

# DEPRESSION

A TEEN'S GUIDE

TO

# SURVIVE

AND

# THRIVE

BY

JACQUELINE B. TONER, PHD

AND

CLAIRE A.B. FREELAND, PHD

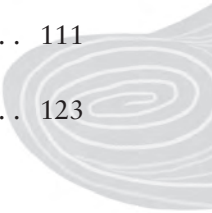
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# A NOTE TO YOU, OUR READER

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As a teen you get a great deal of information and guidance on lots of things. If you take a course on study skills, your teacher will no doubt make lots of suggestions about how to approach projects or memorize information. If you are about to take a standardized test for college admissions, you will probably get advice about how to interpret tricky questions or whether to guess on answers. The list goes on, right?

But you may get no direct instruction about how to manage difficult emotions. It may seem that you're expected to just know how to cope with all the changes and challenges you're facing. This lack of direction can be hard because you are at an age when you are vulnerable to depression. While people often use the word "depression" to describe a momentary mood, the same term is also used to label a more serious and long-lasting problem that can interfere with many aspects of your life. It's that second definition we'll be focusing on in this book.

If you're like most kids your age, you may have heard of depression, and you may even have some idea of what it is. But if you are experiencing depression, you definitely need to understand it better. More important, you'll want to learn effective ways to

interrupt depression, cope with it, or avoid it altogether. We think you deserve a book just for you to explain what depression is, how it may derail you, and effective ways to prevent depression or to take care of yourself if you are depressed.

## IS THIS BOOK FOR YOU?

You may have picked up this book because of difficulties you are experiencing or upsetting emotions you have. Or you may just be curious about what you've heard or read about depression. Maybe this book was given to you by a parent, teacher, school counselor, or other adult. Or perhaps you already know that you are depressed, and you're seeing a therapist who thinks the ideas in this book will be helpful to you. Chances are, if you're reading this, you or someone else has wondered if you're struggling with depression.

Within these pages we hope to help you to answer that question. We'll start with some basic information about what depression is. We'll also include some information you might find interesting about the role your brain and emotions play in making you depressed. Knowing what depression is and where it may come from will help you understand how depression can impact your life. It can help you recognize that depression can come from various sources, too—sometimes even more than one source at a time. While each person's experience is unique, we hope this information will help you recognize what you may be experiencing and also give you language to talk about it with trusted adults, should you decide to do so.

We are confident that having a better understanding of depression can help you to manage it, but this book is not meant as a substitute for getting professional help. Depression can make it difficult to follow through with making needed changes. Having a therapist

as a sounding board and guide is important. And if you are feeling so down that you are having thoughts of suicide, it is urgent that you seek professional help right now. If you can't identify an adult to confide in, you can seek immediate help by telling your doctor, calling 911, or going to any hospital emergency room. See page 10 for more resources for preventing suicide.

## HOW TO USE THE BOOK

Of course, if you're struggling with depression, you want more than to understand it. You want your depression to go away! Although we can't offer a quick solution, we will attempt to help you understand how behavior, thoughts, and emotions interact and catch you in a depressive loop. In addition to helping you see how this loop may make you feel stuck, we'll suggest some ways to interrupt it. Many of the ideas that are explained come from cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). Research has shown this type of therapy to be effective in fighting depression.

Many kids who experience depression have the sense that it's out of their control—a roller-coaster ride that they can't get off. Maybe that's been your experience too. We hope to alert you to how the many decisions you make every day can make a difference in how things turn out for you. You may be surprised that a few important changes can make a gigantic difference in your emotional well being, in how you think about yourself, and in how you relate to the world around you. Our goal is to put you in charge!

**Make a commitment to yourself.** Learning and change of any kind is difficult. Overcoming depressed thoughts and behaviors doesn't happen overnight. Real change requires time and effort. For

you to benefit from using this book, you will need to make a commitment to try new ways of thinking and behaving. Luckily, we have learned that taking 20 minutes or so most days to learn and practice the ideas presented here will make a big difference—a difference that lasts.

**Read it.** Of course it will be important to read the book, but we don't recommend starting at the beginning and just reading through to the end as if this is a textbook. Take your time. Read a section and then put it aside for a while. This pause will allow you to think about what you've read and begin to identify how the information relates to you. While the ideas aren't complicated, it can take time to observe how they are reflected in your life. Letting go of old habits and absorbing new habits into your life will happen gradually. Working slowly through the book will allow you to observe yourself in new ways and try different ways of thinking and acting.

**Do the exercises.** We've provided some quizzes, questionnaires, and exercises. As with the reading, you'll need to take some time to complete them and take note of how they may change you in smaller and then larger ways. If you are currently in therapy, your therapist may want to work on some of the exercises with you or even modify them to make them fit you and your situation.

**Keep a journal.** Reading this book will give you many new ways to understand and deal with depression, but we think a journal is an effective addition. Keeping a journal will help you become more aware of yourself. It will also allow you to plan and track changes you find useful and note the impact those changes have on your life.

And keeping a journal allows you to look back later at what worked for you. It helps you to mark progress, which will be a big boost to your confidence. As you proceed through this book, you can keep notes on the exercises you try and what you find most helpful or surprising when doing them.

## **SURVIVING THE RIDE AND LEARNING TO THRIVE**

Life is like a roller coaster at times, but you can keep your balance by learning to identify behaviors and ways of thinking that impact your emotions in positive ways. You can cope with challenges if you learn ways to calm and refocus yourself. You can enjoy the ride when you learn to increase the number of successful experiences you have, become involved in fun and rewarding activities, build relationships with other people, set goals, and develop your personal strengths. The information in this book will help you learn strategies to protect yourself from having depression take control.



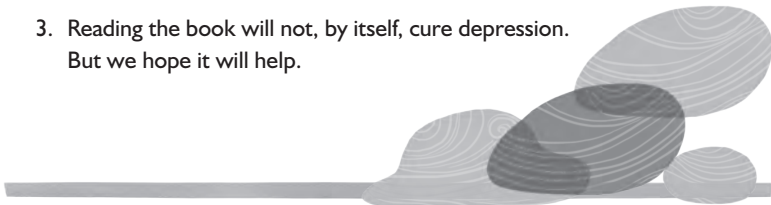
### **Journal Idea**

Come up with a plan for journaling. Decide when you'll have time and energy to spend a few minutes focused just on you. Is bedtime a time when you can relax and think? Between school and after-school activities? Will you likely do better writing by hand or making notes on your computer or cell phone?





### In a Nutshell

1. It's better to read this book in chunks to allow yourself time to think about the information presented and incorporate the ideas into new ways of thinking, acting, and feeling. Try not to just plow through the book as fast as you can in one sitting.
  2. It's not necessary to do all of the exercises, but they are designed to assist you in developing new skills. Just as with building physical strength, building emotional strength takes practice over time.
  3. Reading the book will not, by itself, cure depression. But we hope it will help.
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If you have picked up this book, you probably want nothing more than to understand why you feel the way you do and how to feel better. You want those depressed thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to just go away, right?

Inside you'll read about what depression is, how it can derail you, and effective ways to take care of yourself if you are depressed. Full of useful information, helpful self-reflection quizzes, and easy-to-do exercises, and based firmly on cognitive-behavioral principles, this book will provide you with a concrete plan that could make a huge difference in your health and well-being—a difference that lasts.

*“Well written, easily understood, and jargon-free. The authors have appealed directly to the teen in a manner that empowers rather than stigmatizes.”*

—James M. Foley, DEd  
Licensed Psychologist;  
Author of *Danny and the Blue Cloud: Coping With Childhood Depression*

*“This engaging and well-written book offers a user-friendly, accessible version of CBT for adolescent depression. It provides up-to-date and practical information on what depressed teenagers can do right now to start feeling better.”*

—Paul Rohde, PhD  
Licensed Psychologist;  
Senior Research Scientist,  
Oregon Research Institute

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