

OVERCOMING DEPRESSION

Wholistic Strategies that Work



Dr. Teeya Scholten
Registered Psychologist

Part of The "Good News About A.D.D." Series

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by

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By becoming better informed about depression, by implementing self-care and wellness practices and by developing a support network, we can help ourselves cope more effectively with depression. The strategies offered in this book can assist in the recovery from and prevention of depression. They are part of a journey to wellness. The wholistic approach recommended is not intended to replace drug therapy or counselling. However, it can be a useful adjunct to such therapies.

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OVERCOMING DEPRESSION

Wholistic Strategies that Work

Dr. Teeya Scholten

Registered Psychologist

author of the

“Good News About A.D.D.” Series

Other books in this series are:

- *“Attention Deluxe Dimension”: A Wholistic Approach to A.D.D.*
- *The A.D.D. Guidebook: A Self-Directed Guide to Understanding A.D.D. in Adults and Children*
- *Welcome to the Channel Surfers Club!
(Primary Age Version)*
- *Turning the Tides: Teaching the Student with A.D.D.*
- *Overcoming Depression: Wholistic Strategies that Work*

Praise for OVERCOMING DEPRESSION

This book is incredible! Your program is comprehensive and structured, yet flexible. I think it could help thousands of people, with or without depression. It strikes me as a must read for anyone who wants to maximize their mental/emotional health. Poignant and relevant personal stories make it real and personal, not clinical. You cover a great deal of ground in a 130-page book.

John Simmons, Teacher and Professional Speaker

I think Overcoming Depression is excellent. I particularly like the clear and very user-friendly layout and the practical, concise, yet thorough information.

Cecile Fraser, Social Worker

As I read the book, I became aware that it was easy to see myself and others in the pages. From the ordinary struggles of someone who's simply unhappy to one in the depths of depression, there's something here for everyone. The steps are clear and useful and the process is hopeful because there's always a starting place. You can follow the whole process or just start with a piece of it.

Rev. Jan Craig, Parkdale United Church

Dr. Scholten has created an insightful, practical handbook that facilitates individuals working through depression. Her personal story gives "flesh" to the theoretical and conceptual while meaningfully grounding the work within a mind-body-spirit holism. The activities support conscious engagement with one's process, which is both efficacious and empowering.

Dr. Shanti Persaud, University Lecturer in Psychology

I am impressed with the amount of material that has been synthesized and presented in a concise and reader-friendly format. I enjoyed reading Teeya's story and the personal way in which the material is presented.

Nancy Dudley, Ph.D., Senior Instructor in Applied Psychology, University of Calgary

I like the flow of the manuscript and the writing style is easy to follow. It is comprehensive and offers choices for people in their approach to their own healing. The goal is not to be perfect. This goal is what depresses a lot of people. The goal is to be in communion or in connection with the Spirit and trust the process, take the risks of love, and find our place in the scheme of things.

John Griffith, Director, Spiritual Directions

Dr. Scholten's approach to overcoming depression has the ingredients for success: her own experience, a wholistic perspective and the spiritual dimension (which is essential to the success of any strategy).

Fernando Davalos, Homeopathic Practitioner

This book is so accessible that it will be helpful to a large number of people.

Patricia Morgan, Certified Author, Counsellor and Speaker

*There is a crack,
There is a crack in everything
That's how the Light gets in...*

Leonard Cohen
(Anthem - CD Album)

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Preface

If you have felt sad, hopeless, angry or just not interested in life...for 5 months or 15 years, *Overcoming Depression* is meant to provide you with a place to start. It contains the tools that I use most often for myself and in my work with clients of all ages. I hope they will work for you too. It will NOT help you diagnose the kind of depression you have, but it may help you begin to understand the reasons you may be feeling so sad – and do something about it.

If you are depressed and can't seem to make yourself do anything, you may need to make a decision about medication. I prefer to use natural methods, wherever possible. This means that medication is usually a last option, not the first thing to try. To do this, you need to feel well enough to explore natural methods as a possible alternative treatment. However, if your life is at stake or you don't have the energy to make any changes, I strongly advise that you discuss the situation with your family doctor or other health care professional. You may need to be on medication in order to have enough energy to read on and apply what you learn.

Although depression is highly treatable, it can be a serious problem. I know because I've been there. **If you find yourself thinking a lot about suicide – get help immediately.** Call your family doctor or go directly to the Emergency Department of your local hospital. There will be time to look at this book later.

*Any journey begins with the first step.
Overcoming Depression can be a place for you
to begin or to continue your journey to wellness.*

Please consider letting me know if these ideas helped and what worked best for you. If you have any feedback or suggestions, please contact me. (See the inside front page for contact information).

PART ONE: An Overview of a Wholistic Approach

Introduction

I have written this book to share a “wholistic” approach that I use in caring for depressed people. I have found my approach to be very successful. I propose, in this book:

- To outline what is involved in taking a “wholistic approach” to depression and how you might begin to do this
- To dispel some myths
- To give you hope and encouragement
- To share stories which show how a “wholistic approach” works
- To teach you skills which may help you to overcome your depression.

These ideas and techniques are not new. They are just put together in a new way – a way that I and the people with whom I work have found to be successful. Furthermore, taking a “wholistic approach” does not have to be difficult, expensive or time-consuming. Yet it can make the difference between success or failure in overcoming your depression.

Taking a “wholistic approach” does not have to be difficult, expensive or time-consuming. Yet it can make the difference between success or failure in overcoming your depression.

A Wholistic Way of Overcoming Depression

This book is about YOU - as a whole person, possessing Body, Mind and Spirit. Taking a “wholistic” approach means that you try to facilitate health and well being by addressing all of your needs, the needs of the “whole person”, using natural methods as much as possible. It is a self-help book, designed to help you feel better as quickly as possible. It is not a comprehensive review of all types of depression and treatment options. (Others¹ have written such books for those of you who are interested.)

In this book, I will be exploring these concerns as they relate to the functioning of your Body, Mind and Spirit:

- BODY** Are there any food and/or environmental sensitivities that are hurting you?
Are you getting enough water, sleep, exercise and proper nutrition?
How is your “stress bucket”?
- MIND** Do you have safe ways to express your anger?
Can you explore your feelings and find solutions to your worries?
Can you choose how YOU want to feel?
Do you understand and accept yourself?
- SPIRIT** What is Spirit?
What do you believe?
Do you have a relationship with the Source of Life²?
Have you learned how to BE, in the moment?

Each of us is a unique creation with our own particular biochemistry, personality, interests, talents, attitudes and beliefs. One of life’s problems is that we do not come with a set of instructions - an “Owner’s Manual”. As we mature, however, we begin to understand how we work best or what “makes us tick”. I believe that it is important to learn how to take care of ourselves in all three areas of Body, Mind and Spirit. Otherwise, we may

¹ See Solomon, A. *The Noon Day Demon*.

² Source of Life is also referred to an Intelligence beyond our own, the Great Spirit, the Creator, a power greater than ourselves or the “God of your understanding”. For a more complete explanation of various ways to understand this concept, see the Chapter on *The Spirit*, starting on page 75.

“pay a price” and begin to feel unwell. For you, that price could be feeling depressed³. For someone else, it might be feeling irritable, angry, anxious or physically sick. Many of us also know what we need to do in order to feel well, but for some reason, we aren’t doing it. These are issues to explore within a counselling relationship.

Where should you begin?

How you choose to use the information in ***Overcoming Depression*** is up to you. Believe that you are going to find answers that will help you overcome your depression. Talk to others who know you, pray for direction, follow your instincts.

Attitude is the paintbrush of the mind. It colours everything we do.

Because you are feeling depressed, you need to be very careful about spending your energy. You can’t do everything at once. You need to choose carefully what you are going to try first. You need to find ways of measuring your success to know if your efforts are worthwhile.

WRITE DOWN...

The ***Screening Checklist for Depression*** (SCD) on page 4 and the ***Symptom and Food Diary*** (SFD) on page 5 have been included here for you to fill out. They will help you to begin to keep an eye on how you are feeling – emotionally and physically. There is more information about the SCD and the SFD in the section ***Evaluating the Effectiveness of your Interventions*** (page 7). Use the approach that is most comfortable for you. Some choices are described on the pages following the checklists.

³ Clinical Depression is suspected when symptoms on the “Screening Checklist for Depression” (page 4) have been experienced nearly every day for most of the day during the same two week period. A proper diagnosis should be performed by a qualified professional.

SCREENING CHECKLIST FOR DEPRESSION (SC/D)

NAME: _____ DATE: _____ RATER: _____

Place a checkmark in the appropriate space to indicate how you have felt over the last two weeks.

OBSERVATION	NOT AT ALL	JUST A LITTLE	PRETTY MUCH	VERY MUCH	
1. Feeling sad, empty, angry or tearful					
2. Not getting pleasure out of anything					
3. Losing or gaining significant amounts of weight, without trying					
4. Can't sleep or sleeping all the time					
5. Fatigue or loss of energy					
6. Feeling worthless					
7. Feeling excessively (or inappropriately) guilty					
8. Difficulty concentrating and making decisions					
9. Wanting to die					
For internal use only	x 0	x 1	x 2	x 3	SCORE

SCORING: To calculate the score, add up the number of entries in each of the 4 columns and multiply the totals by the number (0, 1, 2 or 3) shown at the bottom the column. The sum of these is the SCORE.

THIS FORM MAY BE REPRODUCED

Adapted from DSM-IV criteria for Major Depressive Disorder
by Dr. Teeya Scholten, R. Psych. Calgary, AB. www.GoodNewsAboutADD.com

Everyone can feel sad, irritated, angry or tearful at times; however if you feel this way a lot of the time you may wish to seek help. If someone reports wanting to die, take the person to the Emergency Dept. of the nearest hospital for a "Lethality Assessment". Let a trained professional make the decision about how serious the situation is and suggest what to do.

SYMPTOM AND FOOD DIARY* (SFD)

- Step 1: Write down all of the food items you ate/drank yesterday or on a typical day.
 Step 2: Look through the list of symptoms in the Table below and decide which of them applied to you during that day. Put a number in every box below to describe the severity of the symptoms as follows:

0 - no symptom, 1 - just a little, 2 - moderate, 3 - severe

FOOD

BREAKFAST _____

LUNCH _____

SUPPER _____

SNACKS: (State time of day) _____

SYMPTOMS

TIME OF DAY/ SYMPTOM	BEFORE BREAKFAST	AFTER BREAKFAST	AFTER LUNCH	AFTER SUPPER	<i>SUB TOTALS</i>
TIRED OR DROWSY					
IRRITABLE					
OVERACTIVE					
HEADACHE					
RESPIRATORY (Stuffy Nose, Cough)					
DIGESTIVE (Nausea, bellyache)					
SKIN (Hives, Excema, Itching)					
URINARY (Frequent or Wetting)					
OTHER (please specify)					
<p><i>SCORING: After entering the numbers in the appropriate boxes, add up the subtotals for each row and enter them into the right hand boxes. To calculate the Total Score, add these subtotals together.</i></p>					<p><i>TOTAL SCORE</i></p>

COMMENTS: (Mention anything that happened to you today that might account for your symptoms other than food.... or any observations or ideas you may have, including cravings, etc.)

THIS FORM MAY BE REPRODUCED

* Adapted by Dr. Teeya Scholten R. Psych. from a rating format used by Dr. William Langdon, a pediatric allergist from London, Ont.
www.GoodNewsAboutADD.com

Below, I have outlined several approaches to overcoming depression. Choose what appeals to you the most:

a) “Quick Action”

There are many reasons why people might have depressive feelings. The most frequently reported causes are outlined in *Appendix A* (page 111), along with typical symptoms and strategies for treatment. Look at these possible causes and see if any apply to you. If so, you may wish to follow one or more suggested strategy for treating the possible cause(s) of your depression.

b) “Go with the Flow”

If you prefer a more flexible approach, you can just look through this book and pick a place to begin or start by reading the questions in the *Table of Contents*. Then you could turn to *Part Three* (page 29) and learn just one new strategy from the area where you feel like making changes. You could also decide to apply one new idea for each area of functioning: Body, Mind or Spirit and see how that works.

c) “The Full Meal Deal”

If you are a systematic person who likes to do things in a step-by-step fashion, you may wish to just keep going, read *Parts One* and *Two*, then learn and apply each tool in the order that they are presented in *Part Three*.

d) “The Short Cut”

You could also try any or all of the five different strategies listed below. These are all tools that most of my clients have found helpful. These can have far-reaching effects with a minimum of cost in time and energy spent.

1. Take one food out of your diet for a week and then put it back in for three days to see if it makes any difference to how you are feeling. The type of food chosen depends on your physical symptoms. How to do this and why this is done is explained in *Part Three* (page 29).
2. Find ways to express any anger you may be feeling (see page 45).
3. Use effective ways to communicate such as *I-messages* and *Active Listening* (see page 54).

4. Make a choice to eliminate negative thinking (see page 59).
5. Become aware of the things you find stressful. See if there are ways to get rid of any of them. At the same time build up your ability to cope with life's stresses (see page 41).

Evaluating the Effectiveness of your Interventions

No matter where you decide to begin, give it time. It generally takes 21 days to create a new behaviour. Try each technique for several weeks in order to learn it and to find out what it does for you. This way you can begin to feel its benefits. It is helpful if you can find someone you are connected with (e.g. family member, friend, therapist) to work through the ideas with you. I encourage you to fill out the ***Screening Checklist for Depression*** (page 4) and the ***Symptom and Food Diary*** (page 5). The actual scores are not as meaningful as whether or not they change. In this way, they can then be used to track your progress. You have a significantly greater chance of a successful outcome if you track your progress in writing, rather than “keeping it in your head”. Keeping track of your progress in this way also prevents you from becoming discouraged.

If you fill these checklists out now, you will have an anchor measure or Baseline of how you feel before you start to make any changes. Collect comments from others to help you evaluate the effectiveness of the changes you are making. Change takes time and energy, so please treat yourself gently and with patience!

PART TWO: Common Myths and Real Life Stories

There are a number of misconceptions about depression that I would like to address. The opinions expressed are based on my personal life story and some 30 years of professional experience as a psychologist. They will likely be somewhat controversial. You may want to discuss some of these points with others, do some reading and make up your own mind as to what you believe about depression.

WRITE DOWN...

What do you think? Read the statement and circle whether or not you think the statement is True or False.

<i>Depression Quiz</i>			
<i>1.</i>	Medication is necessary for the treatment of depression.	<i>T</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>2.</i>	Nobody would be depressed if they looked on “the bright side” of things.	<i>T</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>3.</i>	When someone has had a “rotten life”, they are bound to be depressed.	<i>T</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>4.</i>	Once I find a cure to my depression, it will be gone forever!	<i>T</i>	<i>F</i>
<i>5.</i>	There’s nothing that can be done for someone who doesn’t want help for his/her depression.	<i>T</i>	<i>F</i>

Many people would choose True as the answer to all of the statements on the Depression Quiz. Because I believe that the answers are primarily False, I call these statements “myths”⁴. My reasons are explained in detail below; and are illustrated by real life examples⁵.

Myth #1 - I will need medication to cure my depression.

I believe that... medication can be helpful, but it is not always necessary for the treatment of every type of depression. Certain specialized medication (e.g., Lithium Carbonate and others) may be necessary for the treatment of Bipolar Disorder (which used to be known as Manic Depression). Medication may also be necessary in times of life-threatening danger or as an interim measure to give you time and energy to look further into strategies, which may be of help.

There are several types of drugs that have been used successfully to reduce and control the symptoms of depression. Psychiatrists and some family physicians are trained in using these “psychotropic drugs”. Some people need a careful balancing of medications to control their symptoms. If you are presently under psychiatric care, be sure to thoroughly discuss any concerns you have about your medication with your doctor. Sudden, unsupervised changes in medication can result in serious setbacks.

There seems to be a widespread and growing belief that certain chemicals in our brains (called neurotransmitters) are a cause of depression and, therefore, we need medication in order to treat this “disease” successfully. For reasons outlined in the following paragraphs, I believe that this point of view is, at the very least, controversial.

⁴ For myths about suicide, see Solveiga Miezitis' book *Alternatives to Depression*, pp. 190-192.

⁵ In these true stories of clients, names and identifying information have been changed to protect their identity.

During the past ten to fifteen years, research has focussed on the function of specialized chemicals called neurotransmitters, which are found in every brain cell and whose purpose is to transmit neural messages. Examples of neurotransmitters are dopamine, serotonin, and epinephrine. There is a new class of drugs called SSRI's (Selective Serotonin Re-uptake Inhibitors) that include Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft and Luvox. Clinical trials have shown hopeful results for these medications in treating the symptoms of depression.

Because these drugs work at the neurotransmitter level to alleviate symptoms of depression, I believe that professionals have mistakenly concluded that depression is therefore, caused by a "neurotransmitter problem". In this case, medication is alleviating the symptoms of depression, not necessarily removing the cause. In "Teeya's Story" below, you will be able to see how medication helped to treat the symptoms of depression, but wasn't necessary once the actual cause was determined.

Teeya's story

Ever since I was 8 years old, I had felt depressed and wanted to kill myself. I had friends, loving parents, was physically healthy, did well in school and had a spiritual life. My life was very positive, but I couldn't figure out why I felt so very, very sad. At the age of 26, I finally gave up and tried to kill myself with an overdose of aspirins. I failed.

After they had pumped my stomach, they sent me to the hospital psychiatrist. I told him that I thought that there was something "biochemical" wrong with my brain and he agreed. He suggested that I try a modified form of megavitamin therapy. He put me on a very high dose of Vitamin B3 – Niacin. It made me turn as red as a lobster for about 15 minutes each day, but it did seem to help me to feel somewhat better. I also decided to accept the fact that depression was "my cross to bear in life" and promised myself that if I ever felt actively suicidal again, I would be open to taking medication until I could discover the reason for my depression. Even though I was taking megavitamins, the thoughts of suicide returned. I went to my family doctor and he prescribed Ativan – a powerful, fast-acting anti-anxiety medication. It kept me alive for the next 6 months until I found out what was actually causing the problem.

It was at this point, that I had finally decided to listen to my neighbour who had repeatedly advised me to take our three-year-old son, Jeff, to an allergist. Both she and our pediatrician believed that allergies were the reason that he was getting frequent colds, ear infections and bronchitis. The allergist didn't believe that food allergies could be determined using needles or "scratch testing". He suggested that Jeff and I both eliminate milk products for a week and then put them back into our diets. We were instructed to do the same thing with wheat. He even had us fill out the same Symptom and Food Diary (page 5) I now use with my clients. Each day, we had to keep track of what we ate and how we felt. The results were very interesting!

I discovered that if I ate wheat (i.e., bread and pasta), I began to feel irritable, discouraged and ultimately suicidal. My mind just began to think in negative and self-critical ways. When I drank milk, I seemed to cry more often and needed a lot more sleep! Jeff's complexion looked much rosier when he gave up milk products and he seemed to breathe a lot more clearly.

The substances to which we were sensitive were causing different kinds of reactions. Jeff had a respiratory reaction to milk products and I had a neurological reaction at the neurotransmitter level of my brain. These "good foods" had been the cause of my 18 yearlong depression (from age 8 to 26) and my son's frequent sickness! What a revelation! It took me a long time to listen to these people, but, once I did, we have never looked back.

We put Jeff on a Calcium supplement and eliminated all milk products from his diet except for Saturdays. I went off milk and wheat. What a difference it made to both of us as well as our family life. Jeff never got sick again – not even one cold for seven years - from age three to ten (at which point he started to make his own decisions about what he was going to eat). As soon as I took wheat and milk out of my diet, my depression lifted and I felt a lot better mentally, physically and spiritually.

In the meantime, I had certainly had enough time to learn and practice a lot of other techniques for dealing with depression. Most of these are in this book. I had become a "wounded healer". For the 26 years since my suicide attempt, I have been free of depression. However, I know that if I don't take care of myself, my depression could return. This is the way I am wired and I am vulnerable to feeling this way if I get overwhelmed. So, I make sure that

I take good care of myself in Body, Mind and Spirit by using all of the techniques mentioned in this book, as I need them.

I take care of myself by paying attention to what I eat and drink. I try to stay away from those things to which I am allergic. I begin each day connecting with Spirit. At this point in my life, I let the Spirit lead as to how I spend the time – meditating on Spirit’s love (see Light and Love, page 83), reading a daily devotional or simply praying. I ensure that I get enough rest and journal three times a week (often using the “How Do I Feel when I think about...” technique on page 50). All of these techniques help me to stay on top of my feelings by dealing with issues (i.e., accepting myself and forgiving myself or others), thinking in a positive way and living in the present moment.

If you try out some of the ideas in this book, you will discover what works for you. We are all beautifully and wonderfully, but differently made. You probably already know a lot about what you need to do to take care of yourself. I encourage you to do it.

If you don’t know yet what you need to do to feel healthy and joyful, you may need to rely on medication for a while. Through my story, you can see how medication served a purpose (i.e., it kept me alive) until I could discover the underlying cause of my depression. Once I addressed the causes of my depression, it vanished, provided I take care of myself on a daily basis. This is not a lot of hard work; but it does require building habits of wellness. Above all, we need to be patient with ourselves as the process unfolds. I believe that Spirit loves each of us and will help us on our journey if we open ourselves up to that Intelligence beyond ourselves. Have you asked for help today?

In the above example, my depressive symptoms were caused by a reaction in the brain to an allergen. This is called a “brain” or “cerebral” allergy. Allergic reactions can occur in any system of the body. When your skin is the “shock organ”, you may get eczema. When the respiratory system is involved, you may have an asthmatic reaction or bronchitis. The musculo-

skeletal system reacts with aches and pains, which can feel like arthritis, and the gastro-intestinal system reacts with stomach cramps, intestinal bloating or diarrhea (Randolph and Moss, 1989).

There are medical treatments for many of these symptoms. But the underlying cause may be a subtle allergic reaction to a food or environmental allergen or due to a completely different cause. You may need to take medication for treatment until you find the primary cause of the problem.

It is for these reasons that I believe that medication is not always necessary in order to “cure” some types of depression.

Myth #2 - If I could just learn to look on “the bright side”, my depression would vanish.

I believe that... although “looking on the bright side” may be a good everyday life strategy, it may not be sufficient when you are dealing with a serious depression.

“Look on the bright side!” “Just pull yourself up by your bootstraps!” “If you would only just count your blessings!” “Just buck up and face the music!” “Grin and bear it!” How many of us have heard this kind of advice from friends and relatives who are not feeling depressed?

When I was depressed, I hated people suggesting that if I would just “pull myself up by my bootstraps” that I would feel better. I had tried and it wasn’t working. I couldn’t see any reasons for me to feel depressed and that was depressing in itself. Was I spoiled? Why did I want to kill myself from the time I was 8 years of age? As you saw from *Teeya’s Story* (page 11) all

the positive thinking in the world could not have stopped my brain from feeling depressed. It was when I took wheat products out of my diet, that I began to feel better.

Depression is just more than a “Blue Monday”. Many people who have never been depressed have no idea how black and all-encompassing the feelings can be. John Bentley Mays’ book, ***In the Jaws of the Black Dogs*** gives one of the best descriptions I have ever read of how it feels to be depressed. You may wish to recommend it to a loved one who is having a hard time understanding how hopeless or discouraged you feel and why you can’t just “get over it”. I don’t recommend it for anyone who is feeling depressed.

Many of us who are depressed feel frustrated by our own inability to “snap out of it”. We often feel tortured by well-meaning advice. If people really want to help you, they can listen to your anger. See *The Mind, Do you have safe ways to express your anger?* (page 45). They can help you work through the tools in this book or encourage you to see a competent therapist.

Cognitive behavior therapists (such as Drs. Albert Ellis, David Burns and Aaron Beck) believe that it is “distorted thinking” or “irrational beliefs” that cause emotional pain. They have been so successful in treating depression, that this is one of the most commonly used tools today. However, examining HOW we are thinking and choosing beliefs that promote a healthy outlook are more than just “looking on the bright side”. In some cases, just using mind strategies is not enough.

Tasleem’s Story

Tasleem was a gifted adult student pursuing a second career. She had experienced life-long depression. She had been diagnosed with Seasonal Affective Disorder, made some use of light therapy, was on anti-depressant medication, but still often thought of suicide. She was attending a post-secondary institution, but she hated going. She objected to the way students were treated and was sensitive to unfairness in the behavior of the instructors and in the policies of the institution. However, she needed the training they provided in order to get on with the next step of her career.

Our weekly sessions consisted of encouraging her to get in touch with her feelings of anger and express them. See How Do I Feel When I Think About... (page 49). On this particular occasion, we needed to use another skill.

She came into one session furious about a policy decision made by the institution about one of the other students who was a friend of hers. She was concerned about the implications of what she saw as a bad decision for future students. She was angry because the institution was being unfair to them. However, her anger seemed out of proportion to this issue. It wasn't even about her, so why was she feeling so angry and depressed?

As we explored her thoughts and feelings using the ABC's of Emotion (page 59), she began to realize that she was feeling that life had been unfair to her. She had had several recent accidental injuries and her interpretation of the situation was that "life is unfair and Spirit is not taking care of me". As a result, she was feeling angry, frustrated and very depressed.

When we worked on what other beliefs or interpretations she might have of this situation, she chose to believe that "These experiences may be teaching me to surrender and to trust Spirit to be with me and guide me through whatever is happening to me." This helped her to feel peaceful instead of angry about the situation. This seemed to help her accept the situation and focus on accomplishing her educational goals.

Through these techniques, Tasleem learned to work with her feelings. This helped her to cope better on a day-to-day basis. A great deal of healing was achieved when we were able to resolve some of her early hurts from some prolonged physical and emotional abuse she had received as a child.

None of these interventions would have been enough on their own, and they have not yet been enough to completely cure Tasleem's depression. However, she is feeling better and still working on areas that she knows she needs to resolve before she will be completely well.

In summary, most people have ups and downs in life and positive thinking is definitely a good thing for all of us. However, it is not enough to overcome serious, clinical depression. More in-depth, broader-based work usually needs to be done to promote deep and lasting healing.

Myth #3 - I have had such a rotten life, no wonder I'm depressed.

I believe that... what happens to people is less significant than what happens within them. Many people seem to think that experiencing certain childhood traumas explains why a person is a certain way and that nothing can be done about it. They may not even realize that life can be different from what they have always known.

Many people have been through hard times. You sometimes wonder how they survive. Many do; others don't. Although we do not understand fully the magic of the human spirit, we know that the actual circumstances or situations with which someone is faced do NOT cause depression. How many rich or privileged people do you know who are unhappy? How many poor, traumatized⁶ people do you know who have beautiful smiles and shining eyes that reflect a spirit of joy within?

What happens to people is less significant than what happens within them.

A great deal of research has been done on the topic of "resilience". We want to understand why some people do well under difficult circumstances and

⁶ If you have flashbacks from past trauma, have EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) done by a trained therapist. It is amazing how quickly this technique works. See www.emdr.com or Shapiro (2001).

others do not. We know that having a social support system is very important to our functioning. Rubin “Hurricane” Carter was imprisoned for 30 years for a crime he didn’t commit. He had given up until a young boy read a book he had written and became committed to freeing him. The care and interest of others can have a profound effect on our emotional well-being. As Rubin said, “Hate put me in here; it’s Love that’s gonna bust me out!”

We already know that both attitude and friends are very important in alleviating depression, but there are many other factors which can be at the root of our feelings. These need to be discovered, in order for the depression to be overcome successfully. Sometimes I worry that people who have had a hard life, those who have been sexually, physically or emotionally abused by a parent or other authority figure, will be accepting of their depression. Many abused or “broken” people seem to accept depression as a kind of “life sentence”, because they really believe that it is reasonable for them to feel this way. It is not. They may believe that it is O.K. to feel awful, to be treated with disrespect, to put up with drudgery and to have an unfulfilled life. They don’t know that life can be any different.

***Trust your hunches in the treatment of your depression.
You are the expert on yourself.***

The journey to change your life begins with one step. Picking up this book can be a first step. For many people, life change happens when they face a crisis, “hit bottom” and seek professional help. Others seem to be changed by a religious experience or conversion in which they realize that Spirit loves him/her exactly as they are – warts and all! Great things happen after we decide that we want life to be different and we are going to work hard to learn how to help ourselves be the best we can be.

In summary, if you think that your life has been so bad that you have a right to feel depressed, you are likely mistaken. You may choose to feel depressed. But it is not necessary for any human being to feel this way, no matter what you’ve been through.

Myth #4 – Once I get over my depression, it will be gone forever!

I believe that... people who are depressed are likely to get depressed again. This has been proven by research. This doesn't mean that we are 100% sure that you will get depressed again. It just means that you have a chance of reacting the same way to a build-up of stressors in your life. This is the way you have been built. Therefore, it is important to continue to make good choices and be careful to manage your stress well so that you don't become depressed again.

This pattern of repeated depression makes sense when you think of depression as a reaction to a build-up of stress in our lives. Stress has been defined as an uncomfortable physical or mental reaction to problems or events in life. When our “stress buckets” overflow, symptoms result. See ***How is your “Stress Bucket”?*** (page 41). Everyone reacts a little differently to stress. Some people develop ulcers, have high blood pressure, get violent or drink excessively. People like you and me, Tasleem and others who will be discussed in this book, tend to get depressed. That's just the way we're made. Starting to feel depressed is our warning bell that something needs to be done or we'll begin to slide down the slippery slope of sadness!

Overcoming depression means that we need to continue to apply what we have learned. We need to understand and accept ourselves. We need to find ways to be healthy in Mind, Body and Spirit. If we are able to do this, life should be enjoyable.

Let's see what it took Matt to begin to feel good and what he will need to do, in order to maintain this state of well-being.

Matt's Story

Thirty-two year old Matt was the youngest of five and felt that he had been “spoiled” as the baby of the family. He had everything he wanted or needed and yet, he had been unhappy for many years. He’d had trouble getting along with kids at school since Grade One. He was a drug addict as a teenager and lived on the streets for a few years.

By the time he came to see me for his depression, he had been “clean” and had not used drugs for 10 years. He was married to a wonderful woman and had a job in his area of talent, but felt like he was “getting nowhere”. He had already done a lot of “recovery work” for his addiction, had learned to reframe his thoughts and knew how to take a positive approach to life. He had learned that “there was no good and no bad - things just are.” However, he still felt agitated, impatient and unsatisfied.

As it turned out, Matt was experiencing a number of stressors. When these were removed, he began to feel a lot better. He knew that sugar was bad for him and thought that caffeine might be too, so we experimented with these. We took both of these substances out of his diet for a week and then reintroduced them one at a time, for several days. This allowed Matt to see that off the sugar he felt less irritated, off caffeine he calmed down. However, he still couldn’t concentrate on his work or during meetings. This led to a diagnosis of Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD): Combined Type. He went on medication for his attentional concerns and in his own words “became a new man”. His co-workers couldn’t believe the changes.

He was now focusing on his work and during staff meetings, making meaningful contributions and wanting to learn more about aspects of his job. His depression had lifted.

His original problem had been solved, but we weren’t finished yet. Reading and writing had always been a challenge for him; and he had managed to avoid these activities most of his life⁷. Now that he could focus his attention, he wanted to get on with his life and career development. His eyes were

⁷ If you have concerns in the areas of attention or learning, see Scholten (2002) *The A.D.D. Guidebook: A Self-directed Guide for Addressing Attentional Concerns in Adults and Children*, 3rd Edition.

checked by a Developmental Optometrist and problems in visual co-ordination were found. Once he was given the appropriate glasses, he began to read. His typing improved. Writing skills were the next to be tackled and he responded well. He found that on a computer, he could do as many drafts as he needed to, in order to create the kind of product he desired.

Matt had been set up for success. A number of stressors had been removed and he knew what he had to do to be a fully functioning person. He will need to continue to apply the skills he has learned, in order to continue to do well. Otherwise, his depression is likely to return.

In Matt's case, it took some hard thinking to set him up for success. There was more than one cause of his depression. He had already done a lot in the MIND and SPIRIT areas of his life by the time he came to see me, but there were some BODY issues that needed to be addressed. This involved taking some physical stressors out of his diet (i.e., the coffee and sugar), encouraging him to get the medication he needed to concentrate and finally getting glasses to treat his problems in visual co-ordination (Scholten, 2002).

Because Matt had done so much personal work by the time he came to see me, he was able to make very rapid progress. Once we identified the blocks he was experiencing to being a fully functioning individual, he was able to move forward. It didn't take a lot of time or financial resources, but it did take treating the whole person. His depression was caused by a number of factors, all of which needed to be addressed for him to regain a successful path forward in his life. Matt knows that if he wants to continue to be fully functioning, he will have to take care of himself and manage his stress levels. He will need to get enough rest, continue to take his medication for AD/HD and stay off caffeine and sugar. He will need to continue to have a relationship with his Higher Power and try to focus on how he is contributing to the world, not just focus on what he is getting out of it. As long as he follows these steps, he'll probably continue to feel good. If not, he is again likely to become unhappy.

Just like Matt, I know that if I want to feel happy and fulfilled, I need to do what I know is good for me. I need to make sure that I nourish myself, physically, mentally and spiritually on a daily basis, and stay away from the things that hurt me. See *Teeya's Story* (page 11) if you want to be reminded of what I do to take care of myself on a daily basis. Making sure that I begin

the day with some meditation time helps to begin my day in a calm and centered way. This makes a lot of difference. Adequate rest, water, nutrition and positive thinking have become my habit now. These things have helped me to stay well and to be able to live in the moment. I do not follow a highly structured routine. I try to include them in my day in a gentle way that is respectful of the ebb and flow of life.

I want to feel peaceful and I will do what I need to do to avoid feeling depressed. If I feel upset or sad about something, I stop as soon as I can and take some time to figure out my feelings and what I can do about the situation. I use every technique presented in *Strategies: Ways to Help Yourself* (page 29), to help myself when it seems to be needed. I didn't learn these strategies all at once and I'm sure that I will learn more as I continue to grow. As I add something new into my life, I keep the things that have helped me to this point and let go of others. It's a balancing act. But the more simply I live, the more I ask for Spirit's guidance every moment, the more smoothly life goes.

*We need to be patient with ourselves and others
in the process of discovering
who we are and how we work best.*

Many who have overcome depression believe that it will never return. Others live in fear that it will. Research has shown that it is likely to return. Certain people are built this way. We can treat this as a “curse” or we can accept that fact that this is how we are made. This is part of accepting ourselves and writing our blueprint. When we begin to feel depressed, we can consider this as a “wake up” call that is letting us know that life has gotten out of hand and our thoughts, feeling and commitments need to be reassessed.

In summary, those of us who tend to react to stress by becoming unhappy will always be at risk for these feelings. If we learn what our Body, Mind and Spirit need to feel good, we can minimize the chances that depression will return.

Myth #5 –If someone is depressed and they don’t want help, there is nothing I can do.

I believe that... it is difficult to help someone who is not open to change, but it is not impossible.

Most therapists steer away from trying to help someone who is not open to it. Some therapists who counsel families and couples are convinced that you need to have all parties present in order to deal effectively with their issues. I find that it only takes one motivated person in a family or partnership to begin the process of change. I have seen many positive results occur through the efforts of one person, as in the *Blended Family Story* on page 25.

If you are someone who cares about a person who is depressed, there is a lot you can do to help him or her. You can’t do everything for them, but you might help them move back onto their path. If you are concerned about someone who is depressed, here are some things you might want to try for a few weeks to see if they help.

- Listen to their anger. This is the best strategy I know and can really help. Ask if there is anything they might be feeling angry about and then just “active listen” to what they say. See *I-messages and Active Listening* (page 54). Don’t react. Don’t patronize them. Don’t try to solve their problem. This can be very hard to do, especially if they are angry with you or if you can see an obvious solution to their concerns.

The emotions of fear and hurt often cause us to feel angry. Often, we are not even aware of feeling this way. It can be good to have an opportunity to explore these feelings. Just expressing our thoughts, ideas and feelings or “getting them off our chest” can be helpful. Sometimes problem-solving is still needed, but it is then much easier for the person to find their own solutions to their problems.

- You can also tell them how you feel about their behavior, offer your assistance and/or urge them to get professional help.

It can be helpful for them to know HOW you are affected by their behavior. Just be aware that you yourself may be fearful or hurt. Be careful that you don’t add to the turmoil of their emotions by not being clear about your own state of mind. Don’t nag them about it. Once they begin to feel supported and understood, they may be open to exploring more.

“I...messages” (e.g., I feel _____ when you do _____”) can be very powerful. For instance, you might say “I am worried when I see you feeling so sad. Is there any way I can help you with these feelings?”

- Learn the tools in *Overcoming Depression* and apply them to your own life. Many of these are good common-sense strategies that work for most people. You will know how to use them if and when your loved one is ready to learn them.
- If you feel that your children, partner or loved one are reacting negatively to certain foods that they are eating, but you can’t convince them of it, you can still choose to cook without them or otherwise replace or avoid

them in your own diet. You might even begin to feel better! This may help them to notice differences in how they feel and to learn about alternative choices.

- If YOU are worried about their safety, contact a professional or suicide help line for advice, and if you have an immediate concern, take them to the Emergency Department of the nearest hospital and have a trained professional evaluate the severity of their depression.

Here's another true, but unusual, story about how a single intervention on the part of the mother influenced the six people in her family.

The Blended Family Story

I once saw a blended family in which all of the members were impacted strongly by one intervention on the part of the mother. The family consisted of two parents and four children, ages 18, 16, 6 and 4 years old. The two teenage boys were from the father's first marriage and the two younger children were from his new marriage. The parents brought the younger two children in for an appointment for the 4 year old boy. They were concerned about his depression and anxiety. He was afraid to sleep in his own room at night so he would come into his parent's room. They were getting tired of having him interrupting their sleep and had decided to come for help.

When we made up the goals for our work together, it appeared that the 4-year-old boy was actually the least of their concerns. When I expressed surprise at their having brought in such a pleasant child for help, they said that he was the only child where they thought they could make a difference! With the other three, they had just about given up.

The two older boys were having trouble in school. The 18-year-old had said that he didn't want to be at home and study because he hated his younger brother's girlfriend who was always there. The 16-year-old frequently tried to beat up his older brother because he was mad that his girlfriend was not accepted. He also didn't get enough sleep because he stayed up late with her watching TV, etc. He was often late for the bus in the morning and

regularly missed school. Both boys had failing grades. The older boys were not the natural children of this new mother and she felt powerless to intervene with them. The 6-year-old girl insisted that her mother always do everything for her. She would not allow her step-father to comb her hair or read her a story at night. The parents didn't understand why she felt this way, but they had accepted that this was just the way it was going to be. She was a very strong-willed little girl and if she didn't want to do something, it wasn't going to happen. She was also the kind of child who could be kind and pleasant, but when she got into bad moods, she was "horrid". She was doing well in school, but was a rather negative influence at home. She would often scream and hit her little brother when she was in a "bad mood".

*Indeed, the youngest son's problems seemed mild in comparison to the rest of the family! He had a quiet, sensitive type of personality and he was certainly feeling the pain of all this conflict. I didn't know what else might be going on, but we needed to begin the process of investigation, using my wholistic method Empowerment Plus[®]. This meant taking one food out of the child's diet. The actual food was selected based on their symptoms. See more about this in *Are there any food or environmental sensitivities that are hurting you?* (page 32). I recommended that milk be taken out of the little boy's diet and that wheat be taken out of the little girl's. (The parents hadn't come for help for her, but I had a pretty good idea as to the cause of her "bad moods".)*

Normally, I would not have seen such a strong and widespread reaction, but the family misunderstood my directions about the experiment with the diet. Instead of taking these substances out of the diet for a week only, they took it out for a full three weeks. In order to make it easier to implement, the mother decided that she would just cook without any wheat or milk products. In this way, it turned out that everybody went on the same program. The results were astounding. Within three days the little girl became pleasant. There were no more fights with her little brother. She even allowed her father to spend time with her, read her stories and brush her hair! The 18 year old suddenly found that he could concentrate and began spending more time studying. His marks actually improved during this time. (I was amazed.) He began to feel better about himself and started to be more pleasant to the other family members. Because the 18 year old was home more often, the 16 year old decided not to bring his girlfriend over as much. Besides, the older boys were getting along now and having some fun

together. The 16 year old found that he was getting to bed on time, which meant getting to school on a more regular basis and his marks went up too. (Even as I write this, I feel like I am making the whole situation up...but I'm not. It was a unique situation, and it really happened.)

Because everyone was getting along better, guess what happened to the anxiety levels of the 4 year old? They disappeared and he was no longer afraid to sleep in his room. Guess what happened to the parents' sleep deprivation and stress levels? Poof! Gone! I was stunned to see the "ripple effect" from one tiny dietary intervention. All that this family needed was accomplished at the first appointment because of the misunderstanding. Had the diet been altered for just one week, I'm sure that we wouldn't have seen such far-reaching results. I was certainly pleased and so were they.

As we all know, change is easier if someone is open to it. However, it takes just one motivated person in a system to cause change even if no one else is interested (Morgan, 1998). There are a number of strategies that can be tried which may help others begin to make changes even when they might not yet feel ready to do so.

In Summary

In this section we have examined a number of misconceptions which people have in the area of depression. I have expressed my opinions and you will have probably formed your own ideas. The case examples which have been presented are all true stories that have been shared with you to show how a "wholistic approach" can be used. They also illustrate the positive change that is possible from implementing a few carefully selected strategies.

The process of understanding ourselves is a journey. Each of us sets our own pace. I hope that the skills you learn in Part Three and the information you discover about yourself along the way will be useful in helping you to overcome your depression. I encourage you to begin wherever it is you FEEL like beginning.

PART THREE: The Strategies - Ways to Help Yourself

Introduction

In ***Part One***, you were introduced to a wholistic way of overcoming depression. In ***Part Two***, we explored common misunderstandings or myths. You were presented with real life stories that illustrated how this wholistic method works. In ***Part Three***, you will be introduced to tools that I have found useful in my own life and in my work with clients of all ages.

How you approach this section is entirely up to you. In ***Part One*** several options were mentioned on page 6. If you began at the beginning and are still doing O.K. with the reading, I suggest that you may want to just continue on with the ***Full-Meal Deal*** approach. By doing this, you learn each skill, one at a time and you can see what difference each one makes. If you don't have a lot of energy for reading OR are very eager to try a few techniques right away, please refer to the ***Short Cut*** below. These are the steps I normally take with my clients in the 6-10 hours⁸ we usually have together. If you want to do exactly what I do with most of my clients, just follow the guidelines for the Short Cut method outlined below. If the Short Cut works for you, you should feel a LOT better in three to five weeks. If the Short Cut doesn't work for you, this means that you will need to begin again and be more careful about evaluating the effect of each technique as you learn it.

Whether you choose the Full-Meal Deal or the Short Cut, please take a moment to make sure that you have filled out the ***Screening Checklist for Depression*** (page 4) and the ***Symptom and Food Diary*** (page 5) if you have not done so already. This will give you some indication about how you are doing now. It also gives you a way of monitoring your progress in a little more objective manner. For information on how to interpret the results of

⁸ The reason we take so little time is that my clients are ready to try the method I suggest and these strategies seem to help them reach their goals within this time frame!

these Checklists see *Evaluating the Effectiveness of your Interventions* (page 7).

Now it is time to make a decision about whether you want to try taking the Short Cut or the Full Meal Deal.

The Short Cut

If you are thinking of taking the Short Cut....here's another choice for you to make:

You can take one week to do each of the 5 steps (which I recommend) or you can implement all the following techniques at once (if you are desperate AND have the energy to do it all!). If you do everything at once and you end up feeling better, you won't know which strategy made the difference, but you might not care for the time being, because it feels so nice! ☺

This is a brief outline of the steps I usually follow with my clients:

1. Take a particular food completely out of your diet for a week. The type of food that you will take out is chosen on the basis of your physical symptoms. Reasons for this are explained more fully in *The Body* (page 32). If you are still feeling depressed after a week, go to the next step.
2. Find ways to express any anger you may be feeling. See *The Mind* (page 45). Do this every day by writing out what makes you angry or telling someone who can listen and not react to what you are saying.
3. Learn and use effective *I-messages* and *Active Listening* wherever possible. See *The Mind* (page 54).
4. Make a choice to eliminate negative thinking. See *Negative and Positive Self-Talk* (page 69) and *Is the Glass Half-Empty or Half-Full?* (page 100). Find things for which you can feel grateful. These two techniques can have far-reaching effects. By this time, most of my clients are feeling better with a minimum of time and energy spent. If you are still feeling depressed, go onto the next step.

5. Examine the sources of stress in your life. See *The Body* (page 41). Determine if there are ways to eliminate any stress. You can also build up your ability to handle stress by taking a Vitamin B Complex (called Stress Tabs), getting exercise and/or starting your day with a few moments of peace and quiet in which you connect with the Source of Life. All of us need to find ways to manage our stress in order to maintain feelings of wellness.

If you have tried everything mentioned in the “Short Cut” and it has been more than three to six weeks and you are not noticing any significant improvement, I recommend that you try the “Full Meal Deal”. Begin at page 32 and learn to follow one step at a time. Doing this with a friend, a support group or a therapist can provide you with encouragement and help to ensure that you are using the techniques properly.

The “Full Meal Deal”

The tools in *Overcoming Depression* will be presented in terms of some of the strategies I have found helpful in achieving a healthy Body, Mind and Spirit. You will notice that there are actually very few tools in these three sections. I know what it is like to feel depressed. You feel tired and life can be overwhelming. You don’t need a lot of choices. Therefore, I have included only the tools that I use most frequently with clients.

However, there are many other wonderful resources available, so I encourage you to stay open to what the universe brings to your attention, use what you find helpful, adapt these tools to suit you and discard the rest. If you have other ideas about what might help you, please use them.



THE BODY

Are there any food and/or environmental sensitivities that are hurting you?	32
Are you getting enough water, sleep, exercise and proper nutrition?	39
How is your “stress bucket”?	41

Are there any food and/or environmental sensitivities that are hurting you?

People are very skeptical when it comes to the effect of food on their mood, attention or learning. You may wish to review how food or environmental sensitivities can affect various body systems. See *Myth #1* on page 10. Whether or not you think you might have “allergies”, I encourage you to try this step and see if it makes any difference at all in the way you feel.

These are the steps to follow in investigating the influence of food on depression:

- #1 - Get a baseline measure of how you are feeling before you begin.
- #2 - Pick one food to eliminate from your diet for a week.
- #3 - Make up a menu.
- #4 - Measure how you feel every day of the test.
- #5 - Take the test food out of the diet for seven days.
- #6 - Reintroduce the test food for three days.
- #7 - Analyze the results.
- #8 - Decide what to do.

STEP #1: Get a baseline measure of how you are feeling before you begin.

We want to start with a measure of how you typically feel. Make as many copies as you need of the ***Screening Checklist for Depression*** (page 4) and the ***Symptom and Food Diary*** (page 5). Write down how you usually feel – both emotionally and physically. This is your “BASELINE” measurement. When you begin to experiment by eliminating one food, you will continue to record how you feel. You can compare the new results with your baseline measurements.

STEP #2: Pick a food to eliminate from your diet for a week.

If you are wondering which food to eliminate, consider the following:

- Milk -** if you have had a history of frequent colds, ear infections, tubes in your ears, asthma or swollen glands as a child, you may wish to begin with milk products.
- Wheat -** if you have gastro-intestinal problems such as a lot of gas, diarrhea, constipation, feel depressed, get irritable easily, get in “bad moods” or consider that you have an anger management problem.
- Corn & Sugar -** if you have sinus problems or if you crave popcorn, corn chips or sugar.
- Other -** if you suspect something else (like caffeine or MSG), take it out! See what happens! You might suspect a particular substance because you notice you don’t feel well when you’ve had too much of it or because you crave it.

Choose only one food at first. If you want to experiment with other possibilities, you can do that later. Many of my clients have had very good results with the careful selection and elimination of just ONE food from their diet.

Be very careful that you do NOT try to eliminate more than one or two foods from your diet without medical supervision. You do not want to run the risk of malnutrition. If you find that you are sensitive to a lot of substances, you may wish to consider a 5-day rotation of the offending foods, rather than complete elimination. A referral to an allergist, clinical ecologist, naturopath, homeopath or dietitian may also be prudent.

STEP #3: Make up a menu.

You want to keep your diet as similar to your present diet as possible. You are testing the effect of CHANGING only ONE factor at a time. If you change more than one aspect of your life and you feel better, you won't know why.

For your convenience, I have provided sample milk-, wheat-, corn- & sugar-free menus in *Appendix B* (page 123). These are just to show you what kinds of things you CAN have. It is important for you to read the information carefully and then make up your own menu for the seven days off the food you have chosen. You want to be very careful as you remove foods **to ensure that your underlying nutrition is adequate**. You do not want to be hungry nor eat the same food every day. Variety is important, as is representation from the protein, vegetable, fruit and starch food groups: see *Appendix C* (page 127). You need to do some homework before you begin to eliminate the "suspected food"!

You might also want to have your menu checked by someone who is knowledgeable in the area of nutrition. If you do NOT make up a menu and have it checked, chances are that you might accidentally include something with that selected food in it. Then your whole test will be ruined.

***Make a decision about which ONE food you want to eliminate.
Keep your menu similar to what you normally eat.
Just vary the ONE factor!***

If you have no idea of what you might be sensitive to, you might want to consider formal testing (i.e., scratch testing, blood samples or electrodermal analysis). Formal allergy testing may tell you WHAT your sensitivities are, but it will NOT tell you the effect these sensitivities are having on your emotions, attention or thinking. I recommend that you experiment with one or two foods and then make a decision to get any potential allergies treated through newer techniques such as N.A.E.T. (Nambutripad's Allergy Elimination Technique⁹) or others that seem to be safe and effective.

⁹ For more information on this technique, visit www.naet.com

Once you know what you are sensitive to, you will still need to take it out of your diet for a week to see what, if anything, this substance is doing to your mood.

What are you going to try first?

 **WRITE DOWN...**

- MILK-FREE WHEAT-FREE CORN & SUGAR-FREE
 ANOTHER FOOD/SUBSTANCE _____

What do you normally eat? Make your menu as similar as possible to what you normally eat. Be sure to include four or five options in each meal category. Try not to eat the same thing two days in a row. Variety is the spice of life! (See *Appendix B*, page 123 if you need menu ideas.)

Time	Ideas for Meals
Breakfast	
Lunch	
Supper	
Snacks	

You may want to have a dietitian or someone knowledgeable about food double check your menu to ensure that you have eliminated all the foods in the category you are testing.

STEP #4: Measure how you feel every day of the test.

It is very important to fill out the ***Screening Checklist for Depression*** (SCD) (page 4) and the ***Symptom and Food Diary*** (SFD) (page 5) **EVERY DAY of the ten day food test** (i.e., seven days for the elimination and three days for the re-introduction of the food you have chosen). Having other people (i.e., teacher, parent, child, partner) fill out the ***Screening Checklist for Depression*** before you begin and each day of the test will help you to gather information on the effects of food on your mood. Having multiple observers increases the power of your observations and ratings and makes them more “objective”.

Using these forms will give you actual numbers to compare along with your observations of how you feel. You can show these records to your doctor, friend or other professional who might be involved in helping you to interpret the results. Sometimes, the results will be obvious. Other times, it can be more difficult to tell.

If you **write down everything you eat** and you have an unexpected reaction or symptom, then you can look back at your records and see what you ate that day. It might be due to something you had never suspected!

STEP #5: Take the test food out of the diet for seven days.

This time period is usually long enough to tell whether or not the food in question is having an effect on your physical or depressive symptoms. However, if you are addicted to the substance, the first three days of the week long test can be quite difficult. You might feel extra tired or your mind will try to play tricks on you to try to get you to “cheat” or “quit the experiment”. Your mind might say that you could never live like this, that it is ridiculous, so why bother? I find it helpful to remind myself that I am on a “fact-finding mission”. This is usually enough to get over this hump of resistance. You want to know if this substance is hurting you. If you find out that it is not good for you, you will still have choices: to continue eating that particular food, to reduce the amount eaten, or to build up your body so that it can handle it.

*If you can get through the first three days
you are usually home free!*

STEP #6: Reintroduce the test food for three days.

This is often a challenging step, especially if you are feeling a LOT better! If you don't put the substance back in your diet, chances are that several months down the road, you will wonder if you really felt better because you eliminated the substance or because of some other factor. Be sure to fill out the *Symptom and Food Diary* and *Screening Checklist for Depression* during this time, too.

STEP #7: Analyze the results.

Once you have completed Step #6, you will need to decide if there is another substance you would like to explore or not. If you have felt better OFF the first food you chose, be sure to keep it out of your diet when you take out the next food. You want to see how well you can feel, as naturally as possible. Be careful not to eliminate more than one or two substances from your diet unless you are under careful medical supervision.

If you are feeling better...

If the results are obvious, and you feel a lot better - physically and in terms of your depression, your problems may be solved! You will need to decide what you want to do next. See Step #8.

If you are better in some ways, but not in others...

Maybe you feel a bit better physically, but your depressive symptoms are still present. You will want to continue exploring factors related to your Body, Mind and Spirit.

If you are NOT feeling any better...

Remember that 90-95% of my clients report feeling physically better when they took just one food out of their diet. If you are not feeling better, I wonder if you:

- made up a menu before you began the experiment with food
- filled out the ***Symptom and Food Diary*** every day (including the food you ate and a rating for each of the physical symptoms)
- had enough to eat
- ate a balanced diet
- accidentally included the food you had chosen to eliminate
- chose the wrong food, based on what you were willing to take out of your diet and not according to your physical symptoms. (See Step #2, page 33.)

In this case, you may want to re-read the guidelines for selecting a food, consult a dietitian or find a professional with expertise in these areas.

If you followed the directions perfectly and didn't notice any difference in how you felt or the numbers on the Symptom and Food Diary, maybe you don't have a problem with food. I find this only in 1-2% of the people I see.

STEP #8: Decide what to do.

If you have discovered that you are feeling much better OFF certain foods, you have some decisions to make.

- Do you want to continue to eat foods that are hurting you and simply endure the symptoms? At least you know that you do not **have** to continue to feel depressed if eliminating certain foods took away the symptoms.
- Eliminate the food from your diet completely (see Mandell, 1979; 1981).
- Have it no more than once every 5 days.
- Treat the allergens (with desensitization or some of the newer procedures).
- Build up your body's ability to handle it. See ***How is Your Stress Bucket*** (page 41).

This is your decision¹⁰.

¹⁰ See books like Dr. Marshall Mandel's, **The Five-day Allergy Relief System & Allergy Free Cookbook** for more information about food sensitivities.

*Every **BODY** is different and you will only know what works for **YOU** by trying it out.*

Are you getting enough water, sleep, exercise and proper nutrition?

Water

Most people should be drinking 6-8 glasses of water each day. A lot of people believe that by drinking liquids (such as coffee, tea or juice) they are getting the water they need. This is not correct - we need to have water all by itself to be of use to our brains.

If you are not thirsty or you don't like the taste of water, get into the habit of drinking some water first thing in the morning and at other times throughout the day. You will find that your body will start feeling thirsty and you will begin to enjoy drinking water. You may also wish to experiment with different kinds of water (i.e., Spring water, distilled or reverse osmosis) to see if you enjoy the taste better.

Sleep

Many of us are sleep-deprived. We are just plain tired¹¹. In this state, we have less patience, can think less clearly and we weaken our immune systems and are more prone to sickness. We usually don't enjoy life when we are in a tired state. Most of us know how much sleep we need. I encourage you to try to get it. Go to bed earlier. You will never be able to accomplish everything that you have to do anyway. You may need to decide what is a priority for today and what can wait.

¹¹ There are many other causes of tiredness, especially if you are getting enough sleep. These include: Thyroid, Hypoglycemia, Fibromyalgia, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Diabetes and Sleep Apnea. See your physician for a diagnosis.

If you can't get an eight hour chunk of time to sleep, you may want to consider getting five or six hours at one time and then supplementing this with a couple of 20 minute power naps or meditation time. See the ***Light and Love Meditation*** (page 82). You can even just lie down, relax and concentrate on your breathing. When I do this for 20 minutes it seems to be worth about 2 hours of sleep! I encourage you to find out if meditation helps you get some badly needed rest.

Exercise¹²

Regular exercise plays an important part in the treatment of depression. For example, different types of exercise have been shown to be helpful in individuals with mild to moderate depression. Dr. Christine Northrup in ***The Wisdom of Menopause*** refers to studies by Adlercreutz and colleagues who reported that 50% of the participants who were depressed were cured by exercise alone. So you see that exercise can have a significant effect on your mood.

It doesn't matter what you do to exercise, as long as you do something! Even dancing around the house to your favourite music can help. Exercise changes brain chemistry by increasing chemicals in our bodies that are known as "beta-endorphins". These are sometimes thought of as our body's natural painkillers. As these endorphins are released, we often feel re-energized, revitalized and even better able to relax.

Nobody cares if you can't dance well ... just get up and dance!

Proper Nutrition

People should have a variety of foods from each of the four food basic groups (i.e., fruit, protein, starch and vegetable). See ***Appendix C*** (page 127) if you are not sure which foods fit into which category. It is better to eat food that is as close to its natural state as possible, rather than highly refined food. Sugar, alcohol and caffeine should be taken in moderation, if at all.

¹² With thanks to Kimberley Eckert, C. Psych. for helping create this section

If you are a vegetarian, it is important to ensure that your vegetables include legumes. See *Appendix C* (page 127) for examples under the protein category. When you combine these legumes with a starch you get a complete protein. You may want to ask your doctor about taking a weekly B12 supplement. If you do not eat milk products, be sure to consult with your doctor or health food store and take a Calcium/Magnesium supplement.

We tend to overload on certain foods by eating them everyday. People think that they are getting variety when they have an egg salad sandwich one day, a ham sandwich the next and a turkey sandwich on the third day. There is variety in the fillings, but there is always wheat in their bread. Eating milk and wheat products every day may be harming our health.

Try to eat a particular food no more often than once every five days. Be sure that you get a balance across the four food groups of fruit, protein, starch and vegetable. If you would like more detailed instructions on good nutrition (for both men and women), including menu ideas, you may refer to a Sample Healthy Diet written by Marcelle Pick. It is included in the Appendix of another book by Dr. Christine Northrup called *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*. You may also want to check with your family doctor or a dietitian to ensure that you are getting a proper balance of nutrients.

How is your “stress bucket”?

Stress can be defined as an uncomfortable physical or mental reaction to problems or events in life. People find it helpful to think in terms of each of us as having a personal “stress bucket”. When we are filled with too many stressors, our bucket overflows and we have symptoms. The symptoms can be physical (i.e., sneezing or itching), mental (i.e., problems making decisions or concentrating) or emotional (i.e., depression, anxiety, tearfulness or anger).

Examples of stressors include: allergies to dust, excessive tiredness, insufficient money, worrying about a teenager, arguments with your partner, too busy to cope, working the night shift, rush-hour traffic and so on.

What are your symptoms when your stress bucket begins to overflow?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> sneezing, wheezing, itching or pain | <input type="checkbox"/> anger or sarcasm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> anxiety or panic | <input type="checkbox"/> fatigue or shutting down |
| <input type="checkbox"/> concentration | <input type="checkbox"/> crying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other? _____ | |

If we can learn to recognize our responses (both in ourselves and others), we can help each other begin to manage our stress before it takes over our lives.

 **WRITE DOWN ...**

On the following chart, list as many stressors as you can.

STRESSORS	STRESSORS	STRESSORS

Now you have a choice. You can continue to suffer or you can try to re-arrange your life. If you don't want to suffer from stress-induced symptoms, you can either:

- a) reduce the stressors and empty out your stress bucket or
- b) increase the size of your "stress bucket" by using some of the strategies listed on page 44.

Now, re-examine the sources of stress in the previous chart and see if there are any you can eliminate and which ones you might just need to accept for now. For instance, you could reduce some of the stressors mentioned above by:

- allergy to dust - purchase an electronic air cleaner
- excessive tiredness - get more sleep, or meditate for 20 minutes each day (see page 83)

You could try managing other stressors by:

- arguments with partner - improve communication by using I-messages and Active Listening (see page 54)
- too busy to cope - cut down on your involvements
- rush hour traffic - use the time for listening to taped books or interesting radio programs

 **WRITE DOWN...**

STRESS I CAN ELIMINATE OR REDUCE	HOW???
STRESS I NEED TO ACCEPT AND LEARN TO MANAGE	HOW???

*You can't do it all at once, but you will feel better if you just begin...
What do you feel like addressing first?*

In addition to trying to reduce some of your stressors, you can also try to increase the size of your stress bucket. In this way, you can handle more stress without experiencing the symptoms of an overflowing bucket. This can be done in a variety of ways, including:

- i) nutritional supplements (e.g., Stress Tabs)
- ii) physical exercise (e.g., walking, biking, aerobics, yoga, Tai Chi or dancing)
- iii) laughing, having fun, doing something you enjoy everyday!
- iv) deep breathing or relaxation
- v) meditation (e.g., Christian, Vipassana, Chi Gong)
- vi) prayer

You don't need to do all of these. Just choose one or two of them and see what effect these activities have on your stress bucket. There is good stress (e.g., wanting to do a good job) and bad stress (e.g., getting angry and irritated at other drivers). Without any challenges we would not be stimulated. Therefore, we need a happy medium of stress in our lives. I recommend that we all try to keep our stress buckets half-full. This allows us to feel challenged and while still being able to absorb a few unexpected stresses without having our stress buckets overflow.

In this section on THE BODY, we explored possible effects of food and environmental sensitivities on your depression and reviewed the importance of enough water, sleep, nutrition, exercise and stress management. If you have these bases covered, it is probably time to consider factors related to THE MIND.



THE MIND

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Do you have safe ways to express your anger?

One of the most common reasons for depressive feelings is anger kept inside oneself – anger not expressed. They might be bottled up because they are not considered “nice” feelings, maybe they don’t seem reasonable, perhaps it seems dangerous to say how you feel or you don’t see the point in sharing how you feel. You don’t think it will make any difference, so why should you do anything with it? Maybe people don’t know HOW to express their thoughts and feelings or they are worried about feeling uncomfortable or looking foolish if they try to do it.

These are some of the many reasons people might choose NOT to express their feelings, especially anger. By choosing to keep your feelings inside, you are ultimately hurting yourself. The feelings can fester; almost like what happens when you have an infection in your body. In this way, these feelings can become “poisonous” to our minds and result in our feeling sad, depressed and/or badly about ourselves.

We know that there are no right or wrong feelings. Some of these feelings are very uncomfortable and you may decide that you want to feel differently about a particular situation. If so, the *A-B-C's of Emotion* (page 59) could assist you. Let's say that you are angry and you feel that you have a right to be. You want to be angry and how you feel is how you feel. No one can argue with that. However, there are healthy and unhealthy ways to express how you are feeling. It is also very important to find safe ways of letting these feelings out.

*It is important to Recognize, Accept and Express
ALL of your feelings –
especially anger.*

Recognizing Your Feelings

The first step is to realize that you are feeling angry. Sometimes you don't even know that you are angry. You may be banging books or doors around your home or office, cutting people off in traffic or not listening to what your family members are saying. Other people may say, "What's eating you?" You may not know, or you may feel that it is a silly thing to feel angry about.

The first thing is to ask yourself, "Is there anything I am feeling angry about?" Parents can ask the same question to their children, "Is there anything that is making you feel angry?" Hurt? Scared? If I am ever feeling down and I don't know why, I will ask myself if there is anything at all I could be angry about. Then I try to get in touch with those feelings.

You might want to say whatever comes to mind, or make a list. Maybe you need to spend some quiet time alone to think about it. Writing in a daily journal may help you put your feeling into words. (See *The Morning Pages*, page 48).

Accepting Your Feelings

When you realize what you are angry about, accept these feelings. They are never wrong, despite what others in your life may believe, say or feel. They are how YOU feel. Others have a right to their own feelings too.

Even if you feel that it is silly or embarrassing or pointless to feel angry, it is important to accept that you feel angry. Sometimes, just allowing ourselves to feel hopeless or despairing helps us to “let it go”. When we accept our feelings for what they are, we seem just to “get over it”. Eckhart Tolle has written a powerful book about the importance of acceptance. This book is called ***The Power of NOW***, and has already been of great help to many people. Once you have accepted the situation you are in, you have three choices:

- i) to stay in the same situation
- ii) to do something to change the situation or
- iii) to leave the situation.

Acceptance of our situation and any feelings that go with it, can be very powerful. It prevents us from wasting our energy on resisting or fighting reality. Instead, we can make a choice as to what we want to do about it and then put our energy into resolving our problems.

If you want to get over your feelings of depression, it will be important to do something about the situation and find safe ways of expressing your feelings.

Expressing Your Feelings

The last step is to find safe ways of expressing your feelings. There are many different ways of expressing angry feelings:

- writing, as in journal or letter-writing. (See page 48).
- talking, as in giving “I messages” and then doing “active listening”. (See page 54).

- moving, as in physical activity such as running, hitting a pillow with a tennis racket, using a punching bag, tearing or cutting up paper
- screaming into the wind (just be careful that no-one is around!)
- can you think of any other ways? _____

Whether it is through writing, talking or physical means, expressing anger is a powerful first strategy to try as a means of resolving your depression. Different methods work for different people. Some of these methods are described in more detail below.

Have you tried to express your anger? What methods feel most comfortable for you? Are you using them? If so, great! If not, why not?

Sometimes we become depressed because we are dealing with situations we don't understand. The techniques outlined in the following section explain several ways you might wish to explore your feelings.

Can you explore your feelings and find solutions to your concerns?

Journal-writing is a wonderful way to express and explore feelings. Some people use a personal journal to write whatever comes to mind. Some write letters to people at whom they are angry or with whom they are having some other kind of problem. They may read the letter to the person or just write it out and rip it up (depending on what feels right to them).

The Morning Pages

I find that writing about how I feel often helps me to understand more about why I am feeling that way. Sometimes I am able to find a solution to my problems through writing about them. In her books, *The Artist's Way* and *A Vein of Gold*, Julia Cameron recommends a technique called "The Morning Pages". She recommends that when we get up in the morning, we take a few minutes to write something out on three 8½ x 11 inch pages. They should be handwritten and can involve anything we are thinking or experiencing. We might even choose to draw or write a poem. It is important to keep

writing, even if you can't think of anything to say. In that case, you would write "I can't think of anything to say" over and over until something else came to mind. I have found this to be a very useful technique for staying in touch with how I am feeling about things and working out how I want to handle certain situations.

How Do I Feel (HDIF) when I think about...

Sometimes it's hard to know how you feel or to express it to another person. There is one method which I find particularly helpful. It has been adapted from the "love letter technique" or "How Do I Feel (HDIF) when I think about..." originally developed by Worldwide Marriage Encounter. It involves coming up with images to express our feelings, according to how a feeling might look, taste, smell, sound or feel. It covers our five senses. On page 50 there is a blank copy of a form you can use to explore your feelings this way.

The first step is to focus in on how you are feeling. Then go through each sense and try to come up with an image that expresses your feeling. If you can't think of anything, go onto to the next sense, until you have covered all five senses.

I find that as I examine the metaphors or images that come up, I can often see a solution to the problem I am facing. Here are some examples of how to use this technique:

People can have very different feelings about situations they are facing. That is why it is important to understand how we feel. Then we can decide whether or not we want to do anything about it.

How Do I Feel when I think about ... all the things I have to do today?

It looks like..... a big crane piling tons of debris on a garbage heap

It tastes like a mouth full of rotten apple

It smells like the suffocating smell of ether

It sounds like..... an air raid siren

I feel..... overwhelmed

In this case, the metaphors suggest that the person is overwhelmed with the number of tasks that need to be accomplished.

How Do I Feel (HDIF) when I think about ...

It looks like... _____

It tastes like... _____

It smells like... _____

It sounds like... _____

I feel... _____

What is the common theme in your images?
Can you see any “solution” to your concerns?

Adapted from Worldwide Marriage Encounter’s “Love Letter” technique
by Dr. Teeya Scholten, C. Psych. Calgary, AB. (403) 230-2959

In the previous example, it may be that many of the things that need to be done are not so important, but still on their mind. A strategy in this situation might be to write down all the things that need to be done, to prioritize the most important and to decide to work on one or two items on the list each day.

Here is another example:

How Do I Feel when I think about ... my partner constantly asking me to do things around the house?

It looks like..... a black vulture sitting on my head picking at my hair
It tastes like vomit
It smells like tear gas
It sounds like..... a tap dripping constantly when I'm trying to sleep
I feel..... angry and irritated

Once the individual has figured out what his feelings are, he then has some choices to make. He may choose to simply reflect on his emotions privately or he may decide to share his feelings with his partner so that they can problem solve together. No matter what his decision, it has been good for him to get in touch with his feelings.

If he wants to find a solution to the problem, he may decide to analyze the metaphors more carefully. In this case, there is the irritating aspect of the repetitive requests, like a bird picking at his scalp or the constant drip, drip, drip of a faucet. One possible solution would be to find ways to reduce the constant requests. An idea might be to make a list of chores that need to be done and to post it on the fridge. In this way, the person who has been making the requests is assured that their partner is aware of what needs to be done. When either of them are ready to do something around the house, they can look at the list and see what is needed. They might wish to try this strategy for a few weeks to see if it alleviates the problem.

The only real rule in using this technique is that you cannot use images that are close to the reality of a situation. For instance, in the example above, the person could NOT have said "*It looks like... one person yelling at another*". It has to be a metaphor for the feelings, not a reflection of the concrete reality of a particular situation.

In the next example, we have another person who uses this technique to deal with spiritual issues she is facing.

This HDIF was created by Tasleem who you met earlier in *Myth #2*, page 14. She had been originally frustrated by some policy decisions that were being made at the post-secondary institution she was attending. Soon, her thoughts were spiraling down to how unfair life was, in general. This downward spiral is an all-too-common experience when negative thinking takes over. However, the issues are often real ones that need to be addressed sooner or later.

How Do I Feel when I think about ... how unfair life is?

It looks like.....a coal mine – a dark, black, enclosed space

It tastes likea medicine that you can't swallow since it sticks to the roof of your mouth

It smells likea steam room- suffocating

It sounds like.....the deafening roar of an airplane engine when you are standing underneath it

I feel.....enraged

You can see from the metaphors that certain images might have unique or special meaning to different people. For instance, this person actually feels comforted by dark, enclosed spaces, but not where you have to breathe in coal dust. You may like steam rooms, but she doesn't. These metaphors which occurred to her, helped both of us to understand her feelings better.

From her point of view, these images reflected feelings of being overwhelmed and enraged by her educational environment, which in other ways was good for her. It was like medicine that is difficult to swallow. The enclosed space represented a sense of security for her, because she knew she had to be there, as the courses she was taking were necessary to her career development. Nevertheless, she was trapped or stuck in a very unpleasant and overwhelming situation.

Can you see a solution to her problems? It may be hard not knowing all the details of her situation, but as we worked together on the HDIF, it seemed like the solution to the stressfulness of the situation was to be free of the suffocating feelings, the deafening roar of the engine, the stickiness of the

medicine. She needed to escape from this. How could she leave a situation that was unpleasant, but necessary for her career?

Do you have any idea how you can “get out” of a situation where you can’t actually leave it? She might try detachment. Sometimes deciding not to resist what is happening can be very freeing. Responding to life from a moment-to-moment perspective, accepting what you cannot change, having courage to change the things you can and having the wisdom to know the difference. See *The Serenity Prayer* on page 96. Some people are able to distance themselves from a difficult situation through prayer or meditation, by connecting with a source of Love, Light, Spirit or a loving place within themselves. It can also help to think of life as a journey – a play. Dr. Brent Haskell’s book, *A Course in Miracles* has helped many people to put their life into perspective.

By using the *HDIF technique*, Tasleem and I were able to begin to explore Tasleem’s deeper issues. She had a hard time trusting Spirit who she blamed for the severe abuse she had experienced in her childhood. These are common spiritual issues which I believe need to be addressed before deeper emotional healing can take place. More of Tasleem’s HDIF metaphors relating to these types of concerns will be presented in the section on *The Spirit* (page 75).

Before we move onto another topic, it is important to know you can use the *HDIF technique* for getting in touch with positive feelings too! Here is an example.

How Do I Feel when I think about ... having dinner together as a family?

It looks like..... a Banana Split

It tastes like a chewy Eatmore chocolate bar - yummy

It smells like Chanel No. 5 perfume

It sounds like..... a crackling fire in the fireplace

I feel..... comforted

You have now seen how using the HDIF technique can help you to get in touch with and understand your feelings. It can assist in finding effective solutions to problems that, in turn, keep the amount of stress in your “stress buckets” as low as possible. Sharing your feelings with people you trust can also be a powerful means for building strong, mutually supportive

relationships. These contribute to your quality of life and are essential for your sense of well-being. In the following section, you will learn some other techniques for relationship building - sharing how you feel and listening to others.

I-messages and Active Listening

Sometimes we are angry at particular people or situations and we need to do more than just write about it. Sharing the metaphors that occur to us in the “How Do I Feel (HDIF) when I think about ...” technique might be too threatening, especially if trust is an issue. In this case, it can be very helpful to learn how to communicate our feelings with anyone, in safe and respectful ways. Using *I-messages* can be very helpful in sharing how you feel, no matter what your emotion – positive or negative.

I feel _____ **when you** _____.
 (name your emotion) (describe the action or problem)

For instance, you might say,

“I feel angry when you don’t call and let me know where you are.”

“I feel frustrated when you interrupt me.”

“I feel worried when you come home so late.

“I feel appreciated when you bring me flowers.”

“I feel thankful when you take out the garbage.”

“I feel happy when you share your feelings.

You start with “I feel” and then express an emotion. The emotion could be any one of hundreds of options, including:

Angry	Frustrated	Confused	Guilty
Sad	Hopeless	Depressed	Grateful
Happy	Encouraged	Hopeful	Peaceful

Once you have expressed the emotion you are feeling, you are free to describe the situation (i.e., “when you..”). You cannot name call or insult the other person or go into a long-winded history of the problem. An I-message is just one sentence, preferably no more than 15 words.

Sending *I-messages* is usually a very safe and powerful way to communicate. But many people have never been taught HOW to do this, or they do it wrongly. In the examples below, see if you can tell what is incorrect about the statements on the right side of the chart.

I-MESSAGES

CORRECT	INCORRECT
"I feel angry when you don't call and let me know where you are."	"I feel that you are inconsiderate when you don't call me and let me know where you are."
"I feel frustrated when you interrupt me."	"I wish you would let me finish speaking!"
"I feel worried when you come home so late."	"I feel that you should not come home so late."
"I feel appreciated when you bring me flowers."	"I can't believe that you brought me flowers!"
"I feel thankful when you take out the garbage."	"I'm glad to see you doing something around the house!"
"I feel happy when you share your feelings."	"It's nice to know how you are feeling."

Often people believe that if they start their statement with "I feel" and then put in a "you are" that this makes an "I-message". It doesn't. When my children were growing up, they thought that "I messages" were "Eye messages" – Look at the person in the eye and say whatever you wanted to, like "Give me back my toy!!!" Eventually they DID learn, but it is easy to misunderstand how to give a proper I-message. You must begin with "I feel" and then add the word to describe your EMOTION. Only then, can you say "when you..." and describe the situation.

One of the good things about *I-messages* is that it allows your feelings to be expressed. One of the disadvantages is that the person you are sharing your

feelings with can become defensive and react to what you are saying. This can be uncomfortable. but it can provide an opportunity to vent their feelings as well. When this happens, I advise clients to try to forget about your own issue for a while and begin to listen to the other person.

Just reflect or paraphrase what is being said to you. Start each statement with “You feel...” and listen to the emotions behind the statement from the other person. This is called “Active Listening”. Give them your full attention, look at them carefully, stop what you are doing and actively listen to what the other person is saying and feeling.

Listen to the dialogue below between a mother (M) and her 15-year-old daughter, Danielle (D). In this very typical example, the mother started with an “I message”, but the daughter reacted in a negative way and got angry:

M: “Danielle, I feel worried when you don’t tell me where you are”.

D: “Well isn’t that too bad!”

In **Scenario #1**, the mother decides to do active listening. In **Scenario #2**, she reacts with anger at her daughter’s insolent comment. See what kind of difference this can make.

Scenario #1 – Mother decides to do “Active Listening”.

She listens to the feelings of her daughter until they seem to be completely vented or expressed or the matter is resolved. Notice the number of times the mother just listens, when she might be tempted to correct her daughter’s misunderstanding or answer her questions directly.

M: You feel angry when I tell you how I am feeling angry.

D: You’re right! You don’t care how I’m feeling, so why should I care about how YOU are feeling?

M: You feel unsure about whether or not I care about your feelings.

D: You don’t care about anybody.

M: You feel disappointed that I don’t seem to care about anybody.

D: You don’t care about anybody.

M: You feel certain that I don’t care about anybody.

D: Actually, I know that you care about me. I just hate being watched all the time.

M: You feel resentful that I am paying attention to what you are doing.

D: Yes, I think that you don’t trust me.

M: You are afraid that I don't trust you.

D: Yes, that is how it seems when you are always asking me where I am going.

M: You feel insulted when I ask about your plans, because that suggests that I don't trust you to make the right decision.

D: That's right and I hate it.

This is quite a long dialogue, but you can see that a lot of frustration and misunderstandings are being expressed. You can see how listening to her daughter resulted in a calming of emotions. The daughter was even able to see that some of the things she said were not reasonable, so she corrected herself (e.g., “*Actually, I know that you care about me.*”). Watch how listening well eventually leads to a solution to the problem, and the daughter even comes up with it herself!

M: You feel pretty angry that I don't trust you to make the right decision.

D: Oh, I know that you trust me, I just hate being watched.

M: You feel cramped by my watchful eyes.

D: Yes I do. It's none of your business what I do.

M: You feel bothered by my trying to know your business.

D: Yes, I am grown up now and I want to live my own life.

M: You feel sure that you are capable of making all of your own decisions.

D: Yes I do. If I want your opinion, I will ask.

At this point, the mother will have to decide whether to continue “Active Listening” or to give her own reactions. Let's say she decides that her daughter seems to be more calm now and settled and that it would be appropriate to explore options for a solution.

M: Actually, that seems like a good idea for you to ask my advice if you want my opinion. I apologize for giving you advice that you weren't requesting. I do trust you to make responsible decisions, Danielle and I am sorry if it doesn't seem that way to you.

My problem is that I feel convinced that in a family, it is respectful of one another to make sure we know where the other people are. That's the rule in our family. I'm sorry if you find it difficult or insulting; but can you think of any way that we can be respectful towards each other without making it seem like we are snooping around or not trusting each other?

D: I have an idea. Why don't we have a white board like they do at your office? I will write down where I am and when I'll be back and you can do it too.

M: I think that sounds like a great idea. Let's try it for a few weeks and see how it works.

D: O.K. I love you, Mom. Thanks for listening to my ideas.

If the mother had NOT chosen to active listen, the discussion might have ended much more abruptly and without any solution to the problem, as we will see in the next scenario. This is certainly a familiar pattern to many of us. Sometimes we just "lose it". We are human, after all!

Scenario #2: Mother decides NOT to do active listening and gets angry instead. This is how it all began...

M: "Danielle, I feel worried when you don't tell me where you are".

D: "Well isn't that too bad!"

M: That is no way to talk to your Mother, young lady. Get to your room!

D: Make me! I dare you to!

M: That's enough of that - you are grounded for a month.

D: Oh sure, just try it. I'm tired of living here anyway! I'm going to move in with Aaron. Good-bye!

How many teens do you know who have ended up on the streets or at their friend's homes as a result of an interaction very similar to this? It was certainly shorter, didn't take as much time or thought, but the results were disastrous. The ***I-message*** and ***Active Listening***, or "I-feel... You feel...", way of communicating can defuse a potentially hostile situation and lead to much greater understanding. Once you have talked out the situation fully by listening to each other's feelings, you may choose to problem solve -but not before you have listened. Sometimes just venting our anger or listening to the feelings of the other person takes care of the problem. In other situations, you may need to work more actively on solving the problem by exploring possible options and their consequences.

The ***I-message*** and ***Active Listening*** approach may seem awkward at first, but it is amazingly powerful if you can persist with listening to the feelings of the person who is upset. If you want to learn more about how to communicate in this way, please refer to a book by Adele Faber, ***How to Talk so Kids will Listen***.

Communication skills are extremely important to learn. I feel that they should be taught from the earliest grades and be a required life skill for all of us. It is amazing how much conflict can be resolved at home, work and on international fronts with some of these simple communication tools.

However, sometimes the people you live and work with are not open to problem-solving. Sometimes there are no apparent solutions. In this case, you may want to make a decision about whether or not you want to continue feeling angry, frustrated, guilty or resentful. Feeling this way on a continual basis can create high levels of stress that can be dangerous to your Mind, Body and Spirit. The tool described in the next section illustrates how you can be in charge of HOW you are feeling in any situation.

CAN you choose how you WANT to feel?

It was Dr. Albert Ellis who first proposed in the 1950's that people could actually choose HOW they wanted to feel about a situation. He explained that although you do not usually have a lot of control over what happens to you in life, you do have control over what you believe about it. And whatever you choose to say to yourself or believe about the situation, will automatically determine how you FEEL as a result.

It was a revolutionary concept at the time, and it has been further developed by therapists such as Dr. David Burns in his ***Feeling Good Handbook***. It is now one of the most commonly-used forms of therapy for depression. Often, our beliefs about a situation are unconscious. This tool can help us become aware of what we are thinking. We can then consciously choose another belief if we wish. The model presented below is a simplified one that I find works very well and is respectful of people's choices. Sometimes, it's appropriate to feel sad (for instance about someone's death) but if these feelings become a problem, know that there are ways to deal with it. Here's how it works:

The A-B-C's of Emotion

Dr. Ellis's original model was called A-B-C: In this model,
A – represents the “Activating Event” or “The Facts” of a situation
B – describes your “Belief” about the event
C – stands for the “Consequence” – your emotions or how you feel as a direct result of your beliefs.

Here is a concrete example of how it works. You are in your car on your way home when an impatient driver cuts in front of you. The facts (A) are what actually happened in this situation. You have a choice about what you think or believe (B) about the situation. There are many options: just be aware that there are no "good" or "bad" beliefs or feelings here. However, the belief you choose will determine (C) your emotions or how you feel about what happened (the consequence). This process usually takes place so fast and so automatically that you are not consciously aware of your beliefs. You are first aware of your emotional reaction to the situation.

After the car cuts in front of you, if you feel angry, it is likely that you were thinking something like *“How dare that guy think he can push me around like that! I’ll show him a thing or two!!!”*. If you don’t want to feel angry, you might want to choose another belief. If you want to feel peaceful (C3), when people cut you off in traffic, you would say B3 to yourself next time it happens (i.e. *“It’s a shame he/she has to be in such a hurry.”*).

If we choose to BELIEVE...		The consequence will be this EMOTION...
B1 – <i>“How dare that guy think he can push me around like that! I’ll show him a thing or two!!!”</i>	⇒	C1 – Anger
B2 – <i>“There are so many inconsiderate drivers on the road these days. What is our society coming to?”</i>	⇒	C2 – Sadness
B3 - <i>“It’s a shame he has to be in such a hurry. He’d probably enjoy life a lot more if he could find ways to slow down.”</i>	⇒	C3 – Peaceful

It's amazing how easily this can work. The important point here is that many people do not realize that their thoughts have a major role to play in determining HOW they feel about things that are happening to them. I believe that there are no right and wrong ways to feel. Certainly, it feels better to me if I feel peaceful or thankful. However you WANT to feel is up to you. The idea of this activity is to help you understand how you can choose to feel about any situation.

This is what I recommend when you are dealing with a certain situation that is bothersome:

- Fill out the *A-B-C's of Emotion* chart found on the next page. See pages 64 and 66 for examples of completed charts. First fill out an Activating Event or what happened in the first place. Then create for yourself different possible beliefs for each feeling. I call this "creating a smorgasbord of options" to consider. You don't have to really believe certain things to write them down, just give yourself some choices.
- Once you have created a statement for each feeling that is listed in the shaded columns, then you are ready to make a selection of how YOU WANT to feel. There is no right or wrong feeling or belief to have, it's all up to you.
- Circle the feeling that you want to have and put a star beside that belief statement.
- The next time the situation occurs, try thinking the belief that you have put a star beside.

Remember!
***YOU are in charge of deciding how
 you want to feel in a situation.***

The hardest beliefs to come up with are those that result in feelings of thankfulness or peacefulness - but it sure feels better inside. See the completed examples on pages 64 and 66.

The A-B-C's of Emotion

A - _____

What happened? What are the facts?

B - _____

What did you say to yourself about the facts?

C - _____

How did you feel about what happened?

Belief	Consequence	Belief	Consequence
1.	Angry	6.	Confused
2.	Hurt	7.	Hopeful
3.	Depressed	8.	Happy
4.	Hopeless	9.	Thankful
5.	Guilty	10.	Peaceful

* Adapted by Scholten (2002) from the work of Dr. Albert Ellis

Let's look at a few examples of how the *A-B-C's of Emotion* Method can be used.

In the first situation, Ms. Smyth's 10-year-old daughter, Melissa, was teased about wearing braces by Susie, one of her classmates. Melissa came home crying and Ms. Smyth was extremely angry about the situation. She decided to fill out the *A-B-C's of Emotion* chart to help her decide what she was going to do about the situation. You may want to have a look at her completed chart on page 64 before reading further.

Ms. Smyth calmly thought about all of the options for how she might choose to think about this situation. Then she decided that she wanted to feel peaceful. In order to feel this way, she would have to choose the belief "*Susie must be a pretty unhappy child. She needs our prayers and understanding.*" She spoke to her daughter, Melissa and showed her the chart. Melissa agreed with her mother that Susie probably needed loving thoughts. Every time after that, when Melissa saw Susie, she would wish Susie well in the silence of her heart. At first, Susie appeared to be puzzled by Melissa's behavior. Soon, she began to smile at Melissa instead of teasing. A year later, they were the best of friends.

In the second situation, we meet Edith, a 68 year old grandmother who was upset that her son, Chuck was not phoning her. Her husband had died 10 years earlier, and since she had retired a few years ago, she had become more and more depressed. Life just wasn't the same and she felt that she had nothing to live for. She loved her only son, Chuck and she was feeling more and more angry that he never called her. She had tried *I-messages*, but Chuck just got angry. It seemed like there was nothing else she could do to get Chuck to call her. Finally, she got tired of feeling bitter and angry and decided to explore some other ways of feeling. Edith knew she was free to decide how she WANTED TO FEEL in any situation, but she had some homework to do. Her first step was to fill out the *A-B-C's of Emotion* chart (page 66).

The A-B-C's of Emotion

(Ms. Smyth's Chart)

A - Susie teased my daughter, Melissa
 What happened? What are the facts?

B - How dare anyone hurt my precious child!!!!
 What did you say to yourself about the facts?

C - Angry
 How did you feel about what happened?

Belief	Consequence	Belief	Consequence
1. (see above)	Angry	6. <i>Why would anyone do such a thing?</i>	Confused
2. <i>I feel so badly when Melissa is upset</i>	Hurt	7. <i>Maybe someday Susie will be nicer.</i>	Hopeful
3. <i>There's no use in trying to be a good mother with all this evil in the world.</i>	Depressed	8. <i>I'm glad that she was hurt with words and not with actions.</i>	Happy
4. <i>Why do I even try when society will never change?</i>	Hopeless	9. <i>Thank goodness Melissa has an opportunity to learn to deal with this kind of thing early in life.</i>	Thankful
5. <i>I should have taught Melissa to stand up for herself better.</i>	Guilty	10. <i>Susie must be a pretty unhappy child. She needs our prayers and understanding.</i>	Peaceful

Edith realized that the root of her anger at her son was her belief “How dare he ignore me after all these years!” Before looking at her completed *A-B-C's of Emotion* chart on page 66, see if you can come up with some beliefs that Edith could choose, which would result in the emotions listed below. Refer to the completed chart only if you need help.

A: The Facts are: My son, Chuck is not phoning me.

 **WRITE DOWN**

what she is going to say to herself if she wants to feel guilty about Chuck's behavior (see Belief #5):

 **WRITE DOWN**

what she is going to say to herself if she wants to feel confused about Chuck's behavior (see Belief #6):

 **WRITE DOWN**

what she is going to say to herself if she wants to feel peaceful (see Belief #10):

In this case, Edith decided to feel peaceful. Whenever she thought about the fact that Chuck was not phoning her, she would say to herself, “*I accept the fact that Chuck has so much to do. Life must be pretty stressful for him. Hope life calms down for him soon.*”

The A-B-C's of Emotion

(Edith's Chart)

A - Chuck never calls me
 What happened? What are the facts?

B - How dare he ignore me after all these years?
 What did you say to yourself about the facts?

C - Angry
 How did you feel about what happened?

Belief	Consequence	Belief	Consequence
1. (see above)	Angry	6. <i>I can't understand why he doesn't call me.</i>	Confused
2. <i>I feel so badly when my son ignores me.</i>	Hurt	7. <i>Maybe someday Chuck will start calling me.</i>	Hopeful
3. <i>It's so sad when you are not wanted anymore.</i>	Depressed	8. <i>I'm glad that Chuck is able to set limits for himself and stand up for his own needs.</i>	Happy
4. <i>There's no sense hoping that things will ever change.</i>	Hopeless	9. <i>Thank goodness my son is being honest with me and not just pretending to care.</i>	Thankful
5. <i>I should have taught my son to be respectful of his elders.</i>	Guilty	10. <i>I accept the fact that Chuck has so much to do. Life must be pretty stressful for him. Hope life calms down for him soon.</i>	Peaceful

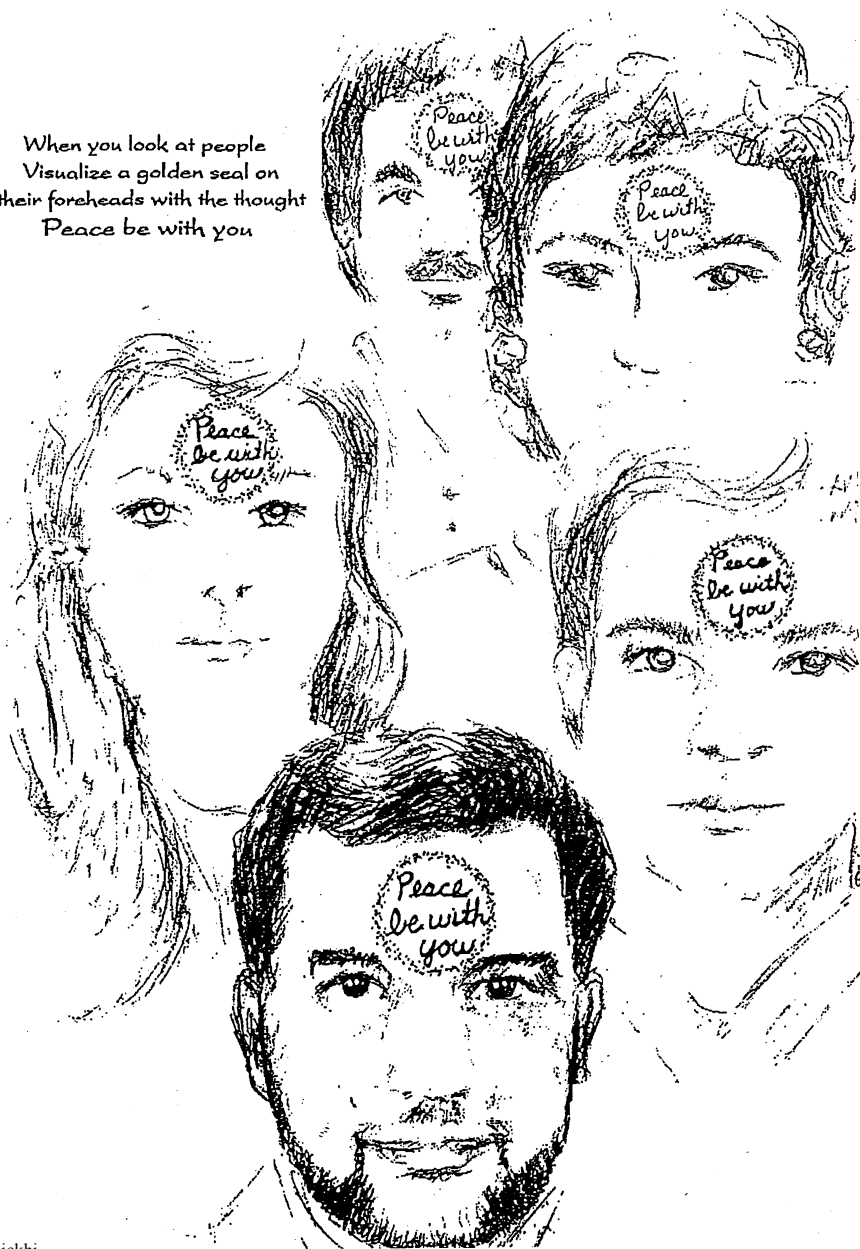
If you have used the *A-B-C's of Emotion* Method and find that you are not able to feel the way you want to feel, even though you are thinking an appropriate belief, it may be that you need to do a little more work exploring your deeper feelings about the situation. That's when the *HDIF method* (page 49) can come in handy. Maybe it's time to write a letter to the person who is upsetting you or have a conversation where you share your feelings in an *I-message* way (page 54). Don't forget to use *Active Listening* after you have made your initial statement.

As it turned out in Edith's case, thinking about how stressed Chuck's life was did help her to get over most of her feelings of anger. She felt more peaceful, but she was not yet "at peace" with the situation. She had a little more work to do. She used the *HDIF technique* and this helped her to understand more about what was going on inside herself. She was then able to see a permanent solution to her problem. She took action and was pleased with the results. These are reviewed in the rest of Edith's story that is found in the next section of this chapter. See *The Spirit* (page 75).

Peace Be With You

As you have seen, one of the feelings on the *ABC's of Emotion* is that of peacefulness. We can work on coming up with belief statements that result in feelings of peace...or we can just send little "love arrows" of peace to those around us. This was what Melissa did to her tormentor Susie, as outlined on page 63. This is a concept that has been an integral part of many of the world's great religions for many centuries. Jewish people have used the term "Shalom" as a greeting. It was used by Jesus and evolved into the expression "Wishing you peace in Christ". A particular tool which has brought renewed meaning to this expression for me is one distributed by Dr. Bud Rickhi, Director of the Integrative Medicine Institute in Calgary, Alberta. It involves looking at another person, focusing on the centre of their forehead and wishing them peace by thinking "Peace Be with You" (page 68). I try to do this with as many people as I can during the day, in a calm way. It gives me such a good and peaceful feeling inside to do this. I am often surprised to see people smiling at me in return.

When you look at people
Visualize a golden seal on
their foreheads with the thought
Peace be with you



Courtesy of Dr. Bud Rickhi
Integrative Medicine Institute,
Calgary, Alberta

Peace Be With You

So far, we have explored safe ways to express anger, explore feelings, look for solutions and choose how we want to feel. The last and final tool related to The Mind is one that relates to self-acceptance.

Do you understand and accept yourself?

Self-acceptance is very important for peace of mind and personal development. One of the ways that we can accept or reject ourselves is through our “Self-Talk”.

“Self-Talk” is what we think or say to ourselves, inside our heads. Our comments are generally either positive or negative. Positive statements might be: “Wow, what a beautiful day!” Or “Good try!”. Negative ones might sound like: “Oh, brother, the weather looks crummy again today.” Or “That was a stupid thing to say!”

Negative and Positive Self-Talk

“Negative self-talk” is a very destructive form of communication that many of us use everyday. When we speak to ourselves or think in negative ways, it is like we are beating ourselves up...continually. We are causing ourselves a lot of pain and hurt, sometimes without even realizing how bad it is for our self-esteem, mood and attitude toward life.

Does any of this sound familiar?

“How could I say such a stupid thing?”

“I’ll never get it right.”

“Who would love such a blob?”

“How could I ever think that I had something to offer?”

“I’m so selfish.”

“I’ll never be able to face her again.”

“What was I thinking when I said that?”

Let's look at the previous statements and see how these might be reframed in a more positive way.

Negative Self-Talk	Positive Self-Talk
<i>"How could I say such a stupid thing?"</i>	<i>Oh well, she knows my heart is in the right place!</i>
<i>"I'll never get it right."</i>	<i>Someday I'll understand how to do this.</i>
<i>"Who would love such a blob?"</i>	<i>No matter how I look, I know that I am lovable and capable inside.</i>
<i>"How could I ever think that I had something to offer?"</i>	<i>At least I tried my best in that situation!</i>
<i>"I'm so selfish."</i>	<i>It's important to communicate our needs to each other.</i>
<i>"I'll never be able to face her again."</i>	<i>I hope that she'll be able to forgive me.</i>
<i>"What was I thinking when I said that?"</i>	<i>It's amazing how quickly things get out of my mouth!</i>

It is important to remember that we HAVE A CHOICE about what we are saying to ourselves – whether it is negative or positive.



WRITE DOWN

the kinds of negative things you sometimes say to yourself. What positive things could you say to yourself instead?

- _____ +

- _____ +

- _____ +

Are you even aware that you are thinking or saying things to yourself? Many people do not know they are doing this. The question is: “Is this what you WANT to be saying to yourself?” “Is this something you would say to someone you love and respect?” This is your very own choice. But it sometimes takes a conscious decision on our part to change a habit.

I used to say a lot of negative things to myself. Then one day, I decided that it was over. I pictured a large black crow sitting on my right shoulder as being the source of the negative statements (see the picture on page 72). They say that you shouldn’t kill parts of yourself, so I imagined tying his beak up with a lovely pink ribbon to keep him from getting more airtime. Then on my left shoulder, I pictured a lovely white bird (see page 73, Positive Self-Talk). It was that white bird’s job to say positive, supportive things to me, particularly when I made a mistake or did something that I regretted.

It wasn’t easy to overcome a lifetime of feeling negative but, with practice, I managed to do it. It is such a relief to receive encouragement from yourself rather than continual criticism. I usually suggest that each person make up some kind of image that represents the positive and the negative side of self-talk. Choose a shoulder for each image to sit on. One young girl chose a snake for the negative side and a furry chinchilla for the positive. She shut up the snake with a rubber band around its mouth. An older gentleman chose a grouchy bear for the negative side and a fun-loving elf for the positive. He decided to put duct tape on the bear’s mouth so that it couldn’t speak any longer.

It doesn’t really matter which images you use, as long as they mean something to you. Assign each one to a particular shoulder and practice giving the positive one lots of airtime!



DRAW OR WRITE DOWN

a kind of animal or figure that you might picture or imagine in your mind

When you are feeling self-critical...

When you are feeling kind to yourself...

Negative Self-Talk



We can really hurt ourselves with the negative things we say or think about ourselves.

Positive Self-Talk



It can be such a relief when we choose to substitute positive or encouraging words in the place of negative statements.

It can really help to take a few moments to come up with a character for yourself and try it out. This helps us be very concrete about the type of self-talk we do. If you want to stop your negative self-talk, you will need to find a way to keep the animal (or whatever it is!) quiet, without harming it. How have you decided to silence it?

Which of these strategies should you try first?

Any of the techniques listed in this section can be of use in clarifying how you feel about a particular situation or helping you to move into a more positive frame of mind. As you take your time and learn each of these strategies, you will probably find that you feel most comfortable with one or two approaches. You may tend to use these more often, but it is probably worth keeping some of the others in mind, in case more work is needed.

What if you can't feel peaceful or happy or thankful, no matter how much you want to do so?

Sometimes you just won't be able to overcome your depression on your own and a therapist will be necessary. If you have learned and mastered the skills in this book (including those presented in the following Chapter on Spirit), you will likely make faster progress in individual therapy, as did the client you read about in *Matt's Story* (page 20). A trained professional will be able to ensure that you have understood and applied these ideas properly. Or s/he may know of more specialized techniques that may be more suited to your individual needs. It takes courage to admit that you can't always solve your problems on your own. Ask for help if you need it.

We have now covered a number of tools related to your Body and Mind. The last area to be addressed relates to Spirit.



THE SPIRIT

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How does Spirit relate to Overcoming Depression?

In order to overcome depression, we need to learn strategies that help us to live in healthy ways. The first two sections of this book presented ways to be healthy in Body and Mind. This section is about strategies for being healthy in Spirit. If we find ways to nurture this part of ourselves, it will help us be the best we can be. Being in touch with Spirit can also help us to handle whatever situation we are facing. We can start to connect with moments of peace and joy. These can grow into feelings of personal fulfillment.

What is Spirit?

What do we mean when we talk about Spirit? Spirit is a special “energy” that is with us every moment of our lives. Many consider it the source of all consciousness. Spirit has been called by many names¹³ including: The Great Spirit, Higher Power, Life Force, Universal Intelligence, Source of Life, Spirit of Love, the Light of the World, God, Yahweh, I AM, Inner Essence and/or God of our understanding.



WRITE DOWN ...

What term do you prefer for Spirit?

As the ideas are presented in this chapter, I encourage you to accept whatever feels useful and let go of what doesn't feel right to you. Through reflection, you will be able to find ways of integrating some of these ideas about Spirit into your life in ways that are helpful to YOU.

What is Spiritual Health?

Spiritual health is shown in the way people live their lives. It is an active process of learning how to place ourselves in the presence of Spirit, opening up to inner guidance and choosing how to respond. It requires an awareness of how we are living our lives every moment of the day.

When we are aware of our spiritual self, this gives direction and meaning to our lives. We get beyond a preoccupation with daily worries and concerns to a deeper connection with the inner part of ourselves that never changes. Some ways to make this connection with Spirit will be discussed on page 81.

¹³ These various names for Spirit will be used throughout this Chapter. As you are reading, I hope that you will feel free to substitute the name that feels most appropriate to you.

We are living in spiritually healthy¹⁴ ways when we:

- are at peace with ourselves, others and the environment
- see ourselves as being connected to a greater whole
- are able to tap into a power greater than ourselves that can offer inner guidance and support

Bishop David Pytches, author of *Come Holy Spirit*, uses the Fruits of the Spirit as a kind of measuring stick for his daily life. He feels that the qualities of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control¹⁵ will be expressed in his life, if he is “on the path” to spiritual health. If they are absent, he is aware that he needs to readjust what he is doing.

Do you agree with this viewpoint? Do you see it differently? If so what do you think?



WRITE DOWN ...

How do YOU know if you are in a place of spiritual health?

People who live in union with Spirit have found a way to allow Spirit to fill their existence and work through them in all of their relationships.¹⁶ They have learned how to go open-handed through their life, ready to listen to the Spirit. They act on these promptings or intuitive feelings that emerge from deep within their consciousness. This way of being seems to be the goal of most spiritual traditions.

Those who practice Yoga as a way of life, refer to their ultimate goal as Samadhi, a state of union with Spirit-consciousness or absorption in Spirit. To the Hindus it is Nirvana, a state of no wind or turmoil-lessness. To the Buddhists, it is Enlightenment, to Muslims, Zikar, to Christians, it is being saved or healed. To New Agers such as Shakti Gawain or Shirley Maclaine,

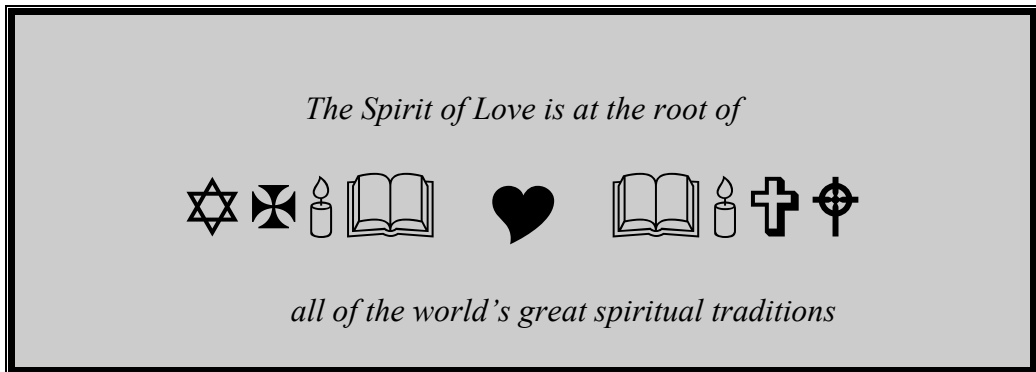
¹⁴ Thanks to Joe Graumans for his assistance in defining spiritual health.

¹⁵ From the New Testament of *The Bible*, Galations 5:22

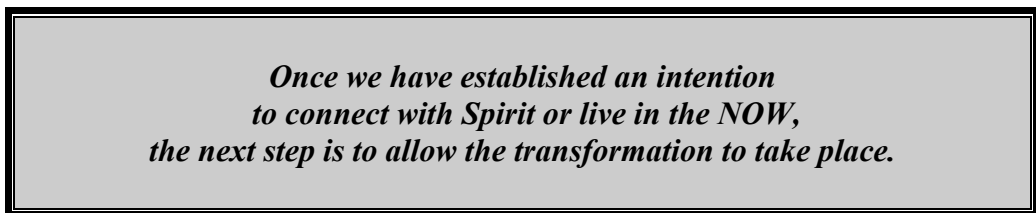
¹⁶ See Lucinda Varley's book *The Flowering of the Soul* for a selection of prayers from a variety of Spiritual Traditions.

it is living in the Light, and to Eckhart Tolle, it is practicing Presence.

All of these states reflect a life that is being lived in the present moment unburdened by worries about past or future events. When this happens, we live life in a state of grace. We are in tune with what Deepak Chopra, in his book ***How to Know God***, calls a quantum reality. Here, life flows. We are free. We feel a deep inner peace, joy and love that is not lost if we encounter difficulties or need to deal with various types of pain.



Trying to describe how to get to this state of grace is like trying to catch a moonbeam¹⁷. We can see it, feel it, experience it, but we can't hold onto it. We can only approximate it, appreciate it and enjoy it. Alternatively, it can be like trying to reach the horizon: We can see it and as we progress, we feel like we are getting closer. At the same time, it sometimes feels as though we will never get there. Yet, in truth, we are already there. We just need to learn to let go of the barriers to awareness of our oneness with Spirit.



¹⁷ Thanks to Betsy Young, M.S.W. for sharing this beautiful analogy.

 **WRITE DOWN ...**

Do you know anyone who lives in this kind of “state of grace”? Are there any people you know or have heard about? Any whose lives have inspired you? (e.g., Gandhi? Mother Theresa? Jean Vanier? The Buddha? Jesus? Baha’u’llah? Confucius?) What has inspired you about him or her?

Try Softer rather than Harder

Wherever each of us is on our spiritual path right now is exactly where we are supposed to be. Our goal is not to be perfect. It is to be in communion with Spirit and to trust the process, to take the risks of love and to find our place in the scheme of things.¹⁸ Trying harder to “get there” will not help the process. In fact, most spiritual teachers tell us that we need to “try softer”, “let go”, surrender and just trust that life is unfolding as it should.

It is very easy to say “trust the process”, but quite a challenge to learn how to do it! It is hard to be patient if we are in an uncomfortable situation or feeling a lot of pain. However, discomfort can be a great motivator. That may be WHY you are reading this book. You want to “solve the problem” of your depression. Part of the solution could be learning HOW to build spiritual health.

How do we learn to live in spiritually healthy ways?

Since the dawn of civilization, there has been a great deal of debate over HOW to learn to live in a spiritually healthy way. How can we arrive at this state of oneness with Spirit? WHAT should each of us be doing on a day-to-day basis? The answers to these questions are many and varied. They have resulted in the establishment of the many different spiritual traditions and belief systems. If you have found the “way to spiritual health” which is right for you, I encourage you to follow it. Whether or not you feel you have achieved spiritual health, the following ideas could be of some value to you on your journey.

¹⁸ Thanks to John Griffith of Spiritual Directions for sharing his ideas on the goal of the spiritual path.

In order to live in a “spiritually healthy” way, we need two basic elements in our daily life:

- To feel connected to Spirit¹⁹
- To live in the present moment free of worry about the past or future

How can we achieve this? Jesus said that if we are able to love Spirit, treat others as we would like to be treated, not worry about tomorrow and forgive ourselves and others, then we would experience “the peace that passes all understanding”. The Buddha recommended that we give up any expectations and develop detachment from worldly concerns. Eckhart Tolle’s focus, as explained in his book *The Power of NOW*, is on keeping one’s attention in the NOW and making a decision that we will allow or accept²⁰ whatever IS. When we are attuned to the NOW it is impossible to worry.

All spiritual teachers seem to agree on these two elements – connection with Spirit and living in the present moment, free of worry about the past or future.

Living in the NOW is a state of grace that allows us to feel a connection with Spirit. This is the goal of all who journey on the spiritual path.

I imagine that this feeling of connection with Spirit is different for everyone. I’ll use the HDIF technique (see page 49) to share how it feels for me.

How Do I Feel when I think about ... connecting with the Spirit?

It looks like..... lying in a rowboat on a calm lake at dawn

It tastes like a chocolate milkshake

It smells like Chanel No. 5 perfume

It sounds like..... a harp being beautifully and calmly played

I feel..... peaceful

¹⁹ Remember to substitute the name or concept that you prefer for the “God of your understanding”.

²⁰ See the Footnote on page 90 on acceptance.

This is how I feel when I make a conscious effort to be present to myself and my immediate surroundings and tuned into the NOW.

What have you been taught? What do you believe at this point in your life?

 **WRITE DOWN ...**

How do you connect with Spirit? How does it feel to you?

 **WRITE DOWN ...**

How do you live in the present moment without worrying about the past or future?

Have you found a method that works for you? If so, I encourage you to practice this on a daily basis and see what results you get. If you have not yet discovered what works for you, you may wish to consider some of the strategies that are outlined below.

1. Do you have a connection with Spirit²¹?

In this section, several strategies will be reviewed that can help us to develop a connection with Spirit. These are not new techniques, nor are they the only way to make this kind of connection. They are simply tried and true forms of traditional wisdom that many have found helpful:

The Light and Love Meditation
 The Guiding Presence
 Listening to the Still, Small Voice Within

One of the most powerful ways to develop a connection or relationship with Spirit is through the practice of meditation. There are many additional

²¹ Other ways of expressing the same idea might be “Do you have a relationship with the Source of Life?”, “Can you feel the Presence of Spirit?”, or “Are you able to connect with the deepest part of yourself that seems beyond time and space?” Please use whatever terms work for you.

benefits²² to this practice, as well. In a meditative state, we learn how to quiet our minds so that we can become still on the inside. We are then able to feel the deeper parts of ourselves and our connection with Spirit.

There are many different ways to meditate, but they all use the same principles: straight back (lying on the floor or sitting) and a relaxed but alert awareness. The focus of our mind might simply be on our breathing. It could also be on an image that has special meaning for us, a sacred picture or icon, a one or two syllable word (i.e., a mantra or the name of Jesus as is used in Centering Prayer) or a specific task that takes us inside ourselves (e.g., a visualization such as the *Light and Love Meditation*, page 83). As we try to develop our ability to keep our minds on one thing, it often happens that other ideas, plans or worries may intrude. As we become aware of these thoughts, we acknowledge them and then gently let them go. It is just like watching clouds float by on a clear sky. Then we come back to our original focus.

You can learn about how to meditate through taking a course, reading about it, listening to tapes or CDs or just doing it. A course or books can offer helpful guidelines. Joseph Campbell's book *Insight Meditation* explains it well. The most important thing is that you try out different methods and use what seems to work best for you.

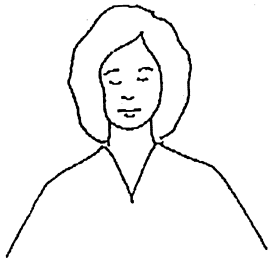
The Light and Love Meditation

One of the most beautiful meditations I have used is one taught by Dr. Bud Rickhi²³. He calls it the *Light and Love Meditation* (see page 83). It is an ancient Buddhist practice. However, it can be adapted to fit the beliefs of any spiritual tradition. I find this meditation so powerful, so peaceful and so regenerating that I try to do it every single day first thing in the morning. If I am rushed on a particular day, I try to do it even if it's just for 5 minutes. In this case, I set my egg timer so that I can focus fully on the meditation without worrying about keeping track of the time.

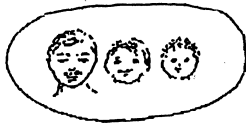
²² Dr. Paul Pearsall states in *The Heart's Code*, that studies in the field of Psychoneuroimmunology have shown that the practice of meditation can have a powerful effect on the immune system, as well.

²³ Dr. Rickhi is the Director of the Integrative Medicine Institute in Calgary, Alberta, Canada.

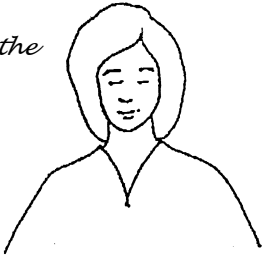
1. Visualize a ball of white light 10" to 15" above your head.



2. Focus on those you love. Feel the love build.



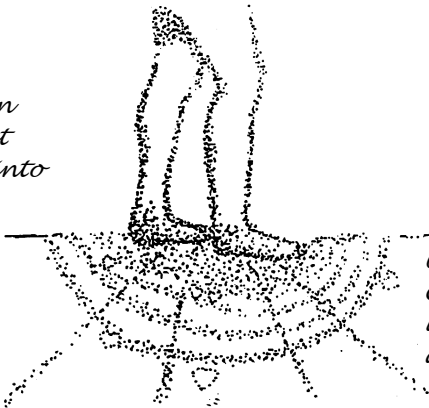
3. Put love into the ball of light.



4. Visualize a column of light flowing from the ball into your body down to your feet. Every physical cell it touches changes into pure light and love.



5. Light can leave feet and go into earth.



6. Or turn light upwards and out.

7. Be this Light in the World.

Courtesy Dr. Bud Rickhi, Integrative Medicine Institute, Calgary, Alberta

Light and Love Meditation

During this meditation period, I usually sit in a chair and picture a ball of white Light above my head. Next, I think of the love that my friends and family members and I feel for each other. I put these feelings of love into the ball of Light. I have added a next step that fits with my own spiritual belief system. So I then picture the unconditional love of Spirit in this ball of white Light. Next, I imagine this column of Light and Love as it flows down into my body. The light sparkles into every cell of my body as it flows all the way down to my feet and then back up my body to my heart centre. I imagine being a beacon of Light and Love to all. I encourage you to try this meditation and adapt it to fit your own spiritual beliefs.

There are so many ways to connect with Spirit, that I will simply encourage you to discover what works for you. Some options include:

- ♥ meditating
- ♥ praying in a contemplative style
- ♥ focusing on your breathing
- ♥ having time alone
- ♥ enjoying time in nature
- ♥ doing art or other forms of artistic expression
- ♥ reading a daily devotional or sacred scriptures
- ♥ reading poetry or other inspirational books
- ♥ journaling
- ♥ sharing ideas with others
- ♥ dancing or singing or playing a musical instrument
- ♥ listening to music
- ♥ tuning into the present moment

 **WRITE DOWN ...**

What works best for you to connect with Spirit?

One way is not necessarily better than another. What IS important is that you find a way to be still. Find out what works for YOU and set your intention to DO it every day. Even if it is just for a few minutes. If what you are doing works, that's great. If not, try something else for several weeks and decide if it is enabling you to get in touch with a feeling of Spirit's presence.

The Guiding Presence

This Presence – or what we are calling Spirit – is a force that is with us every moment of the day and night, whether or not we are aware of it. It's like the sun on a cloudy day. We may not always be able to see the sun, but it is there. The same is true of Spirit. It is always in operation. It is the Source of Life. Some believe that this Force created the Universe and is continuing to create. Our job as humans is to find ways of connecting with Spirit and to learn how to co-operate with it. This is sometimes called letting go of our own agenda and following the promptings of our inner voice. When we learn how to do this, our lives become transformed.

Listening to the Still Small Voice Within

In the field of chiropractic medicine, they say that Universal Intelligence manifests itself within the body as innate intelligence. The body knows what to do. It grows, develops and heals itself if the conditions are right. On a mental and spiritual level, we co-operate with Spirit by first making a choice that we are willing to be open to guidance (i.e., by being still, asking for help or direction and then trusting our intuition). If we are living in the moment we are then free to respond to what is going on NOW. We are able to notice and hear that still small voice which offers us wisdom.

There are many different ways of connecting with this wisdom. We need to be open to answers coming through what we hear, see, feel or think. As James Redfield states in his ***Celestine Prophecy*** series, answers often come to us through people we meet or even the small coincidences that occur in everyday life. When we feel as though we are being guided in a certain direction, it is always wise to double-check that the “answer” is consistent with our values and beliefs and those of our spiritual tradition. For instance, if you pray for direction and you believe that Spirit is urging you to behave in a way that is contradictory to your values (e.g., urging you to kill

someone, cheat or steal) then you are probably mistaken. Any prompting that goes against traditional values is probably NOT from the Spirit.

I encourage you to ask Spirit for guidance in the spiritual area of your life. Free yourself from expectations about what the answer will be. Ask in a way that is accepting of what you hear and surrendering to the promptings you receive. In surrendering, we are trying to give up control for the overall direction of our lives. We are asking our Higher Power to take over. It is as though we are asking Spirit to lead us in the moment-by-moment unfolding of our life. Through inner guidance, we can stay in the present and be led to what we need to do next. Admitting that we are powerless over certain things in our life and asking a Higher Power to take over is the first of the 12-steps in the Alcoholics Anonymous program. It is often when people reach the end of their rope, that they are finally able to “let go and let God”.

By being open to listening to the still small voice of intuitive guidance, you create energy for certain things to come into your life. Ask others what they are doing, occasionally trying things out until you find what feels right for you. There may be strategies that work for others, but not for you. Some of us may need to be guided on our journey (e.g. by a spiritual director, minister, priest, pundit, shaman, rabbi or counsellor). Others may be able to find and follow the path to a healthy spirituality on our own. Just be open and aware of what feels right to you. Don't look in an anxious or desperate way. Remember to try softer rather than harder!

What if you can't “let go”?

There are the people who have a very hard time developing a relationship with Spirit and then “surrendering” to the guidance it offers. Often they don't really believe that this Spirit is a loving force. The God of their understanding is harsh, judgmental and ready to punish them for their mistakes. This is what they may have been taught. They may also be people who have experienced some type of abuse in their childhood. They often have serious trust issues.

Asking them to surrender to a Power greater than themselves is very difficult. A lot of healing has to take place before they even want to be in the Spirit's presence. Understandably. Who would choose to be in the presence of a punitive Force? A spiritual mentor can be very useful in this

situation. They can offer guidance through a healing process that can help to revise the negative images.

Tasleem is an example of a real-life client who had negative feelings about Spirit. You have met her already a few times in *Myth #2* (page 15) and in *Part Two* (page 52). She was abused in her childhood and had suffered for years with depression. She had made several suicide attempts. When Tasleem thought about being connected with Spirit and “surrendering” to a still, small voice, she felt terrified. This is HOW she felt about the idea of giving up control of her life:

How do I feel when I think about ... “giving up control”?

It looks like walking off a cliff – take one step and down you go

It tastes like a lychee nut – unfamiliar and I don’t like it

It smells like an unknown chemical smell

It sounds like sounds of people’s conversations that you can’t hear

I feel terrorized

Was Tasleem ready to surrender to her Higher Power? Not just yet! She couldn’t do it, even though she believed that there would be many benefits to doing so. Tasleem was an abused person who had been hurt by an authority figure in her childhood. To her, Spirit was also an authority figure and therefore, not to be trusted. She believed that Spirit had allowed the abuse to happen and she was still mad about that.

Tasleem was active in her faith, but she still had a lot of obstacles to overcome. The clouds of hurt and anger were preventing her from accepting Love from anyone, including Spirit. She hadn’t even learned to love or accept herself yet. She was not ready to forgive either.

It always takes a certain amount of courage to try new strategies, but in Tasleem’s case, the thought of being in Spirit’s presence was terrifying. When someone feels this uncomfortable with the idea of Spirit, it is probably advisable to refocus their attention on the NOW. If Tasleem can learn how to be in this state, she will probably find that she is able to begin to “let go” of her past hurts. Maybe her self-critical thoughts and worry about the future will be gone, too. In time, she may become aware of a more loving Force, Presence or Spirit. She may then understand that it is people who

hurt others, not Spirit. When she gets to that point, she may be ready “to let go and let God”. In the meantime, living in the NOW may provide a safer path to healing for Tasleem and others like her.

2. Have you learned to BE in the present moment?

Living in the present moment, the NOW, is a goal of spiritual health. We act from our inner essence that is deeply connected to Spirit. In the state of NOW, we no longer feel an agonizing sense of our problems. It is a place where there are no worries. Eckhart Tolle states that “When we honour life, Life can help us. It’s been trying to help us for years, but we’ve been resisting.” We’ve been too busy trying to be somewhere else that we have not been able to just BE and live in oneness with Spirit.

The way we learn how to do this will most likely be different from what works for our neighbour. There is no way that is “right” for everyone. Tolle would say that it is essential that we make a decision to accept the reality of the present moment – to live in the NOW. We will still have work to do, but the NOW is where we want to be. The beautiful poem on page 89 by Helen Mallicoat entitled “I AM” beautifully expresses the concept of being-in-the-moment. It is my hope that we will all be able to find a way to live in this peaceful place of the present moment – the I AM – or the NOW.

Although there are different ways to arrive at this point, there are a few “tried and true” techniques that are common to many different spiritual traditions and/or approaches to spiritual health. These strategies for living in the NOW are presented after the poem.

- The Power of Acceptance
- Acceptance of Self
- Forgiveness of Self and Others
- The Serenity Prayer
- Is the Glass Half-Empty or Half-Full?

I AM

I was regretting the past
And fearing the future.

Suddenly, my Lord
Was speaking to me

“MY NAME IS I AM”

He paused.

He continued,

“When you live in the past
with its mistakes
and regrets, it is hard.

I am not there.

My name is not I WAS.

When you live in the future,
With all its problems and fears,
it is hard.

I am not there.

My name is not I WILL BE.

When you live in this moment
It is not hard.

I am here.

My name is I AM.

Helen Mallicoat

The Power of Acceptance

In order to live in the NOW, Tolle states that we first need to have an attitude of acceptance²⁴ to everything that happens to us. Once we have accepted any situation we are in, we have three choices. We may:

1. stay in the same situation
2. do something to change the situation or
3. leave the situation.

When we resist the NOW, we become upset with what is going on in our lives. How many of us become frustrated when we are driving our car, hurrying to get to an appointment and we find that we are caught in a traffic jam? We might feel worried about getting to our appointment in time. We become impatient and angry. As our level of agitation increases, we might even experience road rage.

This kind of attitude is very common. It uses up a lot of energy and creates a kind of resistance to the flow of life. We feel increasingly anxious and upset. We make mistakes that can result in an accident and even further delays! Or maybe our stomach secretes acid and we develop ulcers. This is how resistance to what IS can get in the way of us responding to life from a place of peace, calm and pure Spirit. In this traffic jam situation, we do have a few choices. We could let someone know that we are delayed, rearrange our plans or simply decide that we will get there when we get there. In the meantime, we can sit back, pay attention to our breathing, relax, enjoy some music and send positive energy to others who are waiting by using the ***Peace Be with You*** visualization (shown on page 68). Can you imagine what kind of difference this type of accepting attitude could make to our physical, mental and spiritual health?

²⁴ “Acceptance” does not mean allowing yourself or others to be abused. If you are in this situation, “acceptance” means accepting the reality that you are in danger of being hurt. Then you are able to choose what you want to do about it. We all need to find ways to set boundaries that protect ourselves physically, emotionally and spiritually. Setting a healthy boundary may mean choosing to leave a particular situation while still feeling love and acceptance for the person who is abusing us – not for their hurtful words or actions. See also Eckhart Tolle’s teachings on “the pain-body” in ***The Power of NOW***.

There are no problems, only situations to bring Presence to...

When we learn to live in a way that accepts the reality of the NOW, then Life can flow more freely through us. Problems disappear. Of course, challenges still come, but nothing is made into a problem. A situation is a challenge to be handled. We respond to it. When we live in the NOW, with a sense of Presence and aliveness, we say, “What can I do about this situation?” We become still and are able to hear that still small voice – that evidence of Spirit guiding us. The action that arises out of that state of peace and calm is often much more effective than any agitated response. When we are able to do this, a powerful transformation can take place in the way we live.

Leanne Payne takes an approach that is slightly different from Tolle’s. Yet the ideas are quite complementary. In her book, *The Healing Presence*, Payne suggests that there are only three blocks to achieving a state of wholeness, healing or oneness with Spirit. This is when we:

- fail to accept ourselves
- are unable to forgive ourselves
- are unable to forgive others

Have you accepted yourself or your life’s circumstances? Do you feel forgiven for “mistakes” you feel you have made? Have you forgiven others who may have hurt or disappointed you?

Self-Acceptance

Can you accept the fact that you are “beautifully and wonderfully made”²⁵? So many of us can’t. It is particularly difficult when we are feeling angry, hurt or depressed. Yet self-acceptance is a key ingredient to overcoming depression. We have already discussed aspects of this in *Part Two*, page 69. Eckhart Tolle states that acceptance of oneself or one’s situation can open up channels of healing. As I said in *Teeya’s Story* on page 11, I felt that a turnaround came in my depression when I accepted that this is how I was made.

²⁵ Taken from the Old Testament of *The Bible*, Psalm 139: 13-14

Somehow, I was then ready to listen to the advice that my neighbour was giving me.

*When I accepted who I was and what I had to face in life,
I was ready to hear the solution to my problem.*

I have also found that the more I have been able to accept Spirit's love for me, the more accepting I have become of myself. This in turn, has led me to be more accepting of others. I also need to remind myself that we are each doing the very best we can.



WRITE DOWN ...

Have you accepted yourself? If so, how did you do it? If not, what is stopping you? What would it take for you to do so?

Forgiveness of Self and Others

Forgiveness of Self

One of the greatest challenges that we face as human beings is that of forgiving ourselves. People who believe in reincarnation believe that we carry the mistakes from past lifetimes into our present one where we reap what we have sown. Eventually, we will have paid for all the mistakes of our past lives. Then we will reach the peaceful state of Nirvana. This is a state in which we are perfect and will never have to reincarnate again. The Judeo-Christian tradition also has a whole system of beliefs and practices that deal with helping people learn to forgive themselves and overcome the guilt that has arisen from choices they have made.

For example, Christians advocate the importance of repentance²⁶ for our mistakes. This can be done directly to Spirit. Another option practiced within the Roman Catholic tradition is to participate in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. In this sacrament, a person reflects on mistakes they feel they have made, admits them verbally to a priest and then receives forgiveness. Some form of penance or making amends may seem advisable. People can go to this sacrament every day if they wish, but going several times per year is the more common practice.

In the Jewish tradition, there is an annual ritual to facilitate this process. Rosh Hashanah is a 1-2 day period that occurs in the Fall of each year. During this time, preparation is made for Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement. By this time, people are supposed to have reflected on their mistakes and to have asked forgiveness from those they have harmed. They should have made amends, where appropriate. On Yom Kippur, there is a beautiful service in the late afternoon called the Tashlich. It is held for the purpose of cleansing oneself. Those who have repented of their sins are invited to participate in a symbolic gesture. They take a handful of bread crumbs and throw them into a river; and in this way, they are cleansed of their sins, ready for a fresh start in the New Year.

Aspects of this Judeo-Christian tradition have been built into Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 step approach (e.g., Steps 8 and 9, re: Making Amends²⁷). This is a system that is used very successfully by many individuals today from a variety of faith traditions.

New Age writers such as Eckhart Tolle, Shakti Gawain and Shirley Maclaine do not feel that we need forgiveness. We just need acceptance of what IS. They state that we are perfect. This means not only that our Spirit nature is perfect, but that there are actually no mistakes and therefore no need to ask for forgiveness. The only forgiveness that is necessary is for the

²⁶ See Irma Zaleski's beautiful little book, *The Way of Repentance*. It explains in clear and simple terms that no disaster, tragedy or malicious act on our part or someone else's can ever separate us from the love that Spirit has for each one of us.

²⁷ From Alcoholics Anonymous *The Big Book* (1952) – Step 8: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all. Step 9: Made direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others.

mistake of thinking that we need to ask for forgiveness. Life is unfolding as it should and we need to just let go and go with the flow.

These thoughts are reflected in the words of the song sung by Barbra Streisand²⁸,

*“There are reasons for the path we take
There are no mistakes
Only lessons to be learned.
No matter how many times we tumble or fall
The greatest lesson is
Loving yourself through it all.”*

If you are able to feel that you are perfect on the inside, then you are probably very close to the state of Wholeness, living in the Light or being absorbed in Spirit. We discussed this earlier in *What is Spiritual Health* (page 76).

There are many paths to forgiveness. You might believe already that you are perfect...or you might choose to express your regrets to a priest, shaman, counselor, friend or Spirit. Alternatively you may throw bread crumbs into the river, put ashes on your forehead or engage in some other symbolic act of making amends. Whatever you do, it is important that you find ways to forgive yourself. It is essential to mental and spiritual and physical health. Have you found a way that works for you?

WRITE DOWN ...

Have you forgiven yourself for whatever you have done in the past that you regret? If so, how did you do it? If not, what do you need to do in order to forgive yourself?

²⁸ From the song “Lessons to be Learned” by Rich, Gazeley and Malamet on Barbra Streisand’s 1997 CD *Higher Ground*.

*No matter how many times we tumble or fall
The greatest lesson is
Loving yourself through it all.*

Forgiveness of Others

People might think that forgiving someone is an unselfish act. However, I believe it is one of the most “selfish” things that one can do, because one is really doing oneself a favour. It doesn’t matter if the other person is willing to change, regrets his/her actions or even acknowledges the hurt they have caused. We know that we feel hurt. The longer we allow ourselves to think about how angry or resentful we are – the more WE are burdened by these feelings. Forgiveness frees us from this heavy weight.

However, forgiveness is something that can’t be forced. I have found that when we are truly able to forgive ourselves, we are more likely to be forgiving of the human frailties of others. With these kinds of attitudes, it is easier for forgiveness to emerge.

Sometimes we can’t seem to forgive. In some cases, we feel angry with God. In such a case, there is usually more emotional work to do in terms of processing our feelings.²⁹ We may need to spend some time simply accepting or being with the pain of the hurt and anger we feel. Several of the tools that were covered in the Mind section (e.g., *HDIF*, page 49; *ABC’s of Emotion*, page 59) may help in this process. It is much easier to let a negative feeling go after we have allowed ourselves to feel the depth of our hurt and anger. These feelings may need to be kept to ourselves or shared. We may decide to share our feelings through *I-messages* (page 54) or writing a letter. We can decide later whether it would be a good idea to send it! If we have done all of this and we still don’t feel like forgiving someone, we can ask Spirit to help us WANT to forgive. It’s amazing what happens when we ask for help.

²⁹ See Paul Sibey's book *Healing your Rift with God: A Guide to Spiritual Renewal and Ultimate Healing*.

 **WRITE DOWN ...**

Is there anyone that you still need to forgive? If not, wonderful! If so, how are you going to do it?

The 12-step program originally developed by Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) continues to provide sound guidelines for “living one day at a time”. Although this program was originally developed many years ago for people who suffer from an addiction to alcohol, it has been widely and very effectively used in the last twenty years for a variety of other concerns. These 12-step groups are called a variety of names (such as Co Dependents Anonymous, Emotions Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous). There is a lot of good material in any 12-step program to teach principles of surrender, asking Spirit for help, thinking positively, facing challenges, living one day at a time, accepting ourselves and forgiving ourselves and others. Most communities have ongoing groups that are available to provide people with support on their journey. They promise anonymity and confidentiality and charge no fees. Call your local AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) group and ask for the number of a group that would be most appropriate for you. Two of their most common tools are presented below.

The Serenity Prayer

The *Serenity Prayer* (page 97) and the *Half-Empty or Half-Full Glass* (page 101) are two more strategies that grew out of the AA movement. They can help us to live in the present moment.

The Serenity Prayer is one that has been adopted by many self-help organizations around the world. Its traditional wisdom is apparent. We often just need to be reminded to use it. Feel free to copy the version on the next page and make it your own!



The Serenity Prayer

*God grant me the Serenity to
Accept the things I cannot change,
The Courage to change the things I can,
And the Wisdom to know the difference!*



Let us now turn to an example of how Edith applied some of the techniques that have been presented in this book. 68-year-old Edith was first introduced during the *ABC's of Emotion* (page 63). She wanted to feel peaceful about the situation with her adult son, Chuck, who never called her.

Edith had already told Chuck how she felt by giving him the *I-message*: “Chuck, I feel lonely when you don’t call me.” It didn’t seem to make any difference, because Chuck just came up with 10 reasons about why he was too busy to be calling her all the time. “All the time!?!?!?” she thought. “Once a month would be nice!” As she used *Active Listening* to respond to his feelings, she realized that he was feeling totally overwhelmed with life’s demands. Edith decided to accept the fact that she was not going to be able to change Chuck’s behavior. He was not going to call her. She could accept that, but she didn’t like feeling disappointed, hurt and angry about it.

The next step for Edith was to complete the *A-B-C's of Emotions* chart (page 66). She wanted to feel peaceful. She had tried thinking, “He must have a lot to do. I hope things improve for him soon”. As she repeated this to herself, she found that she wasn’t angry anymore. However, she just couldn’t stop thinking about the lack of contact with her son. She was feeling more peaceful, but didn’t feel completely “at peace” with the situation. She wasn’t sure why and she didn’t know what, if anything, she could do about it.

Next, Edith decided to explore her feelings about the situation in greater depth by using the *HDIF technique*. (See page 49 for an explanation of how to use this tool.)

She began by asking herself:

How Do I Feel when I think about ... my son not calling me on the telephone?

- It looks like.....*** an old barren tree standing alone in a swamp
- It tastes like*** a stale cracker
- It smells like*** a musty basement
- It sounds like.....*** a creaking rocking chair
- I feel.....*** lonely and useless

After doing this exercise, Edith realized that when her son didn't call, this reminded her that she was old and had nothing else to do or think about. She was feeling lonely and useless.

Then she remembered *The Serenity Prayer*, and decided that she would follow the three steps:

Accept the things I cannot change

She was not going to be able to change Chuck's behavior and make him telephone her. There was also nothing she could do about getting older. Her energy levels were never going to be what they used to be.

Courage to change the things I can

She decided that she could change what she was doing with her time so that she felt like she was contributing to society. She became involved in some volunteer work at her neighborhood school. She read to the Grade One children once a week. She also began to invite her 9 and 11 year old grandchildren out to supper with her. She saw them one at a time, every few months. That way she would get to know them better. It was more enjoyable when she saw them alone. She hated refereeing their fights with each other. Lastly, she thought that this might also be a bit of a help to Chuck and his wife to have one child less every so often. She also asked Chuck if there was anything that she could do to help him with the things he had to do. He gratefully suggested that the kids' clothes needed mending and the garden was full of weeds. She was happy to have a chance to help out. Chuck offered to bring over the mending to her house and to pick her up every few weeks, when she had energy for weeding the garden.

You can't change others – only yourself!



And the wisdom to know the difference!

Edith knew that she couldn't change her son's behavior, but she could do something to change her own. She could also focus on what she COULD do and what she enjoyed, rather than what she couldn't do anymore.

Guess what happened to Edith's feelings of loneliness, uselessness and depression? They were gone in short order and replaced by feelings of serenity and peace.

In a few month's time, Edith became much more involved in the life of her son and his family. She became a supportive presence to them, rather than just another obligation or duty to add to their "To Do" list. Those weeding visits turned into regular Sunday suppers with the family. What a blessing these times became for everyone in the family.

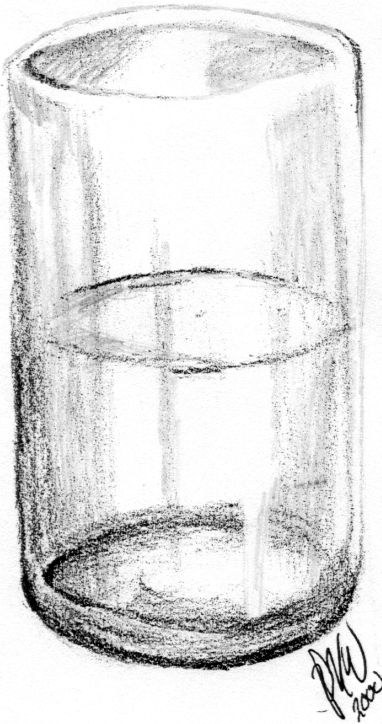
You can see from Edith's example that she needed to use a few of the self-help tools to arrive at a satisfactory solution to her problem. It didn't matter which one she used first. The important thing was to accept the situation and then to make some decisions about what to do next.

Is the Glass Half-Empty or Half-Full?

There is another piece of traditional wisdom that Edith used. She decided to look at what she COULD do, rather than what she could no longer do. This is an example of looking at the HALF-FULL glass instead of the HALF-EMPTY one, as illustrated on page 101. Are there some situations in your life that can be interpreted as either a Half-Empty or Half-Full glass?

We need to be aware that our attitudes can have a significant effect on how we view life. Attitudes of self-acceptance, forgiveness and surrender to what IS can help us to grow. They help to shed the burden of worries and foster a deeper connection with our Inner Essence. When we connect with this unchanging part of ourselves, we move closer to the wisdom of Spirit that can transform our lives in unexpected ways.

Is the Glass Half-Empty or Half-Full?



All of us have heard the expression, “Is the glass half-empty or half-full?” It is simple, but ancient wisdom. It DOES matter what we choose to believe and how we interpret a situation. Our attitudes, beliefs and inner thoughts can create either a barrier or act like a springboard to personal growth.

Looking again at Edith, we see that she had two types of choices in her situation with Chuck:

<i>Situation</i>	<i>Half-Empty</i>	<i>Half-Full</i>
Being a widow	I am alone and have no-one to share my life with	Now I have more time to share with other people
Being retired	I have nothing productive to do	This is an opportunity to use my time in different ways
Nothing to do	I'm no good to anyone anymore.	I can spend my time doing the things I want to do



WRITE DOWN

Can you think of some situations in your life that could be interpreted as either a half-empty or half-full cup? Which way do you choose to see life?

<i>Situation</i>	<i>Half-Empty</i>	<i>Half-Full</i>

How YOU choose to view situations in your life is YOUR VERY OWN CHOICE! Whether you choose to look at life from the perspective of Half-Empty or Half-Full is completely up to you!!! Whatever you choose, however, has a profound effect on how you feel. It also affects those around you.

Conclusion

In this chapter on Spirit, we saw that goal of spiritual health is to live in the NOW in connection with Spirit every moment of our existence. This appears to be the ultimate goal of every spiritual tradition; and there are many paths that we can take to get there. It can be difficult to understand how we can desire to grow spiritually and at the same time be completely accepting of where we are right NOW. That is one of life's mysteries. As we have seen, the path to spiritual health is an evolving journey.

Living in a spiritually healthy way results in feeling at peace with self, others and the environment. We feel connected to others and have an ability to depend on a power greater than ourselves for guidance and support. The more we are able to give peaceful, loving feelings to the world, the more we have achieved our goal of living in a spiritually healthy way.

Remember that it doesn't matter where you start. Pick one of the strategies that have been presented. Set your intention to apply any one them, at any time and in any way that feels right to you and honours your values. Do it when the Spirit prompts you. In time, you will probably find that it will get easier and you will experience the benefits. Before you know it, you will find that it has become a habit and you are doing it every day. Remind yourself that life is unfolding as it should and you will get results!

It is my hope that, in time, you will be able to apply many of the strategies that have been presented in this book. I trust that they will help you in overcoming your depression and in connecting with Spirit. As you live in spiritually healthy ways, I know that you will feel a sense of grace. You will grace others with Presence in return.

In Summary

Overcoming Depression is a non-technical self-help book that describes how to take a “wholistic approach” to challenges in this area.

In the *Introduction*, I explained what I meant by a wholistic approach. You were encouraged to use the *Screening Checklist for Depression* and the *Symptom and Food Diary* as a way to monitor your progress towards wellness. In *Part Two* we examined five common myths about depression. A number of real-life stories were shared, including my own, to clarify the misunderstandings and to illustrate how this wholistic method works. *Part Three* consisted of steps that you could use to facilitate your health in Body, Mind and Spirit. These are strategies that I have found to be helpful both personally³⁰ and professionally. Please remember to try softer rather than harder to put into practice some of the ideas that appeal to you.

Do you remember the lines that I quoted at the beginning of this book? They were:

*“There is a crack,
There is a crack in everything.
That’s how the Light gets in...”*

These lines are from a song³¹ by Leonard Cohen. Did you understand these lines when you first saw them? What did they mean to you?

To me, these words mean that we are all human beings. We all have cracks or imperfections. There are times when we get caught up in reacting to others or to past hurts. Our minds are usually so busy with our problems that we are prevented from reacting to life from a place of pure Spirit. How often do we resist what is happening to us? We block the Light from shining through us into our lives and the lives of those around us.

³⁰ See *Teeya’s Story* (page 11) to learn about my journey with depression.

³¹ These lines are from the song “**Anthem**” by Leonard Cohen which is on his 1992 CD called *The Future*.

As we come to accept that we are ALL doing the best we can, we are better able to give and receive Love. In this place, amazing things happen. We turn into channels of Light and Love. We accept ourselves and forgive ourselves and others. We learn ways of living in the present moment. This is a place that is free of problems. We still have challenges, but we can face them. Being in this space and taking life one breath at a time, allows us to experience a feeling of freedom. We are then able to respond to life from a place of peace and joy instead of anger, hurt or fear.

I encourage you to be thankful for all that you can. Everyday. Be grateful for your cracks. These human challenges motivate us to look for answers. In doing so, we open ourselves up to Love in our own way. People can teach us, but it is our journey. WE are the ones who have choices to make if we want to find ways of connecting with Spirit on a moment-by-moment basis. Because challenges, like depression, feel so painful, they can be great motivators to open us up to learn new ways of living.

My hope is that you will choose to accept the reality of your present situation. Still your mind. Allow Wisdom to lead you to what you need to do next. May you be free to live in the NOW as a being of Light and Love and may your journey be a blessing.

I wish you success in applying these ideas and I encourage you to let me know if these ideas helped you. If you have any suggestions for changes in this manuscript, I would love to hear about them.

“Being the best you can be, as naturally as possible” is a lifelong journey. Be patient with yourself. Take one day-at-a-time. Develop balance in Body, Mind and Spirit; and you will be pleased with the results. You may even overcome your depression in the process!

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Appendices

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***Appendix A:
Common Causes, Symptoms, and Strategies
for Treating Depression***

Possible Causes of Depression	Symptoms	Strategies for Treating Cause	Page # in <u>Overcoming Depression</u>
1. Beating yourself up	Using negative self-talk (e.g., Saying either out loud or to yourself things like “That was a stupid thing to say!”)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a conscious decision to say ONLY positive or encouraging things to yourself. (e.g., “I guess that I’m O.K. because I know that Spirit doesn’t make junk!” Or “At least I got that off my chest!”) 	69
2. Holding frustration and/or anger inside yourself	Feeling frustration or anger and not telling anyone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I-messages – I feel _____ when you do _____. (e.g., “I feel angry when you show up ½ hour late without calling.”) 	45
3. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	Re-experiencing a trauma by dreams, “flashbacks”, feeling anxious in situations which remind you of the trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing). 	17

continued...

***Common Causes, Symptoms, and Strategies
for Treating Depression.***

Possible Causes of Depression	Symptoms	Strategies for Treating Cause	Page # in <u>Overcoming Depression</u>
4. Stress	You have too much going on in your life and feel depressed and overwhelmed when you think of what you have to accomplish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify all of your stresses and decide which ones you will need to accept and which ones you can do something about. • Learn meditation, relaxation, Yoga or Tai Chi. • Ensure a day of rest every week, if possible. 	41
5. Not honoring or validating your own feelings	You tend to disregard what YOU feel like doing in day-to-day living. Instead you spend time doing what you feel you SHOULD be doing or what others want you to do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before you make any decisions about how you are going to use your time, take a moment to get in touch with your “center” and decide what you feel like doing right now. See if it is possible to do this (without losing your job!). 	46
6. BiPolar Disorder (Manic Depression)	Extreme mood swings When “up” feel delusional (e.g., might think you are the King or Queen of England)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain an referral from your family doctor to a local Mood Disorder Clinic for an evaluation. • If medication ineffective, consider Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD). 	10

continued...

***Common Causes, Symptoms, and Strategies
for Treating Depression.***

Possible Causes of Depression	Symptoms	Strategies for Treating Cause	Page # in <u>Overcoming Depression</u>
7. Not taking care of your Mind	Mind is always racing worrying about past events and future possibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train your mind to stay in the present moment – live in the NOW. • Learn how to meditate. • Provide opportunities to listen to your own mind and to connect with Spirit – through journaling or sitting quietly. • Keep your mind exercised by being a lifelong learner and continuing to learn about areas of interest to you. 	88
8. Not taking care of your Body	Body feels exhausted, muscles stiff or uncomfortable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure you are getting enough fresh air, sunshine, exercise, good nutrition, water. At the very least, go for a walk 3 times per week for ½ hr. Combine stretching with muscle-building exercises. Have an annual physical check-up. 	39
9. Thyroid, Hypo-glycemia, Fibromyalgia, Diabetes	Sudden or constant feeling of fatigue even though you are taking care of your body (as above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your family physician to investigate reasons for your symptoms and obtain appropriate treatment. 	39, 41

continued...

***Common Causes, Symptoms, and Strategies
for Treating Depression.***

Possible Causes of Depression	Symptoms	Strategies for Treating Cause	Page # in <u>Overcoming Depression</u>
10. Under-achievement	Feel that you could/should be accomplishing more in your life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore all possible reasons that you may be under-achieving: – learning, attention, reading, self-confidence, lack of study skills - see <i>Matt’s Story</i> (p. 20) • Correct the problem. • Obtain a vocational assessment. 	20
11. Lack of sleep	Feel tired a lot of the time and depression lifts when you are able to get some sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure you get to bed on time to allow for 8 hours of sleep. • Relax or meditate for 20 min. during the day. • If you have trouble falling asleep, cut back on your caffeine, give yourself transition time to fall asleep. 	39
12. Living in a relationship in which you do not feel valued	Feeling unappreciated by your partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use <i>I messages</i> (e.g., “I feel _____ when you _____.”) • Accept yourself and the other person just the way you are. • Examine possible ways in which you are undervaluing your partner. Find things to appreciate in him/her. 	54, 88

continued...

***Common Causes, Symptoms, and Strategies
for Treating Depression.***

Possible Causes of Depression	Symptoms	Strategies for Treating Cause	Page # in <u>Overcoming Depression</u>
13. Lack of proper nutrition	Eyes dull, skin pale, dark circles under eyes, no energy, feeling physically ill (Note: These symptoms could be due to a number of causes and should be thoroughly investigated)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eat foods that give you a balance of fresh fruit, vegetables, starch and protein. See Appendix C page 127 for examples of foods in each of these categories. Reduce or eliminate alcohol, tobacco, caffeine and sugar. 	40
14. Lack of water	Dry, brittle skin, constipated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink 6-8 glasses of water per day. 	39
15. Brain allergy	Feelings of depression, bad moods, anxiety or tiredness come and go for NO apparent reason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify possible food or environmental sensitivities. Remove them from your diet and see if you feel better. See an allergist, nutripath, homeopath or naturopath and don't give up until you have found the cause of the problem. 	10, 32

continued...

***Common Causes, Symptoms, and Strategies
for Treating Depression.***

Possible Causes of Depression	Symptoms	Strategies for Treating Cause	Page # in <u>Overcoming Depression</u>
16. Poor spinal alignment	Get headaches, have poor posture, sore back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See a chiropractor or physiotherapist. 	41
17. Pain	Your body hurts!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the cause and alleviate it through gentle stretching, meditation, hypnosis or acupuncture. If it is untreatable, get a referral from your family physician to a Pain Clinic. Learn techniques for living with pain. 	41, 88
18. Early unresolved loss	Inability to bond with others or fear of attachment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling from a therapist who specializes in attachment, EMDR. 	59
19. Grief and loss issues	Feelings of sadness, anxiety and/or withdrawal when recalling events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counseling which normalizes stages of grief and permits release of feelings. 	49

Appendix B: Sample Menus

A Sample Milk-Free Menu

DAY OF WEEK	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
MONDAY	Corn Bran Cereal with Coffee Rich Apples	Salami Sandwich* Minestrone Soup	Baked Chicken, Broccoli and Baked Potato
TUESDAY	Cheerios with Coffee Rich Bananas	Chicken Noodle Soup Soda Crackers Carrots	Spaghetti and Meat sauce (without Parmesan Cheese)
WEDNESDAY	Bacon and Eggs Milk-free Toast Pears	Peanut Butter and Banana Sandwich Raisins and Walnuts	Pork Chops with Applesauce Sweet Potato
THURSDAY	Hash Browns Milk-free Pancakes	Salmon Salad with Mayo	Vegetable Stir Fry Pasta
FRIDAY	Oatmeal made without milk Brown Sugar Oranges	Egg Salad Sandwich Celery Sticks	Hard Tacos without grated cheese, Refried Beans
SATURDAY	Corn Bran with Coffee Rich Blueberries	Tuna Sandwich Corn Chips	Baked Chicken with French Fries
SUNDAY	Rice Krispies with Coffee Rich Apples	Chunky Soup (without noodles) Black Forest Ham on Finn Crisps	Sweet and Sour Meatballs on Rice

* should be milk-free bread

Snacks: Can include potato chips, corn chips, popcorn, fruit wraps, tortilla chips.

A Sample Milk-Free Menu p.2

Note: Milk products include milk, chocolate, yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese, sour cream and milk in breads and pastries. Milk-free bread can be bought at supermarkets and health-food stores. Any product that contains casein, whey, or lactose should be avoided. Butter is allowed.

Coffee Rich is an edible oil product which tastes like cream and can be used on cereal and in coffee for the test week. A more “natural” alternative is Rice Dream or Soya drinks. Orange juice should not be substituted for milk as it is another allergenic food. You may drink water or a variety of juices. It is best to have a different juice every day.

If you find that you are sensitive to milk products...

- it may be wise to consider using a soya or rice-based milk substitute
- ask your pharmacist for the name of a supplement with Calcium/Magnesium/Vitamin D
- if you limit your intake of milk products to once a week, you may be fine. However, if you find that you are “cheating” and wanting them more often, it may be that your addiction is tempting you too much. In this case, you may need to abstain from milk products for a while.

A Sample Wheat, Corn and Sugar-Free Menu

DAY OF WEEK	BREAKFAST	LUNCH	DINNER
MONDAY	Oatmeal & Raisins Apples	Dill pickles rolled in Salami Barley Muffin	Baked Chicken, Cheese Sauce* on Broccoli and Baked Potato
TUESDAY	Rice Krispies cereal Pears	Chunky Soup without noodles Cheese* and Carrots	Steak and Shrimp Green Salad with Thousand Island Dressing
WEDNESDAY	Bacon and Eggs Bananas	Celery with Peanut Butter Raisins and Walnuts	Pork Chops With Sweet Potato
THURSDAY	Hash Browns Sugar-free Yogurt* and Honey	Salmon Salad with Mayo on Rye Cracker	Vegetable Stir Fry on Rice
FRIDAY	Millet Oranges	Rice Crackers with Egg Salad	Refried Beans and salad
SATURDAY	Oatmeal Blueberries	Tuna Salad with Relish Potato Chips	Baked Chicken with French Fries
SUNDAY	Rice Krispies Apples	Chunky Soup without noodles Black Forest Ham on Finn Crisps	Meatloaf With Spanish Rice

* Remember that these items contain milk

Snacks: Can include potato chips, cashews, pistachios, trail mix.

A Sample Wheat, Corn and Sugar-Free Menu...p.2

NOTE: Wheat is found in bread, buns, pastries, pasta, pizza and many soups with noodles. For the WHEAT-FREE week, consider using rye products such as Rye Crisp, Finn Crisp, Kavli, Pumpernickel, as long as there is no “flour” or gluten in the ingredients. Dimphelmeier makes a 100% Rye Bread which can be toasted. Health food stores carry wheat-free products. Be careful and always read the labels, as most rye bread has as a first ingredient “flour” and then “rye flour”. The “flour” means wheat. Barley flour (and rice flour) make a great wheat flour substitute in muffins and in other baking. They are used in equal amounts to wheat flour in recipes.

If you find that you are sensitive to milk products ...

- you will want to continue to exclude them in your wheat test. Then just re-introduce the wheat. In this case, do not include the items that are written in bold in the menu.

If you find that you are sensitive to wheat products...

- you will want to include different kinds of grains in your diet
 - consider having rye, corn, oats, barley, millet, rice
 - do NOT have spelt or kamut during the test – these are ancient Egyptian grains that are sometimes similar to wheat in their effects on people. Test them on yourself later.
- if you choose to have wheat products once a week you may be fine. However, if you find that you are “cheating” and wanting them more often, it may be that your addiction is tempting you too much. In this case, you may need to abstain completely from these foods for a while.

If you find that you are sensitive to corn or sugar...

Eliminating CORN can be extremely difficult because it is HIDDEN in a lot of foods and other products such as candy and toothpaste. If you want to try, you may be able to use the menu guidelines above, but do NOT include anything which is made of Corn. Therefore, you should avoid:

- Corn Flakes, Corn Bran as cereal
- Cornstarch for thickening (use regular flour, potato or rice flour instead).
- Corn Syrup or any other candies unless you know that the sweetener is from beet or cane sugar
- Alcohol in any form

You may also want to investigate the possibility of candida or take some supplements to properly reline the flora of the bowel. A naturopath or nutritionist may be able to guide you here. The previous page is also a CORN-free menu!

REMEMBER: If all of this food experimentation seems like too much work, you may just want to reduce or eliminate milk, wheat, corn and sugar (alcohol, tobacco and caffeine, too, of course!). Alternatively, put yourself on a 5-day rotation diet (Mandell, 1979) using food groups listed in Appendix C, page 127. On a 5-day rotational diet you don't eat any one food more often than once every 5 days, which reduces stress from allergies.

Appendix C: Food Groups

Often people ask me for examples of various foods and food groups. This is a brief list³² to give you the general idea. A healthy diet should be balanced across all four food groups. Respect your individual needs and preferences by adding your favorite items to the list. Then have someone who knows about nutrition (e.g., dietitian, nutritionist, naturopath, physician) check to make sure that you are getting the nutrients you need.

Fruit	Protein	Starch	Vegetable
Banana Pear Peach Apple Grapefruit Orange Grapes Cherries Kiwi Melons Strawberries Blueberries Blackberries Rhubarb	Beef Pork Chicken Eggs Sunflower Seeds Nuts (such as Walnuts, Cashews, Pistachios, Almonds) Brown Beans Soya & Tofu Chick Peas Lentils Split Peas Bean Sprouts Milk, Cheese	Wheat Oats Rye Corn Barley Rice Potato Millet Quinoa	Tomatoes Lettuce Cucumber Celery Broccoli Cauliflower Carrots Green Peas Squash Red cabbage Green cabbage Chinese cabbage Sweet Potato Turnip

³² For detailed assistance in relation to healthy eating, see menu ideas in Dr. Christine Northrup's book, *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom*. For menus that address concerns with allergies, see Dr. Marshall Mandel's *Five-Day Allergy Relief System*.

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About the Author

As a Registered Psychologist, **Dr. Teeya Scholten** worked in the field of education and mental health for over 25 years. She ran a successful private practice in Calgary, Alberta, Canada where she specialized in the areas of learning, attention and depression in adults, adolescents and children. She offered a variety of services, including consultation, assessment and individual counselling, behaviour management programs for teachers and parents of children with A.D.D., and in-service training in the form of workshops and consultations to other professionals. She has published in the areas of consultation, assessment and program planning for individuals with learning and attentional challenges. Dr. Teeya is committed to the empowerment of clients and professionals and believes in the importance of Body, Mind and Spirit integration in order to maximize one's potential. She developed Empowerment Plus®, a cost-effective model of psychological service delivery.



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Creator - God who loves me

Redeemer - Jesus who guides me, and

Comforter - the Holy Spirit who brings peace and joy.

My greatest hope is that this book will bring others closer to You.

The “Good News about A.D.D.” Series

For parents of children and adults with attentional difficulties

1. The A.D.D. Guidebook: Comprehensive, Self-Directed Guide to Addressing Attentional Concerns in Adults and Children

Part One contains an overview of “Attention Deluxe Dimension” and ways to look at A.D.D. in a more positive way. Information is given as to causes of attentional difficulties, steps in the process of diagnosis and resources which can be accessed.

Part Two is called the Toolbox and contains most of the tools which I use with my clients. The tools are accompanied by detailed instructions on how to explore this part of yourself.

Part Three contains a basic description of the steps in the use of *Riding the Wave*, a behavior management method developed specifically for parents of children with A.D.D. This part is written to be appropriate for those who like a step-by-step approach.

Part Four contains additional resources, the author’s story and an annotated bibliography.

2. Riding the Wave: A Handbook for Parenting the Child with A.D.D.

This book was written for parents to be able to learn and apply a powerful behavior management method designed to teach children self-control. Use of this method has been shown to result in increases in self-monitoring, self-esteem, and motivation. It has been used by the author with her children and taught extensively to other families.

In addition to the basic steps which are covered in The A.D.D. Guidebook, this handbook provides a lot more information to guide those who are trying to learn the method. Along with real-life personal and composite stories, there are general guidelines for parenting and lots of practical examples. Although a family would only apply one rule to begin with and work up to around five rules, there are over 25 different problem behaviors listed, with a suggested rule and possible positive and negative consequences to help parents in generating their own rules.

The use of *Riding the Wave* has been shown to help children, adolescents and even adults learn to make positive choices. It does wonders for family life, too!

For children...

3. Welcome to the Channel-Surfers' Club! (For ADDers 6-16 years old)

Is a small, up-beat book written for children who have been diagnosed with A.D.D. After a reminder about the advantages of having a “channel-surfing brain” and “Attention Deluxe Dimension”, there is a brief summary of ways that s/he learns best according to:

- areas of information processing affected by their attention
- their Myers-Briggs personality type
- their learning strengths and challenges

There is also a section on information about medication, both conventional and natural alternatives, and how it helps the brain to focus.

For teachers and other helping professionals...

4. Turning the Tides: Teaching the Student with A.D.D.

This book is organized into three sections. Part One outlines the approach taken by the author in her work with both adults and children with attentional concerns. In addition to promoting a more positive view of A.D.D., it gives teachers practical information about identifying and working with learning discrepancies, incorporating Myers-Briggs personality information and overcoming resistance in parents of children with emotional difficulties.

Part Two illustrates the ***Riding the Wave*** behavior management method as adapted to the school system. Examples of more than 25 different problem behaviors are given with appropriate rules and consequences from which teachers may select and adapt to their own classroom environment.

Part Three contains an annotated bibliography of books, journals and videotapes which address the issue of A.D.D. in the school environment.

