

A NEW HARBINGER SELF-HELP WORKBOOK

The
Cognitive
Behavioral
Workbook
for
Depression

SECOND EDITION

A STEP-BY-STEP PROGRAM

- Examine the causes & processes of your depression
- Personalize your plan to insulate yourself from depression
 - Identify & overcome depressive thoughts & beliefs
- Manage situations & emotions that can trigger depression
- Make important lifestyle changes that can make you less prone to depression

WILLIAM J. KNAUS, EdD

Foreword by ALBERT ELLIS, PhD

“For anyone in the prison of depression, this workbook might help you get out. It’s both scholarly and practical, and leaves no stone unturned in laying out self-help strategies for helping deal with this widespread problem.”

—Frank Farley, PhD, L. H. Carnell Professor at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA, and former president of the American Psychological Association

“William Knaus has been a leading practitioner and teacher of cognitive behavior therapy for over four decades. In *The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression*, he draws from his vast store of experience to provide people who struggle with depression practical, usable strategies they can put to immediate use to not only feel better, but to get better. Written in an engaging, accessible manner, the book is chock full of powerful tools that, when compiled into a personal action plan, can both defeat depression and build a happy, productive life. I think this is a substantial book anyone, not just the depressive, will find valuable, and I highly endorse it for both the lay public and the clinical community alike. I know that I will keep it handy for my own personal reference and repeatedly encourage my clients to purchase it.”

—Russell Grieger, PhD, clinical psychologist in private practice, organizational consultant, and adjunct professor at The University of Virginia

“I have waited for this book my entire career! With compassion, flexibility, and scientifically sound earnestness, Knaus helps the depressed reader navigate the wide variety of cognitive behavioral treatments to choose the package that is right for him or her. Second editions often contain few, if any, theoretical concepts and clinical exercises that are significantly different from those in the first edition. Not so with this volume! It is full of fresh ideas and therapeutic assignments that help the motivated depressed individual finally crawl out of self-defeating misery.”

—Barry Lubetkin, PhD, ABPP, founder and director of the Institute for Behavior Therapy in New York, NY

“There are many self-help books on the market, but many are somewhere between vague and incomprehensible. Not this one. Knaus is a true teacher in the mold of Socrates, an instructor who takes you by the hand and leads you step-by-step to a successful outcome. Depression has become virtually viral during the last few years, and this is a book that promises to relieve the distress and delivers on its promise. And you don’t need an advanced degree in psychology to understand the Knaus message. Anyone who can follow the plans to build a model airplane or follow recipe directions can use this book to conquer depression. It is so readable that you’ll think Knaus is standing beside you. Without question, he is the country’s leading expert on the cognitive-behavioral approach.”

—Richard C. Sprinthall, PhD, professor emeritus at American International College and licensed clinical psychologist

~~“Occasionally a book on depression comes around that is different from the usual dull books on this topic. This is one of those outstanding books. Between its covers, you’ll discover a helpful and balanced approach. The ideas can quickly grab your attention, peak your interest, and titillate your sense of humor. I finished this book smiling, feeling lighter, and being better able to help those suffering from depression.”~~

—Rev. Thomas A. Downes, PhD, master chaplain at the Academy of Certified Chaplains, REBT supervisor, and cofounder of the Order of Universal Interfaith

“Depression impacts the lives of millions; as many as twenty percent of the world population is affected over a lifetime. A leading cause of disability, depression is a highly serious but largely untreated condition. Knaus presents an up-to-date, evidence-based cognitive behavioral approach that practically anyone can use to defeat and prevent depression. This is probably the best psychological self-help manual on the subject. Besides being immensely beneficial to anyone who reads it, I predict this work will help reduce a lot of suffering in this world. Outstanding!”

—Sanjay Singh, MD, DNB, PhD, rational emotive education (REE) representative in India

“Knaus has admirably culled the best treatments for depression from the field of cognitive behavioral therapy and integrated them into a highly readable and useful program of self-help. Although the seminal work of Albert Ellis informs the approach, many other contributions to the understanding of depression are seamlessly included. Everyone who wants to know more about clinical depression and its proven treatments can benefit from this comprehensive account.”

—Richard L. Wessler, PhD, emeritus professor of psychology in New York, NY, and developer of cognitive appraisal therapy

“Knaus has written much more than a workbook. This is an uncommonly excellent guide for students, mental health practitioners, and those suffering from depression. He takes complex cognitive behavioral theory and makes it readily understandable. Moreover, by copious use of charts, diagrams, graphics, and questionnaires, he shows how this treatment for depression can be readily applied. This workbook is a self-help pearl as well as a psychotherapeutic gem.”

—V. Rev. Fr. George Morelli, PhD, licensed clinical psychologist, marriage and family therapist, and chairman of the department of chaplain and pastoral counseling of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

“In this second edition of *The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression*, Knaus eloquently and compassionately converts a three-pronged truth about depression—that it is a time-limited state of mind that can be remedied through activity—into a set of incredibly powerful cognitive behavioral tools for defeating depression. Helping you to identify and refute irrational thoughts that may be keeping you depressed, Knaus gently guides you to

take action. Read this book, do the exercises, and don't just find out how to conquer your depression—actually do it!

—Elliot D. Cohen, PhD, author of *The Dutiful Worrier*

“Knaus has again produced a handbook that is filled with useful ideas and practical exercises to help people overcome a wide variety of challenges. He takes a simple approach with explanations and examples that give people confidence that they can get started without great difficulty. The handbook includes lots of ways to track progress and document the results of exercises, and employs a graduated approach by beginning with simple, less challenging exercises and progressively building to much more challenging issues. Knaus' book should prove very helpful to anyone wanting to improve their handling of many of life's challenges.”

—James W. Thompson, PhD, business psychologist

“Knaus's *The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression* provides depressed individuals with all the psychological 'workouts' that are needed to pull them out of that state. A great resource for professionals, as well.”

—Edward J. Garcia, MA, CSW

“'Simplify and clarify' seems to be the credo of Knaus. He has distilled his own experience and a thorough perusal of the germane literature into an accessible and succinct series of explanations and exercises that will make profound change in thinking seem facile and, if not effortless, then at least possible.”

—Joseph Gerstein, MD, FACP, founding president of SMART Recovery Self-Help Network and assistant clinical professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School (retired)

“Whether you are solving the problem of depression through medication, professional therapy, or doing it yourself, this book will be of tremendous help. *The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression* is chock-full of the ready-to-use strategies you will need to help you feel good again.”

—Jon Carlson, PsyD, EdD, Distinguished Professor at Governors State University

“This is an excellent second edition of Knaus's workbook for overcoming depression. It contains a clear explanation of the complete range of cognitive behavior therapy techniques for managing depressive episodes and preventing relapse. It includes plans and worksheets one can readily use to keep you on track. I recommend it without reservation.”

—Anthony Kidman, AM, PhD, clinical psychologist and director of the health psychology unit of the University of Technology, Sydney

“Knaus is one of the world’s leading authorities on depression. The second edition of *The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression* will be an invaluable tool for the understanding, treatment, and elimination of this complex emotion. If you, a family member, or a friend suffers from depression, you need look no further. The knowledge contained in this workbook can guide you out of a debilitating haze that often leads to a chronic dissatisfaction in life. I cannot recommend it more highly.”

—Vincent E. Parr, PhD, clinical psychologist at the Institute for Advanced Study
MRL

“One of the best, most highly readable manuals on overcoming depression I’ve ever seen. It provides explicit methods for identifying and countering the negative thought patterns that underlie depression—but that is just a start. This workbook details a compendium of the best of the empirically proven techniques for mastering depression’s major accompaniments, including self-blame, perfectionism, worthlessness, anxiety, and low frustration tolerance. Knaus then guides readers to set goals and strategies for achieving them in order to move from being enervated to being energized. Most strikingly, this book’s self-help exercises don’t pull the reader into further frustration; they are clear and doable.”

—Janet L. Wolfe, PhD, former executive director of the Albert Ellis Institute and
staff psychologist for over thirty-five years

Praise for the First Edition

“Here is a great source for anyone interested in learning the causes, consequences, and cures of depression. The book is a great resource for practitioners seeking effective and efficient ways to assist clients in working their way out of depressive states. It’s an easy read, both informative and well-organized.”

—Joseph R. Ferrari, PhD, professor of psychology at DePaul University and editor of the *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community*

“How to conquer depression with self-education is Knaus’s gift to readers in his new book, *The Cognitive Behavior Workbook for Depression*. Drawing on the wisdom of depression experts as well as his own innovative PURRRRS & Depression Inventory, Knaus shows how to reduce the depth and shorten the duration of most depression. He teaches the reader how to quickly identify and overcome the main components of his or her individual depression. Self-disclosure and case examples offer a realistic perspective and encouragement to anyone struggling with depression’s demons. Knaus offers us here a most hopeful book on depression!”

—Deborah Steinberg, MSW, private practitioner and coauthor of *How to Stick to a Diet*

“*The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression* is the best bet and the best book I’ve seen for tackling one’s depression. It admirably blends a wealth of research and well-chosen examples into step-by-step procedures for understanding and undermining one’s misery. It is fun to read, easy to follow, and full of optimism.”

—Emmett Velten, PhD, clinical psychologist, board of trustees member of the Albert Ellis Institute of New York, and founding member of the self-help recovery system that became SMART Recovery®

“I am very impressed with Knaus’s focus on breaking out of the procrastination and debilitating inertia that usually accompanies depression. His expertise on procrastination sets his book apart as a resource that can really make a difference to those seeking to reduce their depressive thoughts and feelings. If you’re struggling with depression and this book is in your hands, I encourage you to follow Knaus’ advice and ‘do it now!’ The tools and strategies in this book will certainly help you better understand yourself and move out of the misery of depression.”

—Timothy A. Pychyl, PhD, associate professor of psychology at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, and director of the Procrastination Research Group

Dear reader,

The print edition of *The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression, Second Edition* comes with many worksheets throughout the book.

In order to maintain the usability of the original workbook, worksheets are available for you to download and print in pdf format. Please visit:

www.nhpubs.com/23802

You also may find that you can complete the exercises satisfactorily in a notebook or by using the comment function on your ebook-reading device.

Thank you,

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The
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A STEP-BY-STEP PROGRAM

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Publisher's Note

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to the memory of Albert Ellis, PhD, the founder of rational emotive behavior therapy, who died in his ninety-third year. Throughout his career, he showed an amazing clarity of thought and continued to be productive and to contribute until the last month of his life. To the amazement of his physicians, he left this world with a rational acceptance of his mortality. He lived what he taught others to do. Al's thoughts live on and have great relevance today, as they will continue to have in the future.

Starting in the mid-1950s, Ellis pioneered a revolution in the field of psychotherapy when he boldly asserted that people feel the way that they think. By this he meant that evocative events, such as a job loss or a depressive change in biochemistry, are the tip of the iceberg. Because most of these events filter through our belief systems, the way we define, interpret, and judge activating situations stimulates what we feel and guides what we do.

Our beliefs, attitudes, and related cognitive processes are the deep base of an iceberg that is much more massive than what is seen at its tip.

Some environmental, psychological, social, and biochemical events can activate self-harming thoughts and beliefs. Ellis saw that by recognizing, examining, and purging these harmful, irrational beliefs and other forms of unrealistic thinking, our surplus suffering and misery could go the way of the dinosaur. Over the past fifty years, a continuing line of research has demonstrated the validity of this position.

Albert Ellis brilliantly helped change the psychotherapeutic landscape by tirelessly working for over sixty years, often for over fifteen to eighteen hours a day, directly helping thousands through his counseling and millions more through his books and the network of counselors and psychotherapists that he helped train. The rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) system he pioneered inspired the evolution of numerous complementary systems, such as psychiatrist Aaron Beck's evidence-based cognitive therapy and the generic and popular cognitive behavioral therapy approach. REBT is the bedrock system for this area.

In honor of his magnificent achievements and his enormous, tireless contributions to the emotional health and welfare of others, I dedicate this book to my longtime friend and colleague Albert Ellis.

Contents

Foreword

Acknowledgments

INTRODUCTION

PART 1: BASIC TECHNIQUES TO DEFEAT DEPRESSION

- 1. DEPRESSION IS NOT YOUR LIFE**
- 2. YOUR DEPRESSION TEST AND ACTION GUIDE**
- 3. A MASTER PLAN TO DEFEAT DEPRESSION**
- 4. HOW TO MAKE CHANGES THAT STICK**
- 5. BREAK A PROCRASTINATION-DEPRESSION CONNECTION**

PART 2: RECOGNIZING AND DEFEATING DEPRESSIVE THINKING

- 6. RECOGNIZING DEPRESSIVE THINKING**
- 7. CONFRONTING DEPRESSIVE THINKING**
- 8. ALBERT ELLIS'S ABCDE METHOD**
- 9. ENDING WORTHLESSNESS THINKING**
- 10. DEFEATING HELPLESSNESS THINKING**
- 11. OVERCOMING HOPELESSNESS THINKING**
- 12. RESTRAINING BLAME**

PART 3: BUILDING EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

- 13. COPING WITH DEPRESSIVE SENSATIONS**
- 14. ATTENDING TO YOUR ANXIETIES**
- 15. CONFRONTING NEGATIVE EMOTIONS**
- 16. BUILDING TOLERANCE FOR FRUSTRATION**

PART 4: SPECIAL STRATEGIES TO ANCHOR POSITIVE CHANGES

- 17. ACTIVITY SCHEDULING TO DEFEAT DEPRESSION**
- 18. BEHAVIORAL METHODS TO FEEL GOOD AGAIN**
- 19. AVOIDING THE PITFALLS OF PERFECTIONISM**
- 20. MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS**
- 21. A MULTIMODAL APPROACH TO DEFEAT DEPRESSION**
- 22. YOUR RELAPSE PREVENTION PROGRAM**

References

Foreword

Dr. Bill Knaus's *The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression* is not exactly a wonderful book, because, as Alfred Korzybski showed in *Science and Sanity*, to say it is wonderful is overgeneralize and to imply that it is 100 percent filled with wonderful things. Inevitably, this book has omissions as do all books on depression, including outstanding ones like those of Aaron Beck, David Burns, and my own *Guide to Rational Living*. Be that as it may, *The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression* is wonderfully thorough and, if consistently followed, is exceptionally helpful.

Bill Knaus, whom I helped train in rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) in the late 1960s, used REBT particularly well in dealing with human problems and then became an authority on overcoming procrastination. Our 1977 book by that title is still a best seller, as are other books of Bill's.

Not content with helping his readers with their fears of failure and low frustration tolerances, Bill decided to tackle the extremely prevalent and serious problem of depression. He has done so with vengeance. He has thoroughly investigated and therapeutically dealt with its many related issues: hopelessness, blame, perfectionism, and emotional stresses. He shows readers how to deal with the most important aspects of depression, and he has covered it beautifully.

In his excellent chapters, Bill Knaus has researched and cited scores of studies on depression and shown how these findings can be used by readers who are in various depressed states. In many of his chapters, he emphasizes the use of the well-known ABCs of REBT. He shows how to look for and apply the ABCDE technique to depressive thoughts, feelings, and actions. *A* stands for the activating event, such as an imperfect performance. *B* stands for your rational beliefs ("I acted stupidly, and I prefer to do better next time") and your irrational beliefs ("I should have done better, and I am a stupid person"). *C* stands for your emotional and behavioral consequences. This includes healthful feelings, such as regret, and the emotional results of unhealthy thinking, such as self-downing. *D* stands for disputing your irrational beliefs by questioning them and taking problem-solving action ("Where is it written that I absolutely must behave flawlessly?"). *E* stands for an effective new philosophy (you may be dissatisfied with certain performances and accept yourself despite them).

Bill Knaus also shows you how to change your basic self-defeating, depressive philosophies to help achieve the REBT choice of unconditional self-acceptance, unconditional acceptance of others, and unconditional life acceptance. Then you will rarely depress yourself about anything!

Simple, isn't it? Yes, but as Bill Knaus shows, it takes much work and practice: thinking, feeling, and behavioral homework. Apply his many methods and strategies to your depressiveness. Don't wait. Get going.

—ALBERT ELLIS, 2006

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I'd like to acknowledge the following people who contributed tips and ideas for this book: Edward Garcia, MA, Atlanta; Dr. Nancy Knaus, Spofford, New Hampshire; Dr. Dom DiMattia, Goshen, Connecticut; Dr. Diana Richman, New York City; Dr. Robert Heller, Boca Raton, Florida; Dr. Robert Moore, Clearwater, Florida; Dr. Arnold Lazarus, Princeton, New Jersey; Dr. Russell Grieger, Charlottesville, Virginia; Dr. George Morelli, San Diego, California; Dr. James Byrne, Hebden Bridge and Halifax, England; Dr. Nando Pelusi, New York City; Dr. Clifford Lazarus, Skillman, New Jersey; Dr. Jack Shannon, Matawan, New Jersey; Dr. Judith Beck, Philadelphia; Dr. Barry Lubetkin, New York City; Dr. John Hudesman, New York City; Dr. Irwin Altrows, Kingston, Ontario; Dr. Robert Zettle, Wichita, Kansas; Dr. Bruce McEwen, New York City; Dr. Nosheen K. Rahman, Lahore, Pakistan; William J. Knaus II, MD, Dallas, Texas; and Diana Cleary and Dale Jarvis, who worked with me to create original jointly written poetry for this book.

Introduction

Depression is nothing to mess with. If serious enough, depression can have a devastating effect on your relationships, work, health, and the general quality of your life. The good news is that depression is not forever. You can act now to stop feeling depressed and to avert future episodes.

If you begin this book not knowing what to do to defeat your depression, you are like many others. Depression has baffled people for thousands of years. But there are many tried-and-true ways, as well as new innovations, for defeating this ancient nemesis.

Activity is a classic psychological remedy for depression. This workbook offers a crash course on depression with dozens of activities to do better, get better, and feel better, using a wide range of activity remedies, from changing depressive thinking habits to normalizing your daily routine. You'll discover how to manage relationships, get your biology into balance, take tested steps to changing and avoid procrastinating. You'll learn many ways to address this psychosocial biological process we call depression.

Look through the table of contents. Flip the pages. I'm confident that you will find promising ideas that will work for you.

It's important to concentrate on exercises that are likely to do you the most good. In chapter you'll find a depression test that can help you uncover depression hot spots that merit special attention.

This book maps key areas that apply to curbing depression. However, there is no one book program, or system that perfectly fits everybody's situation. Your challenge is to master approaches that help you. As a bonus, you'll find many hot tips from top experts who donated some of their best ideas for this book to help free you from depression.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Depression

This workbook delivers cognitive, emotive, and behavioral ways to overcome depression and many of the psychological conditions that commonly accompany this condition. Here is a preview of what I share that you can use to help yourself:

- *Understanding negative thinking and cognitive solutions.* You'll normally have depressive thinking when you feel depressed. Hopelessness, powerlessness, worthlessness, and blame can elevate your misery. Depressive thinking can be challenged and defeated. You can use cognitive approaches to change this thinking, gain relief, and prevent relapses. For example, if you believe that you are helpless to address depression, you are suffering from depressive thinking. How can you be helpless? If you were truly helpless, you wouldn't be reading this book.
- *Understanding negative emotions and emotive solutions.* A melancholic mood weaves through all depression. When this gloom seems impenetrable, you are likely to draw into yourself and feel worse. To help yourself break this pattern, you can accept that a depressed mood is both painful and temporary. Acceptance can feel liberating. Anxiety, anger, and other negative affects commonly weave through depression. You can simultaneously address these coexisting conditions with the same methods you use for defusing depression.
- *Understanding negative behavioral habits and behavioral solutions.* Behavioral methods, such as activity scheduling, have top change potential (see [chapter 17](#)). Procrastination technology is an activation approach that applies to depression. You'll learn how to use this technology to get right to the issue of curbing depression (see [chapter 5](#)).

The Science Behind the System

Over four hundred clinical outcome studies confirm the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy methods. A meta-analysis of sixteen rigorous meta-analyses of cognitive behavioral therapy shows that cognitive behavioral therapy is effective for correcting a wide range of disabling conditions (Butler et al. 2006). A meta-analysis is a statistical study of the results of related studies.

The Butler meta-analysis amply shows that the cognitive behavioral approach is a significantly more effective means of curbing depression than a medication approach. So, if medication has not worked for you, try this comprehensive approach.

Changing through Reading

Bibliotherapy, or what is known as healing through reading, compares favorably to individual psychotherapy (Gregory et al. 2004). The books that have greater promise are theme-centered books on topics such as depression written by doctoral-level mental health specialists (Redding et al. 2008). This book meets that standard.

A self-help manual for depression is helpful for some but not for all. Some of my depressed and nondepressed clients have read and continue to use the ideas contained here. Some report going back over highlighted sections in order to keep perspective. Other clients have no interest in reading and will politely take resource materials that I offer and place them in a corner, where they lie fallow.

By working to defeat depression, you develop coping skills that you can use over a lifetime.

If you count yourself among those who believe that if they had the tools to defeat depression they'd use them, you may put wind in the sails of your self-help efforts if you follow a written approach. An interactive reading approach is effective for defeating mild and moderate forms of depression (Wampold et al. 2002; Newman et al. 2011). A cognitive behavioral self-help approach can be used by some to overcome the more severe forms of depression (Cuijpers 1998). Here's why:

- A well-designed self-help book on depression can flesh out key issues within a shorter time span than the therapeutic setting can provide.
- Self-help books with evidence-based information on depression prescribe steps for addressing and overcoming depression.
- You don't have to rely on memory. You can return, as many times as you choose, to review a section of the book that you once found helpful.
- You can pace yourself, study an idea or exercise in greater depth, and test and modify what you are learning.
- Although self-help readings and individual counseling represent different ways to get to the same result, they can be used in combination with each other.

If you believe that you can gain from hands-on written prescriptions, you are likely to benefit from using a cognitive behavioral self-help manual (Mahalik and Kivlighan 1988). This approach can be especially useful for people who think that they can address their own depression if they have the tools (Burns and Nolen-Hoeksema 1991). However, in applying self-help methods, persistence is important to a successful outcome (Gould and Clum 1993).

Building a Psychological Skill Set

This book addresses psychological and natural ways to alleviate depression and prevent it from coming back. Thus, the benefits and side effects of antidepressant medication and electric convulsive therapy are the subject of someone else's book.

The literature on depression is vast—and rapidly growing—such that no one book can cover all the bases. Nevertheless, I think you'll find this revised edition of *The Cognitive Behavioral Workbook for Depression* much more comprehensive than other psychology self-help books on overcoming depression.

You get a bonus. The psychological principles you learn here to address depression will also apply to other life challenges. You can reapply what you learned, again and again, to gain greater satisfaction in living.

Here is how to take advantage of the self-help methods described in this workbook:

- Emphasize and complete the exercises that you think are most relevant for overcoming your

depression. If it is hopelessness thinking, concentrate on that first.

- Force yourself to follow through on meaningful exercises that you feel tempted to put off because you tell yourself that you are too depressed to try. These may be the exercises most worth pursuing.
- Refuse to listen to your own excuses. If you think something could be helpful to do, but you want to feel comfortable first, do it anyway. Take a moment to think about the many important things you've accomplished that included discomfort and frustration. I'll bet you'll see a link between allowing yourself to feel tension and your greatest accomplishments.
- Practice tested ways to question the validity of depressive thinking. Build upon this knowledge. This process can lead to defeating depression and preventing it from coming back.
- At the end of each chapter, you'll find a section called "End Depression Plan" where you can record key ideas and action steps you found most valuable. This gives you a record that you can draw from to overcome and prevent depression.

If you believe that you can take steps to defeat depression, read on. Even if you don't think you can help yourself, read on. If you are in this latter group, you'll discover ways to address depressive thinking and unrealistic pessimism. You may change your mind.

A Toolbox for Change

The alphabet has twenty-six letters. You can use these letters to write millions of words and blend them into infinite phrases, sentences, and paragraphs. In a similar sense, you can take basic self-help strategies and find many ways to build these ideas into your life. You can start defeating depression at any time. It doesn't matter if you are nine or ninety.

Defeating depression is a trek. Your toolbox of coping methods can help speed your journey. You'll find the following tools in this book:

- Lists of ideas to curb depression.
- Practice exercises to counter and debunk depressive thinking and strengthen coping skills.
- Sidebars and text boxes that highlight key ideas.
- Reinforcement of key ideas. If you miss a point, you'll likely find a related one later.
- Optional ways to counteract depressive thinking.
- Guiding principles.
- Metaphors, similes, analogies, fables, and parables to make important ideas memorable.
- Stories of people who faced depression and prevailed, and how they did it.
- Encouragement.

- Standard and new technologies for defeating depression.
-
- Creative ways to view and address depression.
 - Tips from top depression experts who submitted ideas specifically for this book.

The early twentieth century French educator and philosopher Jules Payot (1909) observed that once you establish a goal, information will flow in from many sources.

You'll also find information about and techniques to respond to conditions that commonly accompany depression. We'll explore the many nooks and crannies of depression and methods you can use to stop feeling depressed. Perfectionism increases the risk for depression (Hewitt et al. 1998). People plagued by this form of stressful thinking can find help in [chapter 19](#). When depressed, you may put off addressing depression until you feel better. Chapter 5 shows how to break the procrastination connection. When you are depressed, your relationships may suffer. You'll find help for managing your relationships in [chapter 20](#).

There is no perfect solution for depression. Developing and following a highly structured routine can make a positive difference for some. Antidepressant medication works for others. Changing depressive thinking is helpful for most. Perhaps, as with a good spaghetti sauce, you must combine several quality ingredients to achieve results. But whatever approach you choose to take, give it a fair trial.

Bridging the Gap between Depression and Feeling Good

In the early phases of cognitive therapy, you may feel an uplifting sense of relief. Psychologist Albert Ellis (1971) was among the first to observe this rapid-change phenomenon. I've called this initial uplift a *preview experience* (Knaus 1982), but it seems as if this rapid shift can be more than a preview. It can have durability. Research has shown that for people who follow a cognitive approach to quell depression, rapid gains tend to stick (Tang et al. 2007).

In the early phases of this therapy, you do get insight into the positive effects of countering negative thinking and of having a new perspective on your depression. This shows you that your depression is not indelibly written into your future. That's a good start. But you will likely need to finish other steps in this process to feel better longer and to buffer yourself against lapsing into another depression.

Indeed, for most people, the gap between feeling depressed and sensing relief takes time to bridge. Although you can learn about how to defeat depressive thinking within hours or days, applying the principles can take weeks or months. That's because it is one thing to know what to do and another to put to use what you know. You can, for example, read about how to drive an automobile, but learning how to drive requires getting behind the wheel and practicing. In a similar sense, you can learn to become an expert in defeating depression only by working at defeating depression. As with developing any new skill, learning how to defeat depression will take time.

You may want this to happen quickly. The parts of your brain where depression lives will probably change at a slower pace than you'd prefer. However, as you work to defeat depressive thinking, your brain is creating structures that encode the counterdepression skills that you develop. Thus, the gap between knowing and doing closes with practice.

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