greater inner peace by being more aware of your body and five physical senses? One reason is that the body is more solid and easier to anchor your attention on. There is a science behind this which is explained in [Chapter 4](#).

Trying out a mindfulness exercise



To demonstrate this idea of returning your attention to the body, try the following mindfulness eating exercise and simply notice what you experience:

- 1. Get yourself an orange or a mandarin and sit quietly on a chair.**
- 2. Take some time to settle down and take a few deep breaths and allow for things to calm down.**
- 3. Take the fruit in front of you and look at it.**

Examine its shape, the colours, its smell and so on. Simply allow your mind to focus on the fruit in front of you.

- 4. Slowly begin to peel the fruit.**

Piece by piece, notice what you sense in your fingers. You might at this time also be aware of smell which might also evoke certain feelings, most probably pleasant, but whatever they are simply notice and register them without preference.

Continue with the peeling of the fruit very slowly.

5. **Once you have peeled it completely, take a piece and put it near your mouth.**

Notice the effect of that. Do you sense your stomach beginning to prepare for digestion? Do you feel saliva coming down in your mouth? What else can you sense and feel?

6. **Slowly start eating the fruit.**

Really slow down the eating and take time to actually taste the fruit itself. What do you feel? What is the taste like? Is it sweet or sour? Do you like or dislike the taste? Do you want to rush through it, or can you remind yourself to do it slowly and mindfully?

7. **Now simply allow your eyes to close for just a moment and stay with all the sensations – the smell, the taste, the sensation of touch and whatever else you can experience.**

Notice your mood and thoughts as well.

Now take a moment to reflect on what you have experienced. How was this for you? Did you feel different after the exercise? If so, what was different? Where was your mind during the exercise? Was it more in the five physical senses, or was it more in thought?



Mindfulness is a practice, and just like anything new that you learn it takes time. With regular practice you can begin to live less in your head and more in your body. By being more in your body you can have the freedom to navigate through life in a more skillful and effective way.

Understanding the Anatomy of Depression

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding what depression means to you
- ▶ Getting to know your symptoms
- ▶ Getting the right support for your situation

As someone who has suffered with and healed through depression using mindfulness, I know how useful it is to have at least some understanding of the condition.

Understanding your condition a little bit better greatly supports you in your efforts to get well and stay well. I believe that the more informed we are about what is happening to us the more empowered we can be to do something about it, rather than suffer in isolation and silence.

Having supported people with depression using mindfulness-based interventions, both in private practice and within a psychiatric hospital setting, I know that the best way to heal through this condition is to apply the attitude of collaboration. This means that you and I work together to help you get better. In other words we both use our efforts to support you in developing a greater capacity for self-management, healing and recovery.

This chapter provides helpful information on depression and invites you to explore what depression means to you. I will look at the different types of depression and possible causes of the condition as well as providing a quick and practical symptom checklist to help you make sense of your own unique situation. I trust that you will find this chapter of benefit on your journey to greater emotional wellbeing.

Understanding Depression – A Balanced View

So what is depression? Well, the truth is that there isn't really a universally accepted definition of depression, and no one knows for certain what exactly causes it either. Depression is more defined according to signs and symptoms and how severe they are.

So if you are experiencing certain symptoms, one of them being persistent low mood, then you might be said to be experiencing depression.



It depends on whom you ask about the condition, their training and what model they use to define and inform them about depression.



If you go to your medical doctor, he or she might tell you that depression is a brain

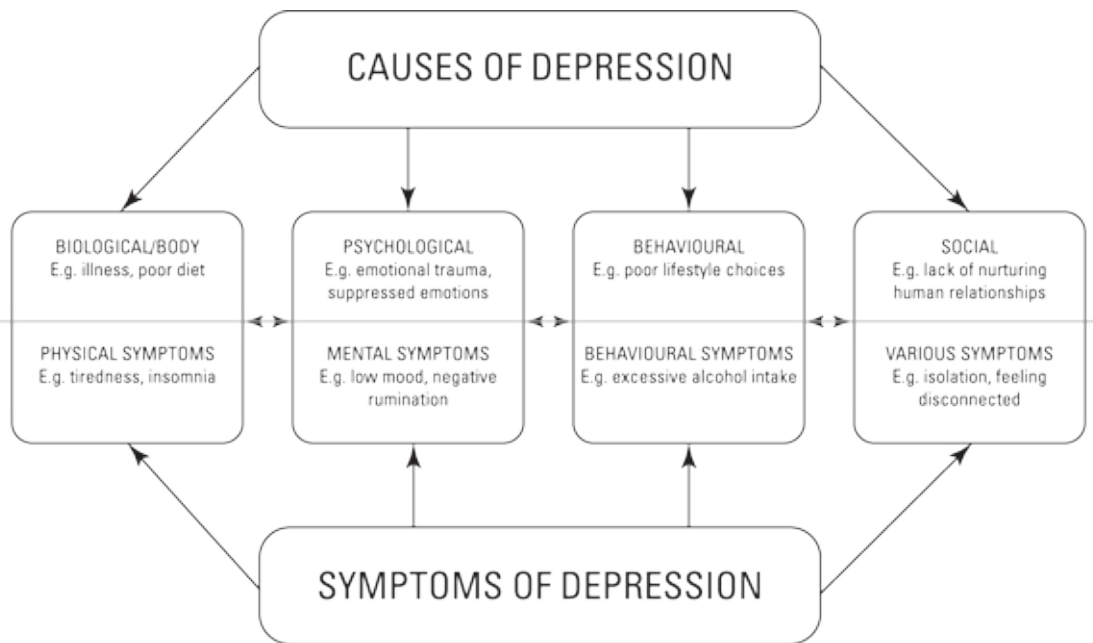
condition or illness which happens because your brain is not making certain chemicals called neurotransmitters. If you ask the same question of a psychologist, he or she might give you a completely different answer, most probably that depression is connected to how you think and process and express your emotions.

Some new research suggests that the most helpful way of looking at depression is through a more balanced and integrated model which takes into account the whole person and not just focusing on one aspect of the human expression.

We can say that depression has causes and symptoms which are usually experienced in combination on the following levels, namely:

- ✔ **Biological** or physically such as our bodies
- ✔ **Psychological** or in our minds such as our thoughts and feelings
- ✔ **Environment** such as our living conditions
- ✔ **Behavioural** or our lifestyle and the way we act and behave
- ✔ **Social**, our in our human relationships and connection to others

In other words, depression can be caused by different factors and there is a usually a connecting link between them, as shown in [Figure 2-1](#).



© John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Figure 2-1: Causes and symptoms diagram.



Mindfulness helps you to be more in tune with your life and focuses on helping you to manage your thoughts, emotions and behaviour more effectively. It deals more with psychological and behavioural aspects of depression such as helping you to feel more grounded and so reducing the excessive unhelpful thinking called *negative rumination*, in this way empowering you to make better choices. You can find more about this in [Chapter 5](#).

In other words, this book will help you to learn techniques that will help you reduce negative

rumination and take achievable steps towards managing and healing through your condition more effectively.

Mindfulness helps you to be more aware of what other areas of your life might need to be examined. These might include:

- ✓ **Your environment, such as your living conditions.** For example, living in a noisy environment with lots of pollution can contribute to or worsen your condition.
- ✓ **What you eat, such as your daily diet.** For example, eating processed food excessively can lead to a depletion of nutrients necessary for proper brain function, which can contribute to depression and low mood.
- ✓ **The absence of good, supportive, nurturing human relationships.** For example, not having friends or family who can support you in life can also contribute to loneliness, low mood and even depression.

Recent research suggests that this kind of recovery based approach and integrative method of healing is more successful in helping you get and stay well as opposed to only using antidepressant medication.

How Bad Is It? Severity, Intensity and Frequency

Depression is not just having the occasional sadness that you can snap out of. There is a big difference between the occasional low mood or sadness and the persistent feeling of hopelessness and inability to function. You can say that sadness is a natural response to change and certain situations in life, such as the loss of a loved one, for example.

Depression, on the other hand, has symptoms which can be more persistent and potentially debilitating and is classified according to:

- ✓ How severe your symptoms are or to what degree they interfere with your life
- ✓ Their intensity or how strong they are
- ✓ Their frequency or how often they occur in your life

The condition of depression is generally divided into mild, moderate and severe. You might relate to the below examples.

You can cope but are not happy: Mild depression

In mild depression you might be able to get on with your daily life and most of the demands placed on it, but you are just not feeling right and you are struggling. Your energy might be low, accompanied by anxiety, you might be feeling low in mood for no apparent reason and you are just not enjoying life as much as you would like. You are, however, able to deal with this in some way using your own coping strategies.



Mindfulness can help you discover ways to work with your thoughts, mood and behaviour

in a way that enhances your ability to self-manage your condition.

Struggling to function: Moderate depression

If your depression is moderate then you might be feeling like your ability to cope with daily tasks is strongly affected. Doing the most simple things such as going to work is very difficult. Your sleep might be badly affected and you might feel like your mind is just going in circles thinking negative thoughts which makes all things worse. Moderate depression is similar to the mild form but much worse.



Mindfulness can still help you in this situation but it is helpful if you seek professional help such as a counsellor or a trained mindfulness professional.

I can't function: Severe depression

In severe or clinical depression – also called *major depression* – you might feel like you just cannot cope at all and go on. You have no energy to eat or do the most basic things. Working might be impossible and you might even have persistent thoughts or impulses about ending your life. This form of depression might feel like a total collapse of your mind and body and requires medical attention.



Mindfulness should only be used under clinical supervision in this kind of depression as it can potentially make your condition worse. You have much greater chances of recovery if you see your chosen health professional for support.

What Type of Depression Do I Have?

There are many forms and types of depression, each with commonly shared symptoms as well as symptoms that are unique to the type of depression.



Try to remember that most of the time you don't know that you are depressed and that it is okay if you feel confused as to what is actually going on. By clarifying your situation you can begin to make greater sense of your condition.

Below are some of the main types of depression and some possible causes behind them. You might relate at least to some of the examples.

Too much stress – Depression due to chronic stress

Evidence is increasing that *chronic stress* (stress which goes on for a long time) can lead to depression. As humans, we can adapt and meet the challenges placed upon us, but there comes a point where we can no longer cope with excessive stress, causing a kind of collapse which can lead to low mood and possible depression.

Food for the brain – Low mood due to nutritional deficiencies

- [*Underground: Tales of Hacking, Madness, and Obsession on the Electronic Frontier pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub*](#)
- [Luminary \(Anomaly Trilogy, Book 2\) for free](#)
- [The Fountainhead pdf](#)
- [**read online Rugby Union and Globalization: An Odd-Shaped World \(Global Culture and Sport\) for free**](#)

- <http://tuscalaural.com/library/If-You-Only-Knew.pdf>
- <http://nautickim.es/books/Eisenhower-in-War-and-Peace.pdf>
- <http://toko-gumilar.com/books/Linear-Algebra-with-Applications.pdf>
- <http://deltaphenomics.nl/?library/Negra-melod--a-de-blues.pdf>