

Depression...Is there light at the end of the tunnel?

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Many people have experienced a life event that dims their enthusiasm and ability to engage in work, decision making, and fun for a while. However, when the darkness seems overwhelming, exhausting, and leads to interference with life activities, it's more serious. If you are experiencing a loss of interest or a feeling of detachment from your family, work environment, and/or society you may be depressed and need to be evaluated by a qualified healthcare provider.

Depression can be caused from an imbalance in brain chemistry. Some people choose to use medication to change their brain. However, there are many support tools you can use to help undermine the root cause of your depression symptoms.

1. Become an observer of your mind. Notice what your automatic thoughts are. Do you tend to use words like "always" or "never"? How about "should"? Perhaps you have gotten in the habit of using Automatic Negative Thoughts which can lead to feeling hopeless. Try a friendly debate with that negative thought. Challenge it with, "Really? What proof is there?" or for every "can't" challenge yourself to say five "I can..." statements. Even if you don't choose any of the alternatives, you are training your brain to be creative and reminding yourself that you have choices.
2. Some people grew up in households where emotions weren't modeled, safe, or they were shut down with guilt or shaming. Therefore, it can be difficult as an adult to know how to have emotion without thinking there will be negative consequences. You may find yourself repeating things that were used on you as a child, like "there's no sense in being sad, it's not going to change anything". Many people who dismiss their emotions also express a disconnection with themselves, and a lack of internal guidance for finding happiness or to make decisions. Emotion regulation can be achieved through mindfulness practices.
3. Sometimes people learn to be in roles that are disempowering. Then, their behaviors can reinforce a sense of worthlessness. Reading about the drama triangle, Glasser's Games People Play, or Roles of Children of Alcoholics, can increase your awareness.
4. Exploring the meaning of life can help you connect with something greater than you can help give you a sense of belonging or connectedness through difficult times. Some people take a walk in nature and feel more grounded and part of the universe, other people participate in Enlightenment Intensives or meditation to feel connected.

**As a Licensed Mental Health Counselor, I help people find light in the darkness.
I also offer collaborative care with any providers prescribing medication.**

Heart Healing Counseling Corporation www.hearthealing.org 253-651-3752