

WHEN DEPRESSY STRIKES, HOLD IT TIGHT

小鬱亂入抱緊處理

Depressy: a cute personification of a very serious issue.
Recipient of Red Dot Award for Communication Design in 2016.

According to the World Health Organization, depression is already the world's leading cause of ill health and disability, and its impact will only worsen in the years to come. Depression disrupts lives, taking a toll on families and racking up sizeable social costs. Yet many people are still unsure how to talk about the condition – which is why this book turns depression into “Depressy”, a cute, mischievous creature who is considerably less intimidating. *When Depressy Strikes, Hold It Tight* employs crisp prose, cute illustrations, and easy-to-understand infographics to convey credible medical expertise on the subject.

As well as going deep into the history of depression and its treatment, this book also offers practical advice on how to deal with the condition, how friends and family can help, and what precautions we can take; it handles the topic of suicide with great tact and sensitivity; and in helping readers learn to distinguish between depression and mood fluctuations, it teaches us to become more aware of our own feelings.

When Depressy Strikes, Hold It Tight dispels some of the most pervasive myths about depression. Readers will be charmed by the book's approachable style and engaging illustrations as Depressy leads them on a journey they were not expecting.

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When Depressy Strikes, Hold It Tight was originally an interactive website created as a graduation project by Lin Yu-heng and Pai Ling when they were design students. Her mother's experience with mental illness made Lin Yu-Heng realize how poorly society understands the condition, and Depressy aimed to overturn these lingering misconceptions through the power of design. An immediate online viral success, *When Depressy Strikes, Hold It Tight* received a Red Dot Award for Communication Design in 2016, and qualified for Taiwan's Young Pin Design Award in 2016, as well as the Adobe Design Achievement Awards.



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What is Depressy?

Depressy is living, moving, breathing depression. He barges into people's lives when they least expect it, stirring up chaos and confusion. Recently, we've been seeing more and more of Depressy, and in the future he may pose a threat to human society. The most frightening thing about Depressy is the way he creeps in furtively, often going undetected at first, meaning his target fails to shake him off while his power remains weak. This book will describe the wide-ranging impact of Depressy in detail, to guard against the future disintegration of human society.



Huge ears: Depressy's ears hear the sounds of mental pressure, and when he finds a person whose pressure level is especially intense, he takes advantage of any opportunity to invade their lives.

Sharp claws: Depressy's claws are sharp and nimble, grabbing hold of a person's eyelids or legs,

keeping them from sleeping or preventing them from taking a single step. Sometimes they can even destroy a person's living environment or damage objects.

A black, curly tail: Depressy's tail can spring out and coil back in, sometimes bushy, sometimes bare. Its main function is causing disturbance in people's lives, robbing them of their motivation.

Black fur: Scientists in ancient Rome thought melancholy originated from black bile – maybe that's why Depressy has black fur! His color helps him sneak into people's lives undetected, but he has a few golden hairs as well which sometimes give him away.

A conversation with yourself

Other than going into treatment and taking medication, what else can we do to cope?



Rule number one

Know that it's not you, it's Depressy

The first thing you need to know is this: "It is depression that causes you to take a negative view on things and feel down. This state is not an accurate reflection of reality." Just like when you come down with a cold or another physical ailment, your experience of daily life and your way of thinking are not the same as when you are healthy. Depression affects the body, emotions, and thoughts, even impacting your appetite, sleep, self-perception, and ways of thinking about things.

Rule number two

Accept the signs of Depressy's presence

Basically, you must admit that you are ill. Many people deny, evade, pretend, and reject, refusing to listen to the warning signals sent by their bodies and minds, but often their struggles only serve to further entrap them. Whether the problem is mental or physical, the first thing is to control the symptoms. If they are ignored, the problem will get worse.





Rule number four

Stop asking, “why me?”

Stop trying to find someone to blame, and remember that condemning yourself will do nothing to drive off Depressy.

Constantly asking yourself “why did I have to get sick?” only deepens your despair and indignation, and does not improve your situation in any way. Or maybe you’ve been ignoring your physical and mental health for a long time, and now you’re tired, and your body and mind are calling out for help, and it’s time for you to stop and take care of yourself.



Rule number three

Do nothing, and get a good rest

The first step to fighting off Depressy is summoning up the courage to ask for time off.

To get back to normal, first off, you have to recuperate. “Doing nothing” sounds simple, but a melancholic personality often makes a person feel like they are letting others down by taking a rest. Have the courage to tell yourself, “the thing I have to do right now is this: ask for time off.”



Rule number five

Don't be ashamed to be depressed

The simple fact is that Depressy afflicts you due to lack of serotonin.

Patients are often afraid of others discovering their illness because they don't want to be labeled. However, depression is due to a physical imbalance in the brain. Just like a cold, the flu, or an endocrine disorder, it is an illness that occurs due to overlapping factors such as the external environment and a weakened physical condition. We should recognize that our “mental immunity” has weakened, and we are in fact ill. As with physical illness, which occurs when physical immunity is compromised, we must seek

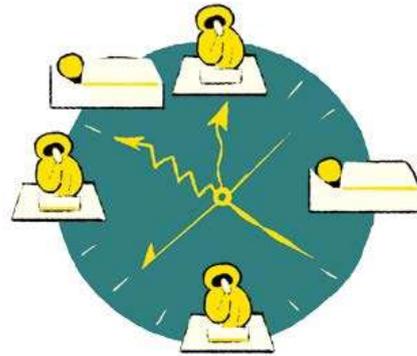
professional help, pursuing treatment promptly to get quickly back on our feet. Attempting to keep mental illness a secret, enduring it alone and taking no action, will backfire.

Rule number six

Maintain a regular cycle of work and rest

Regular meals and regular sleep are the keys to good health.

Depression not only robs people of the ability to feel happiness, it also impacts their bodies, thoughts, appetites, sleep, and lifestyle regularity, all of which can be thrown out of balance. When you get a cold, your doctor will tell you to get plenty of rest and drink plenty of water. Treatment of depression likewise begins with the basics: maintaining a regular cycle of work and rest, eating three meals a day, and sleeping at fixed times. You also have to avoid staying up all night to keep your body in good physical condition. If your body is weak, your mind is likely to be fragile as well.



Rule number seven

Put off important decisions

Put off important decisions, because Depression makes your thoughts turn negative. Put off important decisions until your depression improves. At this time, absolutely do not undertake any strenuous tasks, and do not engage in complicated thinking or make complicated decisions. Before making important decisions such as changing your job, getting married, or getting a divorce, talk it over with someone who understands you and can look at your situation objectively.



Rule number eight

Give yourself the chance to feel good

Take part in activities that interest you, and give yourself the chance to feel good.

If your illness takes a turn for the better, at the right time, you can take part in activities that make you feel good. Examples: attending lectures, volunteering with charities, watching comedy films, visiting friends, pursuing interests you used to enjoy, and so on. Starting a new hobby, such as cooking, singing, or dancing, could also be a good move. However, you must remember that “things that make you feel good” do not include drinking alcohol or taking any drug that your doctor has not approved or that might cause stimulation.

Following the above rules will not be easy when Depressy crashes your party, but even if you can't quite manage when you first get sick, it's worth the effort to try when things take a turn for the better. The patient's friends and loved ones should never put pressure on the patient to follow these steps, as this may backfire.



How should we treat people afflicted by Depressy?



When we're concerned a loved one might have depression, what should we do?

Should we walk on eggshells, avoiding any mention of depression? Should we avoid meeting them at all, leaving them to their own devices? Or should we urge them to think happy thoughts?

No, no, and no!

Keep in mind the “three don'ts” listed below, and enlist the patient's friends and loved ones to help fend off Depressy!

Don't encourage: do not keep telling the patient to “try harder” or “think happy thoughts.”

Don't blame: don't tell the patient “it's all your fault” or “you can't do that when you have depression.”

Don't argue: when the patient tells you of their depressing thoughts, just listen, and don't tell them they're wrong.

In addition to the three don'ts, let's take a look at six correct approaches to a patient with depression:

Show concern

If a friend or loved one suffers from depression, you will certainly be impacted in some way. The first and most important thing is to encourage them or personally accompany them to seek help. Do your best to stay by their side throughout the entire course of treatment, and help them seek another form of treatment if the current one isn't working out. But you should be careful at all times that you don't let their depressed thoughts pull you in.

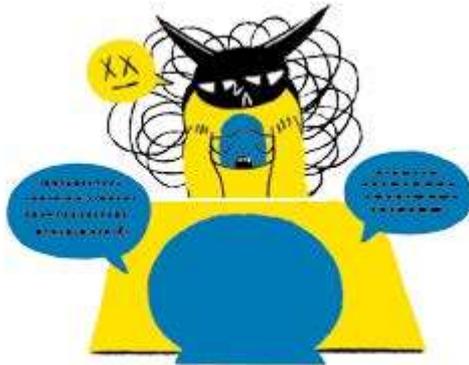
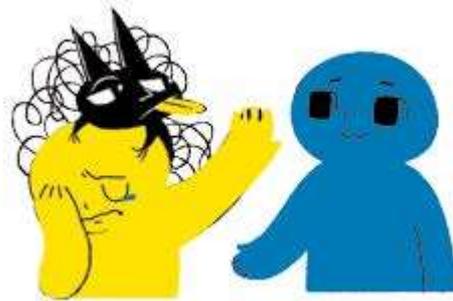


Listen

Help them understand that even though they're in a bad place right now, that doesn't mean things can't get better. Take care not to interrupt them, and patiently let them finish what they're saying. This in itself can sometimes give significant relief when someone is afflicted by Depression. But when listening, you may find yourself pulled in by the patient's emotions and complaints, until before you know it you too are feeling depressed. At times like this, remind yourself that the patient is just letting off steam, and don't let yourself sink into a spiral of negative thinking.

Offer help

It's important to make an offer of help, even if it's refused. Patients with depression often feel alone, and will reject contact with others, but don't let things end there. Even sitting silently beside them, and then taking baby steps with them as they start down the road to recovery, is a very powerful way to help.



Speak up

When the patient expresses suicidal thoughts, speak frankly with them about suicide, then tell their doctor or psychologist. Talking about suicide or depression will not worsen the affliction.

Go out with them

When appropriate, you can invite the patient out to do exercise or participate in some light activity, but do not force them to go out.



Encourage them to seek treatment

People around the patient should actively encourage them to get help, letting them know that treatment can effectively ease the symptoms. Assure them that the treatment will not continue forever, and that once it's over, they'll feel much better.

When a friend or loved one is afflicted by Depression, what should you do?

Show lots of concern

Research reports state that more than 57% of depression patients feel that friends and loved ones provide the greatest help in treating depression, and 31% of depression patients find the courage to seek treatment thanks to encouragement by friends and loved ones. When meeting a friend or loved one afflicted by Depression, offer them comfort and support, as this may help stabilize their condition.



Give lots of support

Friends and loved ones play the most important role in a course of treatment for depression, and 10% of patients decide to stop seeking treatment because family members do not support continuing the treatment plan. Also, patients often stop seeking treatment because they believe they are cured, fear that medication will cause harm, or are concerned about what others will think.

Don't ask questions

In families that get together only occasionally, such as once a year on the holidays, don't be in a hurry to ask about the patient's private life. For instance, asking "Do you have a girlfriend?" or bringing up sensitive work-related topics may put significant pressure on them. Instead, show concern by saying things like, "How are you feeling these days?", "Remember to take your medicine after the meal," and "If you're tired, take a rest."

