

### Defining Depression

1. American Psychological Association, <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/depression.aspx>

Everyone experiences sadness at times. But depression is something more. Depression is extreme sadness or despair that lasts more than days. It interferes with the activities of daily life and can even cause physical pain. Fortunately, depression is highly treatable.

Depression, also known as major depressive disorder or clinical depression, is one of the most common mental disorders in the United States. In 2014, an estimated 15.7 million adults in the U.S. — about 6.7 percent of all U.S. adults — had at least one major depressive episode, according to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH).

2. Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=69W1YOpORww>

So I think we have to be able to distinguish between the two. I can be depressed but not have a depression. Strangely enough, one can have a clinical depression and not be depressed. And it will show itself in an inability to feel... Trying to do psychotherapy with a person who's got a biochemical depression is like trying to tune the television set when it's not plugged in.

3. Mayo Clinic, <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20356013>

Medications and psychotherapy are effective for most people with depression. Your primary care doctor or psychiatrist can prescribe medications to relieve symptoms. However, many people with depression also benefit from seeing a psychiatrist, psychologist or other mental health professional.

4. Psychotherapy – Evidence-Based Treatments for Major Depression

<https://www.mentalhelp.net/articles/psychotherapy-evidence-based-treatments-for-major-depression/>

Psychotherapy is a talk therapy in which people work with trained professional therapists to discuss their problems and learn new skills. Psychotherapy can help depressed individuals to talk about their experiences and feel listened to, gain insight into (and often some measure of control over) the thinking processes that lead to depressed moods, explore the contribution of past experiences to present day distress, and learn practical coping skills that can help decrease the likelihood of developing future depressive episodes.

### Depression in Jewish Tradition

5. Samuel I 16:14

And the spirit of Gd left Saul, and a harmful spirit from Gd frightened him.

6. Don Isaac Abarbanel (15<sup>th</sup> century Spain) to Samuel I 16:14

He was surrounded by confusion and bad thoughts, and his imagination was continually occupied with his punishment, how Gd had torn the throne of Israel from him, and how his good spirit had left him. From this, his blood burned and he developed the "melancholy" disease which happens from the burning of blood and red bile. The doctors have already written that in this disease, imagination and the power of thought are destroyed, pain and worry befall him, and he will fear and tremble and churn in depression...

7. Talmud, Bava Metzia 84a

When Reish Lakish died, Rabbi Yochanan missed him painfully. The sages said, "Who will go settle his mind? Let Rabbi Elazar ben Pedat go, for his learning is sharp." He went before Rabbi Yochanan, and whenever Rabbi Yochanan said something, he said, "Here is a source supporting you." Rabbi Yochanan said, "Will you be like Reish Lakish? When I said something, Reish Lakish would challenge it in 24 ways, and I would answer in 24 ways, and so our learning grew. You say, 'Here is a source supporting you' – don't I know what I said is good?!"

Rabbi Yochanan went about tearing his clothing and weeping, saying, "Where are you, Reish Lakish? Where are you, Reish Lakish?" and wailing, until his mind left him. The sages prayed for mercy upon him, and he died.

8. Rabbi Moses Maimonides (Rambam, 12<sup>th</sup> century Egypt) Shemonah Perakim 5

One who has black bile rise up in him should remove it with songs and types of music, strolling in gardens and beautiful buildings, and sitting with pretty sculptures. This will broaden his spirit and remove the worry of black bile.

#### Jewish Law

9. Rabbi Dr. Avraham Sofer Abraham (20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century Israel), Nishmat Avraham Orach Chaim 328:Introduction  
Regarding violating Shabbat, there is no distinction between one who suffers from physical ailments and one who suffers from psychological ailments. All of the rules taught regarding classification of physical illness based on the seriousness of the condition and the possibility of danger to life apply to psychological illness as well. Therefore, the law regarding violating Shabbat for this person – biblical or rabbinic law – depends on the severity of the condition...

10. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (20<sup>th</sup> century USA), Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 2:59 (1965)

If doctors were to identify a life-saving issue, such as that he might respond to pain with suicide, or that he might violate civil law, not listen to the police and resist such that they might kill him, or that the illness itself is dangerous such that his brain is damaged, and he can only be healed there...

11. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (20<sup>th</sup> century USA), Igrot Moshe Even haEzer 1:65 (1961)

Regarding a woman who became insane after the birth of her two children, such that the doctors forbid further pregnancy. May she use contraception?

Certainly, his honour is correct; insanity is dangerous not only for herself, but also for her small children. Even one whose insanity does not currently incline toward harm could still change, wanting to harm herself or her children, Gd forbid, and one cannot stand guard for this. Therefore, one should permit her...

#### Can Judaism Help? Four points

12. Genesis 3:6

And the woman perceived that the tree was good for eating, and that it was desirable to the eyes, and that the tree was good for gazing, and she took of its fruit and she ate, and she gave to her husband with her as well, and he ate.

13. Psalms 106:7

Our ancestors in Egypt did not gain insight from Your wonders, did not remember Your great kindnesses, and they rebelled upon the Sea at Yam Suf.

14. Exodus 32:1

And the nation saw that Moses was delayed descending from the mountain, and the nation gathered upon Aaron and they said to him: Rise, make a god/power for us, who will walk before us, for this Moses, the man who brought us up from Egypt, we do not know what happened to him.

15. Joshua 7:1

And the children of Israel trespassed upon the *cherem*; and Achan ben Karmi ben Zavdi ben Zerach of the tribe of Judah took from the *cherem*...

16. Midrash, Bamidbar Rabbah 10:4

The daughter of Pharaoh brought 1000 types of music to [King Solomon], and she instructed them to be played before him that night [when the Temple was dedicated]. She said to him: So they play for this idol, and so they play for that idol." And what did the daughter of Pharaoh make? She spread a curtain over him and affixed many kinds of gems to it; they shone like the stars and constellations. When Solomon wished to rise, he saw those stars and constellations, and so he [over-]slept until four hours.

17. Rabbi Chaim Yosef David Azulai (18<sup>th</sup> century Italy), Chomat Anach to Bereishit  
"And the land was *tohu* and *bohu* (Genesis 1:2)" – In *Likutei Torah* of the students of the Ari z"l it is written that this is the secret of the breaking of the vessels.

18. Rabbi Dr. Shalom Carmy, *Religious Optimism and the Meaning of Life*, Tradition 39:3 (2006)  
Paradoxically, R. Kook suggests that yibbum is a better model for Jewish reflection on the family, precisely because the extraordinary and tragic illuminates the normal. "The life of Torah is not ordinary life, but eternal," both in its spiritual and material dimensions. For that reason Torah life is manifest, not only under ideal circumstances, but also in situations of destruction, even when "the natural structure has broken down and the family is destroyed."

19. Ernest Hemingway  
Happiness in intelligent people is the rarest thing I know.

20. Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (20<sup>th</sup> century USA), *Kol Dodi Dofek* (Prof. Lawrence Kaplan translation)  
We ask neither about the cause of evil nor about its purpose, but rather about how it might be mended and elevated.

21. Rabbi Tzaddok haKohen of Lublin (19<sup>th</sup> century Eastern Europe), Divrei Sofrim 16  
A Jew must never abandon hope in any arena, whether in physical issues as in the Talmud's statement "Even if a sharp sword is on one's neck, he should not refrain from [seeking Divine] mercy (Berachot 10a)," or in spiritual issues, even when he has sunk to the place where he has sunk... The entire structure of the nation of Israel came after complete abandonment of hope, for Abraham and Sarah were old...

22. Rabbi Yehudah Leib Alter (The second Gerrer Rebbe, 19<sup>th</sup> century Poland), S'fat Emet Parshat Bo 5641  
One must always remember one's origin, and remembering this will bring strength and energy in all of one's actions. One who forgets the beginning falls into depression.

23. "Rivka", Wings Like a Dove  
[http://wingslikeadove.blogspot.com/2007/02/what-would-i-want-my-congregation-to\\_10.html](http://wingslikeadove.blogspot.com/2007/02/what-would-i-want-my-congregation-to_10.html)

I write to you today as one of the Unseen. It hurts to not be seen. It hurts even more to suffer alone and in silence. I have a mental illness, depression in particular. I hide it well most of the time. Today I did not hide it. I cried openly in shul. I trembled from the sheer pain of it, surrounded by some two hundred people, during the kiddush luncheon that followed, and still you did not see me. I stumbled out of the social hall, blinded by tears I could not control and sobs that left me unable to breathe, and still no one saw me. I took refuge in the chapel and sobbed aloud. In the past I would hide in the bathroom, taking great pains to silence my tears when anyone came in. Today I did not. I sought solace, but I did not hide. People came into the chapel for various reasons: to look for a lost tallis, read the newspaper, find a book in the library. Even still, I remained Unseen. When my sobs exhausted themselves and I found my peace in emotional numbness, I rose to leave the chapel, falling onto a chair in my weakened state. One man remained in the chapel, facing me. He did not even bother to look up. I left the chapel, Unseen.

24. Genesis 40:6-7  
And Joseph came to them in the morning, and he saw them, and they were upset. And he asked the officers of Pharaoh who were with him in his master's jail, "Why are your faces down today?"

25. Mishnah, Maaser Sheni 5:12  
"I have done everything You have commanded me (Deut. 26:14)" – I have rejoiced, and I have helped others rejoice.

26. The Story of Yukio Shige, <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0806/11/cnr.02.html> (June 11, 2008)  
KYUNG LAH, CNN CORRESPONDENT (voice-over): The sheer rocks of Tojimbo Cliff are a natural wonder in Eastern Japan drawing tourists across the country. It's why 34-year-old, Hiro, came here, one last view of beauty before trying to kill himself.

HIRO, CONSIDERED SUICIDE (through translator): I wanted to die at the place where I could see the sunset. My life had been depressing. I wanted it to end on a sunny day.

LAH: That was a year and a half ago. Hiro's mother had died. He had no friends and a mountain of debt. So he came to Tojimbo known as Japan's suicide cliff. But as he waited for the sun to set, Yukio Shige came walking by and asked Hiro if he needed to talk.

HIRO (through translator): He knew why I was here. I told him I was planning to jump.

LAH: Shige listen to Hiro's problems and set him up with financial counselors and gave him a simple gift - hope. For 62-year-old Yukio Shige, it was just another day. Shige spent 40 years as a police officer until he meet an elderly couple while on patrol standing at the cliffs. He convinced them not to jump and sent them to a government office. Days later the couple wrote this letter. The government office told us go ahead and kill yourselves, they wrote. The letter arrived at Shige's police station two days after they killed themselves.

YUKIO SHIGE, FORMER POLICE OFFICER (through translator): It's like I lied when I promised I'd help. I want to cry. What they were told should not be forgiven.

The government office no longer exists. But the letter changed his life.

LAH (on camera): Every day? Twice a day?

(voice-over): Shige retired from the police force and started patrolling on his own. Watching and talking to visitors. Mostly friendly conversation. Emergency phone booths and warning signs on the cliff are not enough, says Shige. And Japanese society isn't doing enough. Four years later, Shige's log list 129 names of people he convinced not to jump. People he still stays in touch with today.