

The Monster in the Closet—Taking Charge of Depression

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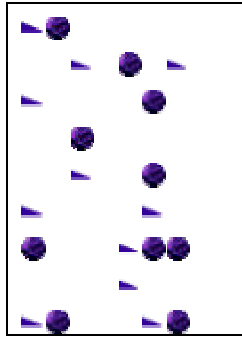
What is depression? (Who is this monster?)

Depression is a serious medical illness affecting 9.9 million American adults in a given year. Unlike normal emotional experiences of sadness, loss, or passing mood states, major depression is persistent and can significantly interfere with an individual's thoughts, behavior, mood, activity, and physical health. Major depression is the leading cause of disability in the United States and many other developed countries. (NAMI, 1996).

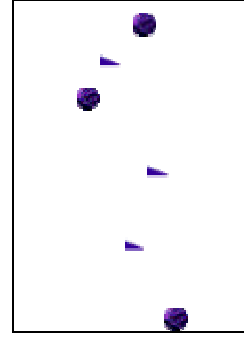
If left unattended and to its own devices, the meanest of the depression monsters can lead to suicide. The good news is that treatment is available and generally very effective.

How I describe the monster—(Likely not completely accurate, but helpful)

Your Brain



Your Brain Depressed



- ▴ (receptors) or engines
- (neurotransmitters) or fuel

So . . . depression = fewer neurotransmitters and receptors, or interference in function between them (we think).

Neurotransmitters help with:

- concentration
- memory
- mood control
- movement

External events do not directly cause depression; they may cause an alteration in your brain that triggers depression. Just like getting hit in the head with a board causes head injury of some type, trauma, stress, etc. can cause changes in brain functioning.

Depression is not you. You may deal with depression, but it is not what or who you are. Consider naming the depression. Make the depression external to yourself.

Scriptures can help in confronting this monster: Two basic ideas are not to fear this monster, and small things can make a big difference in dealing with depression. There are many more helpful things to be found in the scriptures. Try reading for specific instructions to you.

D&C 68:6—“Wherefore, be of good cheer, and do not fear, for I the Lord am with you, and will stand by you; and ye shall bear record of me, even Jesus Christ, that I am the Son of the living God, that I was, that I am, and that I am to come.”

D&C 98:1—“Verily I say unto you my friends, fear not, let your hearts be comforted; yea rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks.”

D&C 6:34—“Therefore, fear not, little flock; do good; let earth and hell combine against you, for if ye are built upon my rock, they can not prevail.”

D&C 3:6—“Look unto me in every thought, doubt not, fear not.”

D&C 64:33—“Wherefore, be not weary in well-doing, for ye are laying the foundation of a great work. And out of small things proceeded that which is great.”

D&C 123:16—“You know, brethren, that a very large ship is benefited very much by a very small helm in the time of a storm, by being kept workways with the wind and the waves.”

1 Nephi 16:29— “. . . And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things.”

Alma 37:41—“Nevertheless, because those miracles were worked by small means it did show unto them marvelous works. They were slothful, and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence and then those marvelous works ceased, and they did not progress in their journey.”

What brings on the monster? (triggers)

It appears that there are multiple causes or triggers for depression, they include the following:

- ❑ Biology—There is often a family history of those experiencing depression. Some studies indicate a smaller hippocampus, (9–13 percent smaller in depressed females).
- ❑ Hormones—higher incidence in women. Watch for adolescent onset.
- ❑ Trauma—grief, abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional)
- ❑ Long-term stress—family conflict, learned helplessness
- ❑ Medicine
- ❑ Illness—particularly heart attack, Parkinson’s and multiple sclerosis
- ❑ Major life events

What does the monster look like?

Symptoms of Depression

- ❑ Sadness (sometimes uncontrollable crying)
- ❑ Loss of energy, chronically feeling tired
- ❑ Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness
- ❑ Loss of pleasure at things that were enjoyable
- ❑ Difficulty making decisions
- ❑ Increased or decreased need for sleep
- ❑ Change in appetite causing weight loss or weight gain
- ❑ Many complaints about aches and pains
- ❑ Sexual desire decreased, or onset of sexual problems

Different Kinds of Monsters

Major Depression—profound, constant sense of hopelessness and despair. This monster interferes with work, study, sleep, eating habits, and enjoyment of life. May appear only once in life, but usually more than once.

Dysthymia—chronic, long term blues, can include episodes of major depression and periods of normalcy.

Seasonal Affective Disorder—major depressive episodes, occurring seasonally. Generally symptoms begin in the fall and last until spring (cabin fever).

Bipolar Disorder (used to be called manic-depression)—mood swings, diagnosed by the presence of mania. There is no set pattern to the mood swings. This monster requires lifetime management.

Shelving the Monster

(out of sight, out of mind)

It is very difficult to prevent depression, but once it has been experienced, you can know the triggers and symptoms and seek help early.

Medication. Can be very helpful and is often essential. The term “art of medicine” applies here because each individual is unique, and differing depressions may respond to different medications. Work closely with your physician and therapist.

Therapy. Has been shown to be as effective as medication with more lasting results. However, it often works best in conjunction with appropriate medication. Good therapy consists of learning and practicing lifetime cognitive skills.

Time. Most depression gets better eventually on its own. But why suffer longer than necessary, or allow the depression to become more difficult to control.

Spirituality. We’ve always understood how important spirituality is to every life and to all healing, but now science is catching up.

Taming the Monster

- ❑ Behavioral interventions (things you can do)
- ❑ Diet—proper nutrition, vitamins, water
- ❑ Exercise—break a sweat, create a natural high.
- ❑ Sunlight—Even on cloudy days, there is a benefit to getting outside.
- ❑ Grooming—Take a little extra time; do this first.
- ❑ Ten-minute tasks—Break up chores, permission to quit or continue.
- ❑ Social involvement—Service is very helpful; follow not lead to start.
- ❑ Cut out TV and newspaper.
- ❑ Anything that is nurturing
- ❑ Cut out caffeine
- ❑ Smile
- ❑ Direct communication

- ❑ Cognitive interventions (You can think better than this monster.)
- ❑ Self-talk
- ❑ Rule of five
- ❑ Affirmations
- ❑ Assertiveness skills—I feel . . . about. . . because
- ❑ Faking it for practice
- ❑ Be true to yourself
- ❑ Caution with should and ought
- ❑ Automatic thoughts
- ❑ Emotional interventions (feelings count)
- ❑ Know the difference between guilt and shame
- ❑ Feelings are valid.
- ❑ Anger is not a primary emotion.
- ❑ Mad, sad, glad, afraid

Sources:

[www. NAMI.org](http://www.nami.org)

www.ndmda.org

www.lds.org gospel library (depression) Get more from the Web. FREE MSN Explorer
download : <http://explorer.msn.com>