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## Wipe Out Depression

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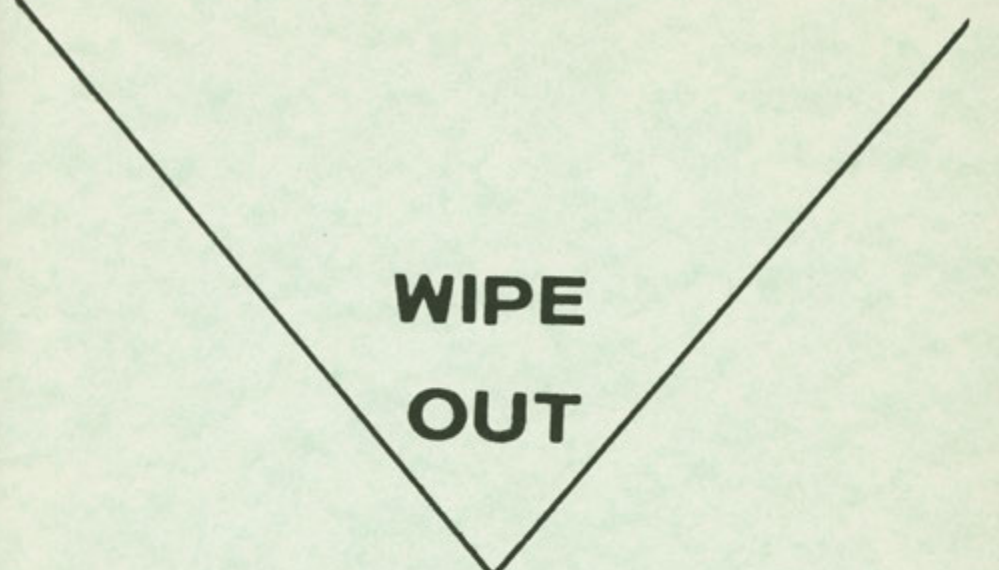
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**WIPE  
OUT**

**DEPRESSION**

MILTON R. CUDNEY  
Ph.D.

WIPE OUT DEPRESSION

by

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## Introduction

A depression can be defined as a state or condition in which the person is dejected, morbid, sad, or withdrawn. Some depressions are fitting responses to what a person is internally or externally experiencing, while others are not. If a depression is caused by some internal chemical imbalance or by a sudden physical change within the body structure or by a tumor on the brain, it is something over which the person has no control other than to seek special help for the condition which causes the depression. In addition, some depressions are a natural and fitting response to something which has happened in one's environment. I remember a woman who lost a husband and two sons to a war in a span of one month. She was grief-stricken, sad and depressed. Her depressed feelings were fitting responses to what happened and helped to heal her inner emotional wounds.

A self-defeating depression, however, is either entirely or partially created by the person or is a depression which is more prolonged than warranted by an objective reason. Many people cause their own depressions and in those cases the behaviors are self-defeating. Fortunately a person can learn to stop a self-defeating depression and replace it with behaviors which are more life-giving.

If there is any doubt in your mind whether your depression(s) is self inflicted or caused by something over which you have little control, you should seek professional help to make this determination. Seeing a medical doctor is very important for such a diagnosis.

For the remainder of this pamphlet, though,

I will assume that the depression you want to eliminate is a self-defeating behavior and that you do it to yourself. It is my professional judgement that the majority of depressions fall into this category. In order to eliminate this behavior, you need to learn HOW and WHY you keep it and do some important work in both of these areas.

This pamphlet is designed to lead you through certain steps. It is important that you do them successfully. If you find you are unable to do them for yourself, you could arrange for a professional helper (counselor, social worker, etc.) to assist you in your efforts:

Acknowledgment:

I would like to thank my colleague, Dr. Greg Boothroyd, for his suggestions and editorial comments in the preparation of this pamphlet.

If somehow you know you are the doer of your own depression(s), I want you to fill out the sentence below. If you do not believe that you are the doer of your own depression, put this pamphlet down and go do something better with your time.

Step 1. Admit you do the behavior and identify when and where you do it.

I, \_\_\_\_\_,  
(write your name here)

practice depression as a self-defeating behavior. I do a depression in a variety of situations, but most often I practice it under the following circumstances:

- Examples:
- When I am alone at night
  - When something difficult or harsh occurs in my life
  - When my ex-spouse takes our son for the weekend
  - At work
  - Anytime something doesn't go the way I planned it
  - Anytime I think of my children
  - After a poor tennis match
  - When something good happens
  - While watching news on TV

Record when and where you do your depression(s).

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However, I do not use a depression in the following situations. Examples could be the same as the list above, but others could also include:

- When I am at a social gathering
- When things go well at work
- When I go out walking in the woods
- At an exciting football game
- At a dance
- Listening to music

Record those situations (when and where) in which you do not use a depression.

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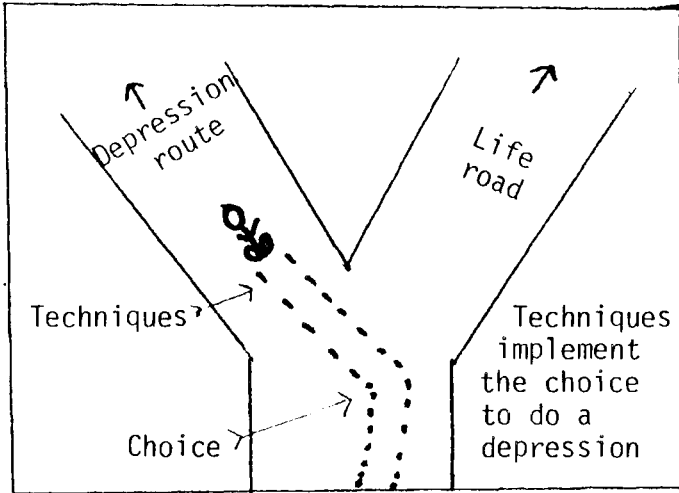
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## Step 2. Implementation Techniques.

A self-defeating depression does not just happen. The person needs to make a choice to engage the behavior and ways must then be created to implement the choice in the situations in which the behavior is used. Humans have come up with numerous ways to implement a depression choice. Some of the methods for

implementation are idiosyncratic to each individual, but many are common and frequently used.



Listed below are some of the more common implementation techniques. Look them over and see if any of your own are included. Then add to the list those you personally use which have not been included.

Techniques for implementing depressions:

A. To dwell.

To dwell on something hurtful such as a rejection, a death, a mistake, or something tragic which occurred to you or to someone else is a technique.

Life travels forward and dwelling is one way a person can try to stop its movement.



This in and of itself will cause friction because the technique of dwelling rubs against life which is ongoing and ever changing. Dwelling contributes most to a depression by fixing on something hurtful and by so doing makes the person unhappy and depressed.

Once I worked with a woman who was 58 years old who told me she had been depressed for over two years. I asked her if anything had happened which might have contributed to her depression. Her answer was, "Yes, my husband died two years ago, and I have been depressed ever since."

This woman's method of dwelling was to focus on what they were planning to do when he retired. They had made many plans for retirement and she would remind herself of those plans, dwell on them, and then appropriately get herself very unhappy. Not only did she dwell on his death, but she blamed his death for her unhappiness.

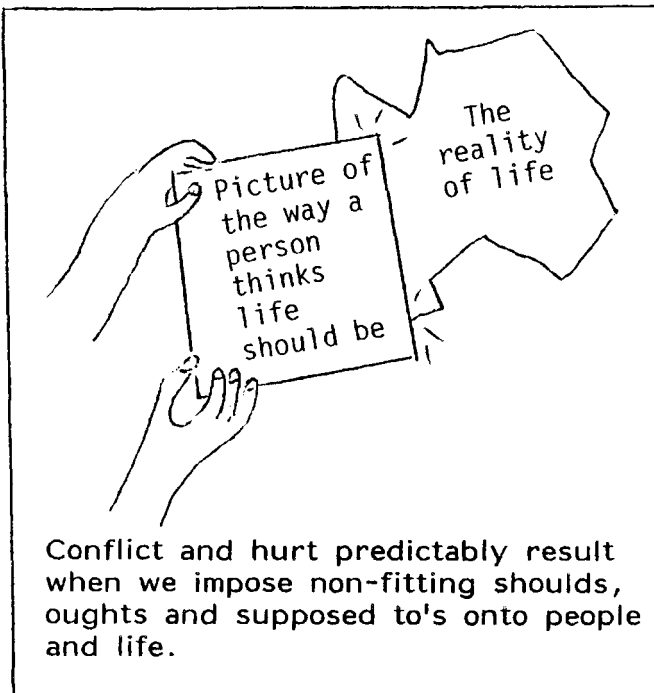
In my work with her, I helped her to see that she was dwelling and that there were many other things she could do with her time, and that the dwelling was contributing directly to her depression. I also helped her to see that it wasn't her husband's death which caused her depression, but her reaction to his death. I also helped her to see that she had power to control her own reactions and to respond differently in more life-enhancing ways.

b. To maintain a lot of shoulds and impose them on self and others.

Imposing a lot of shoulds on oneself such as

one should always be honest, one should be loving all of the time, one should always be a great mother, one should do well all of the time at a sport, one should be smart, etc., can lead to depressions because we can't always live up to the shoulds. Many people take the difference between the shoulds and the reality of life and use it against themselves to make themselves unhappy.

This is not to say that we shouldn't have goals and ideals for ourselves which may be higher than what we are presently doing in our everyday life. But, it's a self-defeating mistake to screen ourselves against these ideals in a hurtful way, and subsequently become disappointed in ourselves and use it to contribute to a depression.



First of all, many of the people whom we impose our shoulds on aren't aware they are receiving them. Therefore, they couldn't possibly live up to them even if they wanted to. Secondly, these are our shoulds, and even if others knew about the impositions, they may disagree with them. By imposing shoulds onto others we have a built-in continuous source of hurt for ourselves. Over a period of time this hurt will build up and bring on a depression.

The best example of a person I knew who used this method of shoulds was a father who eventually became so depressed he committed suicide. He had a picture in his mind of the way his children "should" be. Many of the shoulds were good things in and of themselves. They included studying, becoming professional people, keeping their rooms clean all of the time, being polite, and believing in religion. His children were good people, but they had thoughts of their own, and besides this, they were not perfect and did not always do things like clean their rooms when their father thought they should. Even though his shoulds led to his depressions, he wouldn't let them go and, consequently, he became so depressed he killed himself. He saw no way out of his dilemma yet there was an answer. The answer was to try to guide the children in the best way he knew how, and to allow them room to develop and conduct their own lives.

c. To take things personally.

In the course of a day, most humans will come in contact with things which can be taken personally to hurt oneself. Most of us have people around who aren't overly crazy about us

and they might send snide remarks our way. Or, a person might be kidding us about something and we take it seriously. Another thing which is done to take things personally is to make up in our minds the idea that people are thinking negative thoughts about us or saying negative things which we then use to help depress ourselves.

Sheri was a good example of someone who personalized things to do a depression. People who knew her learned to be very careful around her because she would take the smallest incident and use it to hurt herself. But, in being extra careful and cautious, her friends would become so uptight around her that they would sometimes make a slip of the tongue and she would use this to hurt herself further. If Sheri was socializing and someone made a comment about another's unusual looking clothing, Sheri would grab this statement and personalize it to herself.

Eventually Sheri's friends began to leave her out of their get-togethers because they didn't enjoy having to be so guarded. Sheri noticed the increasing isolation and took her friends' lack of invitations and depressed herself even further with it.

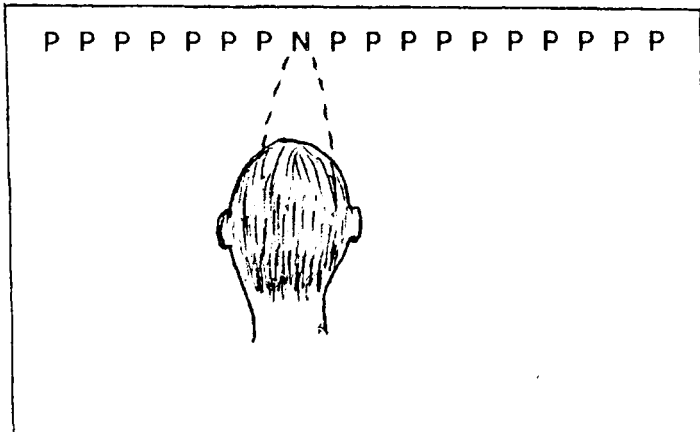
The above is a favorite trick of people who do depressions. They will use a lot of behaviors which turn people off, and when this results in driving people away, they will use their loneliness as a reason to do another depression. Perhaps you can see from this example how one can create a cycle of depression in which one can get deeper and deeper into a hole. It's a case where the person uses the results of doing a depression to generate still another depression instead of

taking the results and using them as motivation to change.

- d. To focus on negative things about oneself or life and to ignore good and positive things.

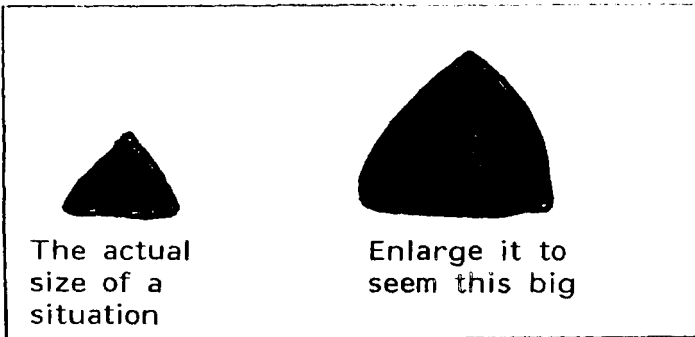
I was talking once to a person who was skilled at doing depressions, and I asked him how he could manage to do a depression so often. The question startled him because in his way of thinking he did not do the depressions. He thought they just happened! But, he gave the question some serious thought and finally came up with an answer. He said, "If fifteen good things happened in a morning and one bad thing occurred, I would ignore the fifteen good things and concentrate on the bad one."

A simple picture can help to illustrate this method for doing a depression. Let the P's represent positive things which occur and the N represent a negative experience. The person doing a depression with this technique ignores the P's and concentrates entirely on the N.



- e. To exaggerate or make a mountain out of a molehill.

Life is full of good things for most people, but it has its hurts, failures, and disappointments, too. A method for doing a depression includes taking these hurtful life experiences and making them seem bigger than they really are. One can take an illness and enlarge it so that it is overwhelming. One can take a setback, mistake, or financial failure, etc., and enlarge it in such a way that it is taken out of context to the reality of the situation. Faced with something so large and monumental, many people become depressed. In fact, it is very difficult not to become depressed if one makes life's negative happenings seem larger than they really are.



- f. To set up failures.

As strange as it may sound, some people will design failure into their lives to do a depression. I don't mean to imply that they do this consciously because I do not believe they do. But it is deliberate from a behavioral viewpoint. People often design failure into school or job by ignoring tasks which need to

be done, missing deadlines, losing important papers, being absent or late, finding other things to do other than study or work, and so forth. With failure heaped upon failure, these people often become discouraged and depressed. Who wouldn't?

- g. To ignore creative, exciting and fun ideas which naturally flow through one's mind.

It is difficult to do a depression if one's life is exciting and if one is a creative and interesting person. Thus, to do a depression people often ignore creative ideas which pop into their minds. They can ignore these ideas and opportunities by focusing on something else or they can create reasons why the ideas are unrealistic and then reject them.

I hope you can see that by turning off one's creativity, life is more dull and boring, and it's easier to become depressed.

- h. To compare.

Comparing oneself to others or to some perceived ideal is a very popular technique to do things such as inferiority and worry, and it works just as well to contribute to a depression, too. One can compare his/her self on looks, physical size, intelligence, personality, skin color, the kind of job one has, how many friends one has, and numerous other things. The comparing is done in such a way that the person doing the comparing always comes out on the negative end.

To illustrate how ridiculous one can become with this technique, let me share with you the story of a man I knew who had a tested I.Q. of 176. Most of us would be elated if we could approach this score, but not this man. He was depressed about it. It was too low in his view. As I got to know him more intimately, I found out that he had a father and sister who apparently had more (I.Q.) ability to which he would continue to compare himself unfavorably. I hope it is apparent to the reader that what he should have done was to take what he had, use it and be happy about it. This is good advice for everyone, i.e., take what you have and use it to the best of your ability, no matter how much ability is there. This man wasted his natural talents through the comparison technique and subsequent depressions which the comparisons created.

i. To deny feelings.

Some people have a way of making the natural expression of feelings seem wrong and weak. Thus, feelings can become repressed and contribute to the creation of depressions. One way to deny feelings their rightful place in one's life is to develop a picture in one's mind of what a person ought to be, and to exclude feelings from this picture. Feelings, when repressed by self or others, can be labeled as weak and silly and this helps to exclude them, too.

Sometime people will trust an emotion, get themselves into trouble because of it, and forever after use this past trouble as a reason not to trust their feelings again.

j. Associating with people who contribute to our depressions.



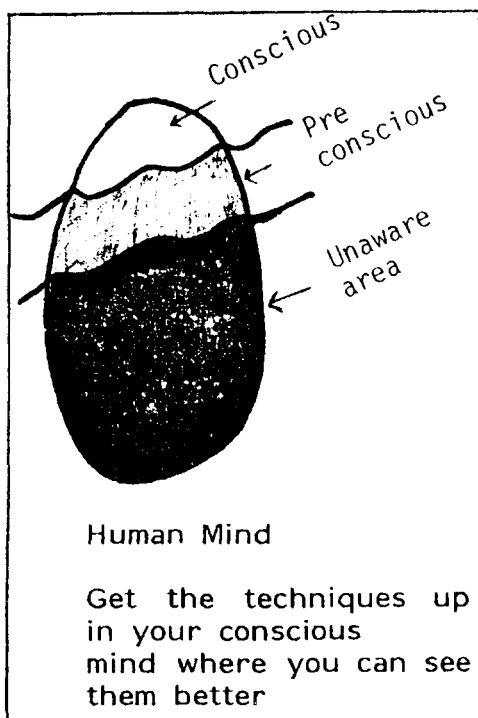
It is not unusual for people who do depressions to pick out friends who do the same thing. Thus, by their very behavior they help each other become depressed. They reinforce a negative outlook, create pessimism, and spew gloom and doom around.

A person can even marry someone who is going to make them unhappy as a way to become depressed. The spouse can be a disappointment or can treat the person badly and it then gives 'good' reason to be depressed.

### A Comment About Techniques

Techniques are the means for carrying out

Your task, if you want to stop depressing yourself, is to get as much clarity as you can on how you implement your depression choices. Try to catch yourself using these techniques and stop yourself in the process. You have the power to do it!



the choice to do a depression. Usually people are not very aware of making a choice to do a depression, but how we implement the choice is something which is more easily seen.

Use the space below to list the techniques you use which have been described in this pamphlet. Then, identify techniques you use which are not listed in the pamphlet. As you continue to live your life, watch yourself doing your depressions and learn more about other techniques you employ. Record them, too.

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(Record your techniques here)

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#### THE IMPORTANCE OF CATCHING YOURSELF

The reason for catching yourself doing any part of a depression is to open up better options. For example, if you catch yourself making a choice to do a depression, you can

stop it and put a life-behavior into operation instead.



Ahah! Caught myself.

Without catching yourself, you will continue to make choices to do your depression, carry the choice out, and never intervene. If you do not catch yourself at the various steps of doing a depression, you will continue to be like most people who think these depressions 'just happen' and that they have nothing to do with their perpetuation.

### Step 3. Disowning.

People who do self-defeating behaviors do the behaviors and then put the blame for the behaviors someplace else. This is called dis-

owning. In the case of a depression, the major things people blame are events, circumstances, and other people. Take the example of the woman whose husband died and who responded with a prolonged depression. She blamed his death for her continued depression instead of seeing that it was her reaction to the death which was the cause. Believe it or not, we have a lot of power over our own reactions if we will take advantage of that personal power.

In the example where the father became depressed and committed suicide, he blamed his children for his behavior. He used to say, "Those kids of mine sure make me unhappy. If I had to do it over again, I wouldn't have children."

Sometimes people who depress themselves blame the world condition, inflation, the older generation, etc., for their depression. I would be the first to say that these things impact all of us, but there are ways to respond to them which are far better than a depression, and those responses are available to all of us.

Common things people blame include:

- |                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| - The past          | - A part of themselves  |
| - Parents           | - Place of work   |
| - Other people      | - Something they don't have (such as not having a lot of money) |
| - Places & events   |   |
| - God               |   |
| - One's sensitivity |   |
| - Etc.              |   |

Your task is to try and glean out how you disown in order to catch yourself at it. As you cut back on the disowning, you will have more

power. The more you disown, the more powerless you will feel because you will think other things must change before you can be depression-free. You will wait forever with that outlook. But, if you see that the depressions are within your grasp, you can begin to do something about stopping them.

Record ways you disown your depression in this space.

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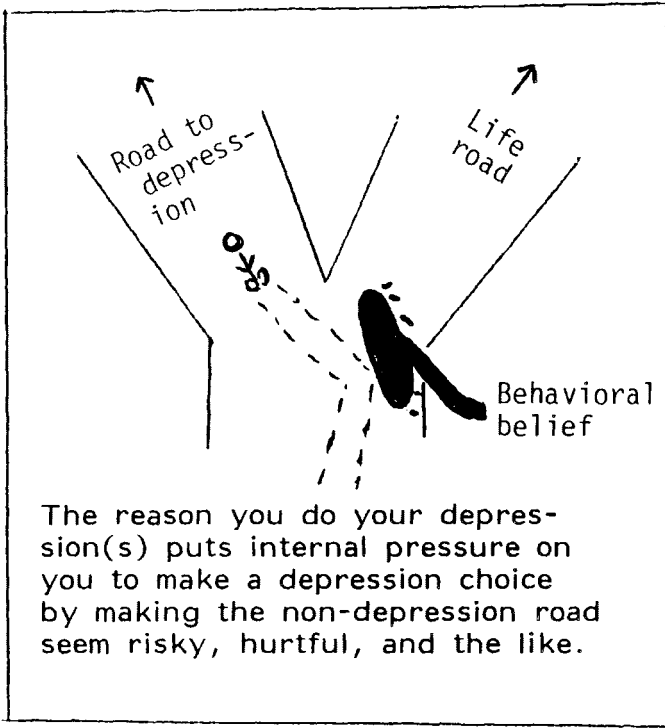
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Step 4. Learn WHY you do your depressions.

Behind all of the activity done to accomplish a depression there is a reason (or reasons) for doing the behavior. From a rational viewpoint, the reason makes no sense; but from a behavioral point of view it does. As long as the person does a depression, there is a behavioral belief that the depression is in the best interest of the person. Nothing could be further from the truth, but the behaviors don't know that.



Nevertheless, the behaviors are open to learning and can be changed. One must know what to do to change this behavioral belief, and then proceed to do so.

First, an explanation of the beliefs which cause people to want to do a depression is in order. These rationales are behavioral beliefs which humans have learned from experiences. For example, a person might be succeeding quite well and all of a sudden be faced with an extreme difficulty in life. It would not be unusual for the person to become frightened of

continuing on in life, and therefore conceive the behavioral idea that to pull back from the cutting edge of life is safe and psychologically advantageous. A depression can serve this function of pulling one back away from life. In this case the behavioral belief, i.e., the reason one would do a depression, is because the person feels it is safer.

Some people do depressions because they behaviorally believe it will keep them from making mistakes. This can be seen in the woman who was dependent most of her life, relying on her husband to make most of the decisions. A divorce ensued and life now asked, even demanded, that she begin to think more for herself. She scared herself about learning how to trust herself more, and copped out on moving ahead by doing a depression. The logic of the behavior (illogical from a rational point of view) was that by wallowing around in a depression she would not have to make decisions and, hence, would make fewer mistakes.

Sometimes the irrational belief is that by doing a depression the person will be happier. This sounds strange, but self-defeating behavioral beliefs are always illogical. An example of this is Bob who entered a new school because his parents were transferred in their work. Bob went unnoticed for the first week of school and responded with a depression. A teacher noticed the depression and took an interest in him. Bob was referred to the high school counselor and the counselor befriended him, too. Bob correctly equated his depression with the attention paid to him. He concluded, "If I do a depression, people will pay attention to me and I will be happier that way." He had his inner reason to depress himself.

Other possible behavioral beliefs include such things as:

- Depressions will prevent rejection
- It will prevent me from going astray and doing sinful things
- It keeps me in the known and prevents possible unknown terrible things from happening
- It helps me survive
- It wards off hurt
- It helps me cope with an overwhelming world

Behind every self-defeating behavior pattern, and depression is no exception, there is a behavioral belief which says that it is in the best interest of the person to do the behavior. A way for you to identify your inner behavioral reason is to complete this sentence: Doing a depression is good for me because

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(Put in what you think your reason is)

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These inner beliefs are most often the opposite of what we consciously think. Thus, a person who behaviorally pushes people away because he/she thinks others will hurt him/her, may in his/her conscious mind really want
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to get close. Because of the conscious desired closeness, the person may be closed to seeing the inner belief which contributes to keeping the behavior. Don't get confused by your rational logic. Instead, put yourself into the logic of the behavior and see what it says.

Step 5. Change your reason for doing the depression.

Identifying the inner reason for doing a depression is one step toward changing it. Another step to take, and a most important one, is to see if the depression does what the behavioral logic promises. In the examples I used in the above section, one person thought that doing a depression was safer, another believed that it would cut down on mistakes, and still another thought it would bring happiness. It isn't difficult to check out these beliefs and see if the depression fulfills their promise.

If you are honest with yourself and open to seeing the results of your depression, you will see that the depression does just the opposite of what your behavioral belief thinks it does. Instead of being safe, depressions are risky because they make relationships difficult. In addition, they take a physical toll, interfere with jobs, interfere with promotions, and can even lead to being fired. Depressions generate unhappiness and mistakes, and we must let that data sink deep inside if we wish to rid ourselves of this psychological burden.

What I would like you to do is to record what your inner belief purports to promise and then screen that up against the actual results which

occur when you do your depression. By seeing the contrast, and letting the truth hit home inside, you can change your inner belief and eliminate the reason for keeping your depression.

Please complete the following sentence: My inner reason to keep my depression promises that if I use it in various situations I can expect the following to occur \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(cite what your inner belief promises)  
\_\_\_\_\_

but, when I do a depression the following actually happens: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

<p>In looking for the results of doing a depression, look for how it affects you physically, socially, mentally, sexually, on the job, in school, how it negatively impacts others, the time and energy and money it consumes, how it interferes with fun and recreation, etc. Depressions often lead to loneliness, thoughts of suicide, sadness, and tunnel vision. Look for these, and other results in yourself.</p>
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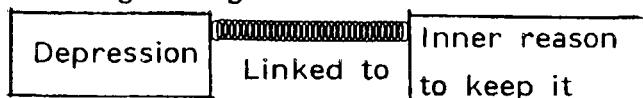
Take a good look at the promise and then take a good look at the results. See if the results are not the opposite of what your inner belief promises. Let this knowledge begin to hit

home and use it to change your inner belief. Begin to realize that it is stupid to keep a behavior which does the opposite of your reason for keeping it.

Step 6. Driving the truth home inside where it will make a behavioral difference.

Fortunately, there are ways to change these inner beliefs. One of them was listed in the above section. Another thing you can do is to continuously link up the depression to its actual results rather than to the inner reason for keeping it. Let me show you what I mean:

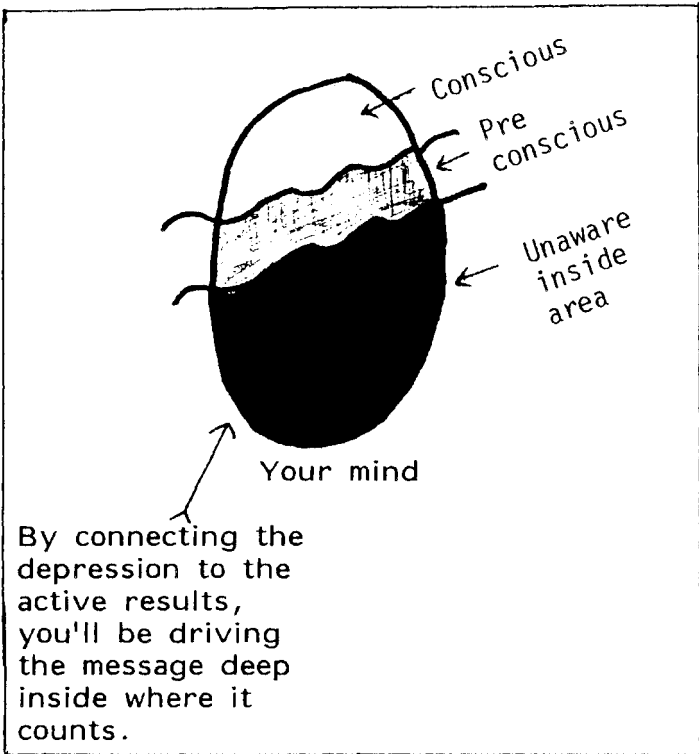
When people do a depression they make the following linkage:



The proper linkage, and something you must do, is as follows:



For the next week or two (or for however long it takes you to break your improper link), each time you use your depression in a situation, consciously notice and feel the hurtful results and then link these results to the depression. Don't link the results to yourself and make yourself seem like a bad person. That will only make matters worse. Link the results to the depression and see how awful it is. As you continue to make those connections, you will know deep inside that the depression is your enemy and you'll have no reason to hang onto it.



Step 6. Replace the depression with a more life-giving behavior.

For everyone who does a depression in a particular situation, there are numerous examples of people who don't. We need to look at how they respond instead of doing a depression to obtain clarity on behaviors we, too, can use. Another thing which can give direction on what to do instead of a depression, is to look at ourselves when we are not doing a depression. This can also help us achieve clarity.

Going back to the techniques for implementing a depression (pages 3 - 12), we can see things we can do instead of the techniques. For

instance, instead of dwelling on some hurtful incident, we can acknowledge that it occurred, but then concentrate on life's happenings as life moves forward. If a rejection occurs which we did not expect or want, there are many things which follow the rejection which we can get involved in. They run the gamut from T.V., people, work, to just plain relaxing.

If you watch people who take things personally and then watch people who don't, you will usually see quite a contrast. The person who responds without the depression often uses a sense of humor, sometimes even laughing at him/her self. Or, instead of taking things personally one can learn to let something go in one ear and out the other.

Listening to one's creative and fun ideas, initiating conversations, and jumping in when people suggest something fun to do are all things which can be done to make one's life enjoyable. I was on a radio talk show recently and a woman called in and said that instead of doing a depression when her husband died, she began to help others. Helping others is a great deal better behavior than doing a depression.

Instead of comparing oneself to others and creating a depression, a person can accept his/her self and go from there.

When I write of using a behavior in place of a depression, I mean just that. It does no good to help someone, for example, if you help them and do a depression at the same time. Many people have the mistaken idea that the thing to do is to try and control the depression after it starts, or to try and keep it at a reasonable level of pain. That is not what I am

suggesting. I am suggesting that, in a new moment of living, instead of ever starting a depression you choose another behavior.

Begin to watch people who don't do depressions and see what they do in those situations in which you depress yourself. Begin to obtain some clarity on what behaviors you could use in place of your depression, and begin to practice them. You will be surprised at how adept you can become at putting life-giving behaviors into gear in situations where you previously used a depression.

Record below some behaviors you believe you could use in various situations instead of your depression and then begin to practice them.

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Let me give you a few more suggestions about behaviors which can be used in place of a depression.

Judy always did a depression when her ex-husband came to take their son for a weekend. This led to many defeating results on her part. She decided to do something about it.

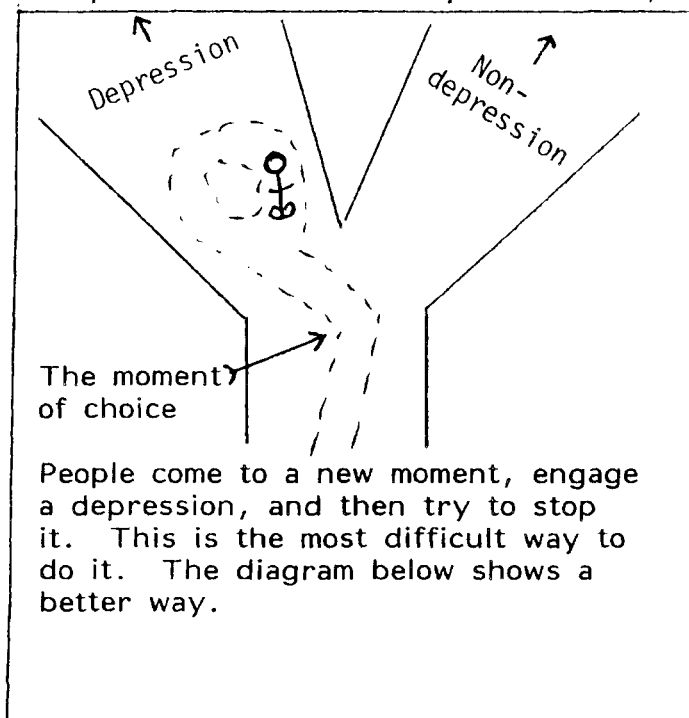
After some work on her part, she began to see that she could use the time to better advantage. If she'd had her druthers, she would have preferred to have her son with her all of the time. But that was not the reality of her situation. Therefore, she decided to accept the reality and asked herself the question: "My son is not going to be with me on certain weekends, so why not take advantage of the situation and do things by myself which I cannot do when he is here?" For her, some of these things included having a man over for a romantic dinner, reading, cleaning house, and going out with some of her friends. As I observed Judy's life, I thought these were much better choices on her part.

Rob found himself in a foreign country through no choice of his own. At first he responded with depression, but later realized how stupid that was. His replacement behaviors included enjoying the country and the people and learning as much from the new experience as he could.

If you watch people who do not use depressions to cope, you will often see them learning as much from a situation as they can, responding with a sense of humor, ignoring hurtful things which do not fit them, getting involved in activities which really mean something to them, bettering themselves by growth activities, working hard, exercising and eating well, and getting involved in recreational activities. Why not try them on for size?

I would like to point out a common mistake people often make who are trying to eliminate their use of a depression and replace it with life behaviors. What they will do is to come to a new moment of living, make a quick choice to engage

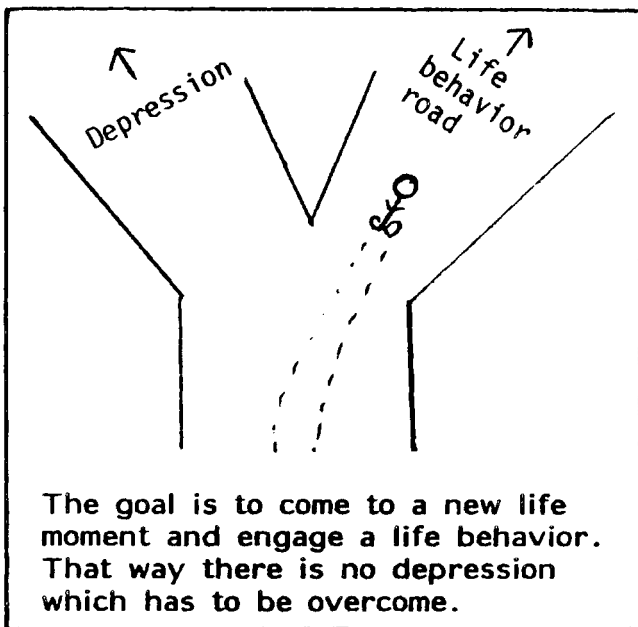
the depression (but probably not own up to the fact that the choice was made), and implement the depression with techniques. Then, after



the depression is in full swing, the person tries to counter it with a life behavior. This is not what I am recommending for you because it makes eliminating a depression too difficult because the defeating energy from the depression is already in motion and, therefore, difficult to stop. The goal you need to have for yourself, even if at first you do not reach it, is to come to a new life moment and merely engage a life behavior as



the first thing you do rather than as a counter move to a depression which initially preceded it. This may sound beyond your reach, but it is not.



I would like to suggest that if you honestly try and stop using depressions but find yourself still using them, professional help may be in order. Almost every city, town, or community has professional counselors and social workers who can help. Contacting a medical doctor for a referral suggestion or contacting a local social service agency is usually a good way to obtain the services of a competent professional. If you do not have money to spend on professional help, there are many governmental agencies where help is free or inexpensive. All you need to do is inquire.

Even though professional help is in order

for some people, don't sell yourself short on what you can do for yourself. Use this pamphlet as a guideline for eliminating your depressions. Get on the move. Life is too short to spend even part of it doing a self-defeating depression.