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| Tackling Depression. By HK Mayfield |
| An honest insight and explanation |
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| **HK Mayfield** |
| **2/16/2016** |

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| Trying to make sense of bouncing off shadows |

Tackling Depression

By HK Mayfield

My first priority is to write to entertain, with the attitude of Que sera, end of story! Unless it is something, I deem to be usefully informative such as this article.

Some people have natural talent, other people don’t. Some people have to still keep on trying, some others though, well they just won’t!

Although to some, on first reading, it may appear to be a ridiculous notion, but a tried and true way to fight off depression is through humour. Re-discovering one’s real sense of humour and practising it will only serve to remind you of an old, often appreciated, well known and commonly used quote: “***Laughter really is the best medicine***!”

Make no mistake; it is going to take an awful lot more than just a good joke or two, or one good Billy Connelly video to watch. But one has to be patient, one certainly has to dig exceptionally deep at times, through and beyond the fear factor, and be focused on one’s continual effort to try to employ laughter. This declaration is made from personal experience, and I suggest that I usually am just an average, everyday Joe.

But before I really get down to the meat and potatoes of it all, let me forewarn the initially sceptical or un-informed non-sufferer, right from the opening bell and straight from the shoulder. If you were to try and imagine, or create an audio-visual picture of your worst nightmares, phobias or fears momentarily and let them manifest before you. And you not being able to adequately cope with them, it would still be nowhere as terrifying as the authentic and entirely debilitating effects that dark, crippling depression has on sufferers who are subject to it and are left to try to contend with it on a 24/7 basis.

Let us consider the difference between stress and depression briefly. Pressure is felt by everybody at some level. Some people actually appear to thrive on pressure. Others seem to be able to take it in their stride. Then again, some people are consumed and immobilised by it. The worry, in reality, is a springboard for emotions. It can have you feeling high, or manic. It can leave you down and worn. It can even remain stable for periods. But depression starts at the bottom and absolutely wallows there, dispatching its effects. Although stress can be a leading indicator to the onset of depression, it may very well be the primary gateway that allows despair to invade.

Stress, however, is often expressed in aggressive form. It promotes expressions of anger, rage, usually a very short temper and frustration. It is, without a doubt, a form of rebellion. But in somebody suffering from acute depression, the depression nullifies all of the gladiatorial impulses that may be stress-generated.

Depression saps the strength and steals the power and potency from those particular emotions and comes down like an invisible weight. Nature dictates that we are adhered to the earth’s surface by approximately fifteen tons of gravity. To the sufferer of depression, the ordinarily acceptable weight upon us multiplies psychologically to maybe a little more than that amount again and even more in some cases. Any sort of functioning under these conditions can become unmanageable reality. The pure thought and need to move from A to B can become an extraordinarily tiring and all-consuming effort.

This state may also be accompanied by a dominating feeling of defeat. As if one has turned into a punch-drunk fighter who can no longer efficiently perform or defend themselves, and it leaves them feeling defeated and washed up with no real chance or incentive to even try for any sort of comeback attempt.

This critical stage can often be accompanied by the wrong choice to try to find solace, ease, or comfort through negative and worsening avenues of distraction such as the reliance on alcohol, illegal drugs, or whatever perceived escape a person may chase.

I must state that I cannot honestly articulate the weight and feeling of helplessness that I experienced through depression. Only people who have or who are suffering from severe depression could appreciate and recognise my plight and would have gotten to the point of wanting to disperse their personal blue cloud, see through the mist, and find the determination to kick the proverbial black dog’s teeth in! Or those who may be merely feeling overwhelmed with expectation and demand either internally, or from outside sources that are in reality becoming far too high for them to bear.

For those who might be questioning their pull towards depression I suggest you try to keep in mind that there is an awful lot of brilliantly sound advice that is captured in the likes of a known quotation, as brief as to being condensed into a single sentence, but it is accompanied by an unpublished tome of advice.

Some hints and recommendations that you may have heard before or in the past that merely resonate with you automatically should be re-visited and further pondered on. Some can be of enormous value when remembered.

Some of my most influential quotes have been as follows;

“***How you treat people, who are of no value to you, is how you will be truly judged***.”

“***Say what you mean... and mean what you say***.”

“***Be patient... and enjoy... You’ll be a long time dead***!”

“***The sunshine invariably always follows the rain***.”

 “***If conscience truly calls to visit... You had better be strong enough and well prepared for it***!”... Etc.

I will not dwell on or re-hash the exact symptoms and effects of my depression by trying to express them in some recognisable form for the non-sufferer to understand. Nor will I act as a misguided sharing and understanding point for the procrastinating sufferer who has not taken action yet, without trying to offer some real definite help.

In the same breath, I have to explicitly state that defeating depression can only be achieved if the individual is prepared to trust and actively contribute to a program. The importance of this fact cannot be overlooked! My objective is to throw somebody an imaginary life-ring, like those used on ships to somebody in the ocean. Irrespective of any other danger that may be threatening, if the imaginary victim who is in the water does not kick their legs or exercise their lateral muscles to help stay afloat, then they will eventually slip through the ring and perish.

I would like to confirm that yes, it can be done. You can beat the proverbial black dog and, what’s more, give it a well-deserved, and ever so personally satisfying, imaginary hiding! Yet I hope that what I report may be helpful to anybody who may be concerned about depression, whether it is for themselves or somebody that they know.

There are endless reasons for people to experience the emotion of fear. Without a doubt, we have to recognise and accept that throughout civilisations people’s attitude towards fear seems to be one of: “***You can remind me of fear... but it must be done from a safe distance.***” As in books, stories, film, newspapers and such, but that is usually as far as we like to go.

Financial worry is high on the list. Personal relationships, employment concerns, family matters, and on, and on, and on. Then there are the real issues that bother us, the issues that are circulating in our sub-conscious. This is the nursery for any potential seed of depression to grow unobtrusively at first, slowly eroding confidence.

Some people can recognise if they have a bit of a phobia, maybe holding and keeping a bit of a very personal secret that may perceivably even shame them. Then again, many haven’t got a clue what their deep underlying problematic issues are. Therefore they can be forgiven for not questioning if they are really suffering from depression, or if they are merely confused to distraction in their thoughts and decisions.

An analogy that I’d like to offer is that of road rage as we know it. Road rage starts much earlier than when a person enters a vehicle. Issues that may be bothering a person, whether conscious or sub-conscious is probably their cause of anger. Some people express it in a distinct and public way and some privately, to themselves.

But aggressive mannerisms and insulting remarks are common forms of expression employed in a road rage incident. Of course, the rage sufferer will take no responsibility for their outbursts and blame all faults on somebody else. Feeling momentarily satisfied that they have achieved some sort of win in a competition, or an accomplishment of some victory; this disguises the real feelings of failure regarding the real issues that are concerning them, and which they cannot or has not yet accepted. Their actions are all justified by the sufferer and played out in the perceived safety of their vehicle. But look how some of these incidents have escalated into something terrifyingly fatal.

A few indicators that I recall which may apply to you or somebody that is close to you may be as follows: Have you started to disengage from usual tendencies? Are you becoming reclusive or to spend a lot of time alone, thinking? You can’t positively put your finger on what it is that is really bothering you? Are you beginning to have thoughts, concerns, or even fears about some upcoming unknown perceived mysterious doom that you are privately expecting to take place? Are you asking yourself, “***Why am I feeling so sad and upset***?” “***Why do I want to sleep all of the time***?”

It was not until I entered later life, fifty years of age when I was struck down with a debilitating bout of chronic depression that crept in quickly and mildly at first. I was shocked and surprised that I should be so afflicted because I had lived a chequered, prosperous, and colourful life entirely up until then.

In golden hindsight, as a child, I did actively exhibit symptoms of what today is classified as ADHD, although it was never officially diagnosed or even recognised in those days by the medical profession. My signs were numerous: manic behaviour, hyperactivity, abounding long-lasting energy, acting on instinctive impulses, and always looking for stimulation or adventure and without much consideration for danger. Up until my eventual collapse, I had lived life with the enthusiasm of a child - not with the behaviour or innocence of a child, but with the passion that a child has for life! A regular Robin Williams, so to speak!

 Therefore I always appeared to be happily manic, and busy being involved in something or other. I never really found it difficult to multi-task, so everything seemed to be reasonable to me. What I did, however, recognise within myself was an incredible sense of positive, mental attitude. I would always look for and try to plan a favourable outcome in most things.

I indeed subscribe to the belief that we can take something positive out of the most negative situation, even if it is the only experience. Maybe Robin Williams and the like finally decided that they were ready and finally felt comfortable enough to face the last decision left to us in life? Then again, in my youth, I had become aware of the writings and teachings of the late and great Dale Carnegie, and other positive mental attitude promoters and practitioners and had become somewhat of a devotee of the subject.

The period of my severe depression and breakdown lasted for some years before I could fully admit to myself that I needed help. No matter how good and sound the advice given to me by family and friends, I just could not personally put any of it into action. Confusion and doubt then started to invade and permeate my ongoing thoughts and attitude.

Everything in my life appeared to take on a Murphy’s Law kind of rule. Anything that could go wrong did go wrong, either through coincidence or lousy management on my behalf. I started to question previous beliefs and had some minor enlightenment. Then again, I began to develop doubts about everything, not just my talents. I even started to make some unfathomable decisions, quickly recognised as such by my adult children. It was at this point we all sat down to a no-holds-barred, home truth Pow-wow!

Even though depression is what it is, random and impersonal, with one goal only, to instil constant misery upon the victim, each and every sufferer tends to think that what is happening to them is so rare and personal that other people don’t, or at least can’t seem to understand it.

I don’t know how many times people had said to me, well-meaning or not, “***You’d better pull yourself together***!” And I, thinking to myself; “***If I could, don’t you think I would... you ignorant bastard***!” Such was my attitude.

I have heard in debate time after time, by so-called soft drug (like marijuana) users, who say that with regular use, marijuana robs a person of all motivation. This may be so, but that sort of lack of motivation is usually tied directly to at least some emotions of feeling quite well and maybe a touch of selfish laziness is involved, just wanting to chill out and enjoy the high.

But the complete lack of motivation caused by depression is something only a severe sufferer can recognise, even though they may not fully understand it. Being so unmotivated is compounded by constant thought, predominantly filled with fearful concerns, whether there is any real basis in them or not, or they may merely be unconsciously employing just a touch of paranoia.

 If I may offer a piece of advice; “***One*** ***is either doing, or one is not***!” Remember that thinking is ***NOT*** doing!

Oh, and may I not only add but strongly suggest that you force yourself to become active in some form of physical exercise program, no matter how evasive you may feel due to mood. My best way of trying to promote anybody into partaking in action is to suggest that you should commit to regularly taking the dog for a walk... even if you do not own a dog!

I fully understand that the non-sufferer cannot truly understand the depth and isolation that is experienced by some sufferers when they try to explain that they just cannot voluntarily get out of bed. It is far too traumatic for them to even make the motions to rise and face the day, with its awaiting personal misery, that it tends to keep them hidden under the bed-covers in the foetal position, in some vain attempt to escape it, but at the same time not being able to entirely retreat from its threat.

I eventually found the courage to make an appointment with a doctor and fully open up to him regarding my feelings and experiences. Of course, it did not take long for him to confirm that I was suffering from depression. He prescribed a light medication for me to help with the condition. He prescribed Paroxetine which he explained is a Serotonin reuptake inhibitor.

I had come to terms and accepted the official diagnosis of my condition, which in itself started to help with my trying to deal with it. After a few weeks on medication, the effects of the Paroxetine seemed to help a little, but not enough to fully stabilise me. Then quite by accident, my partner bought me a book knowing that the title may interest me. It was titled “Achilles in Vietnam”, written by Dr Johnathan O’Shae, an American psychiatrist and specialist in treating war veterans with their post-traumatic stress issues and conditions.

Upon reading the book, I was amazed at just how many of the soldiers’ feelings and emotions concerned their interpretation of being let down so badly in so many ways by their own government. It eventuated that the doctor had started to prescribe a drug to a select group of veterans that regularly proved to have great beneficial qualities for the suffering veterans. It must be pointed out that many had such reactions as diving underneath tables and beds, or throwing themselves over gurneys and such, in order to escape the imagined threat or destruction some imagined incoming enemy fire was about to cause, triggered sometimes by an unexpected sharp or loud blast, some kind of alarm, or such other shrill device.

They all claimed vast improvement and calm after only a short time taking medicine daily. The drug that the doctor had prescribed for them was a Beta-Blocker.

I was shocked to recognise just how many feelings, and anxieties that I felt were so similar to those reported by the suffering vets, even though my experiences were not due to the post-traumatic stress caused by war.

The next time that I visited my doctor, I informed him of what I had read and asked him if I could try the Beta-blocker as a medicine. He explained that it was usually used to help with the easing of the rate of the heart, giving a more regular, solid beat. He informed me that it was typically prescribed for patients with high blood pressure and I was registering a mildly elevated blood pressure at the time. He seemed to understand and agreed to mandate the non-specific type of the drug for me. It is known as Metoprolol.

Within a relatively short while, I found that the combination of medicines that I was taking was actually working exceptionally well for me, so much so that it allowed me to concentrate more positively on fighting my condition. What I had not reported was the wonderful slowing down of my personal flow of adrenalin, which up until then had the tap permanently jammed in the open position. Peace and tranquillity was now a possibility and in sight. A goal to shoot for!

During my improving period, when the combination of medicine and personal effort was starting to take effect, and to ease my condition a little, I began to think and question what might have started or brought on my state. At first, I couldn’t seem to pinpoint any specific reason, then after some very long and inquisitive pondering of my own life from a child to adulthood, I realised just how much had changed in the last fifty years of my experience.

Things have become much more demanding, and the actual need for speed that we now live under has started in earnest, as in relying heavily on instant information via the internet, or the modern speed of production, coupled with the need for more and quicker results from the workforce when and where advanced technology can’t be employed.

Then it dawned on me that the demand for everything was far more significant and with less human concern for everybody in every walk of life. This is much like the changes that the industrial revolution had made as it left many people behind, with the need for newer and quicker skills that had been used previously, all in all contributing to stress levels rising.

Progress and change cannot be stopped or society left to stagnate, but the speed at which they evolve can often be catastrophic to some, compared to those who accept and welcome the change, often viewing it as being an overall benefit to most.

The most obvious reason for this increased level of stress can be attributed to the rule of supply and demand, as the present day demand for things to be provided immediately or as quickly as possible, now far outweighs the actual ability to deliver the required items or materials at a previously normal and patient pace.

An example might be if we examine the need and use of modern electronic technology for communications such as the internet to run and monitor our business, what happens if it goes wrong or collapses? I suggest big trouble in little China and an incredibly frustrating inconvenience.

Then I thought about the demand for people to rise above modern-day hardships and appear to be good, hard-working providers. The expectations on us all today to be of commercial value is ever-increasing. Then I was made aware of just how much modern day living, and surviving had affected the rural communities, especially the farmers.

I started to lean towards the idea that, with our country has been in significant drought for over a decade, the pressures on the average farmer were vastly magnified, as they just could not produce crops or support livestock due to the length of the drought, not so much because of a lack or shortage of funds. We have to be realistic and recognise that money can solve a lot of significant problems, but nature doesn’t trade in finance or currencies.

It also appeared that a lot of these men and women wrongly felt as if they were actually a failure for not keeping the farm productive. When in reality it was entirely out of their hands, especially if insensitive comments were being made as to their perceived lack of ability to do so, with remarks such as, “***But we’ve had drought before and still made it through!****”* Or, “***Oh, Pa would turn in his grave if he could see the condition the property is in now*!**”

I surmise that this sort of talk or attitude would weigh heavily on some people, so much so that some take their own lives, in the mistaken belief that they were somehow a failure and it may have just become too much for them to bear. It is rightly shocking how many country folks have suicided due to perceived pressure, expectation and demands, not to say that the city rate of depression is any less. I have asked myself if the personal fear of failure or their interpretation of it is the very key and significant underlying factor that initially allows depression to seep in.

It does appear to be that in today’s society, with the constant demand upon us to maintain our status quo; we seem to be always expected to punch well above our natural weight, often to the point of collapse. I urge everybody to try to remember that nobody is a failure when the odds against them are just insurmountable.

Worry only about things that you can manage and achieve and try not to be so bothered with the things that are beyond you, even if it is financial troubles. Keep in mind that you cannot be jailed for your debts unless it is for non-payment of Government fines. The worst that can happen is that you will be declared bankrupt, and that is meant to help you not get in any further debt for a while.

How one fares after that is up to the individual. It is, however, more than possible to survive with no initial finances or assets, even though it might be a meagre existence, but once again this is solely down to the individual and how determined that they are in their attitude towards survival.

Try to keep in mind that you are only a failure if you give in and submit to the fatal, destructive seduction of crippling depression, and opt for suicide. As trite as it may sound, death, without a doubt, is a long-term solution to a short-term problem.

I have a haunting thought when it comes to the subject of suicide, which was initially pointed out to me by my eldest son. That is: how would we ever know if at the very last moment of a person’s conscious life as they suicided, a questioning thought of, “***But what if***?” Suddenly a flash through their mind, as the point of no return, arrives. Something to contemplate, I suggest. I surely did!

If we are classified as being of ordinary sound mind, then we cannot escape the fact that we are governed by emotions, as only psychopaths are able to ignore, or do not respond to feelings as most of the general public do. We need to mainly keep in mind that there are many undiagnosed, passive psychopaths existing and working in society among the ordinarily minded people who can mask their emotional detachment. But how you react to your emotions can be manifested in many ways and not all healthy.

Please be reminded or forewarned that depression thrives on the darkest form of emotion when suicide became the imagined and magnified possible option available to stop the unbearable weight, worry, and concerns that may be destructively influencing a person.

It must be stated clearly that most people at some point or stage in their lives contemplate the notion of suicide. Yet it seldom leads to an individual actually attempting the act. To imagine how one would do it is also an extremely common pre-occupation that is often quite thoroughly thought out and planned in the imaginary stage only. But once again, people are merely questioning, not seriously investigating it. We have to be able to recognise the critical difference when it comes to the topic.

I am being sincere and not merely being sarcastic when I suggest that if anybody is questioning their life and pondering on the value, quality, or worth of it. That they make a trip to any cemetery and stand at a few graves and ask the rhetorical question of some of the inhabitants, “***Would you like to trade places with me, even though my life is utter shit and chaos***?”

I wonder, hypothetically, how many would say yes! No matter how sad, miserable, or rotten your life seems to you, I can only imagine the miserable eternity of it all - life after death, in a grave, that is, especially if there is such a thing as an afterlife! Why would you really want to expedite what nature will do eventually and naturally for you? And there is always the possibility that you could actually enjoy some moments if you do stick around. Do not waste a good instance of self-flagellation over minor issues that you cannot change or influence. Save it until you think you really deserve it. Oh, and try to remember my mantra, “***Try and have a giggle now and then***... ***You’re an awfully long time dead***!”

How many poor souls will it take before it becomes common knowledge that depression is not a newish condition or malady? It has been around since the beginning of man and a constant threat, ready to invade when one has serious self-doubts, irrespective of one’s station in life. I have come to the opinion that one’s natural fear, whether it is through phobias or the anxiety of failure, is accompanied by a pheromone or scent which we naturally emit, that also attracts the proverbial black dog!

As obvious as it may sound, it is crucial to first recognise and admit to yourself that things are becoming personally unmanageable and communicate with somebody whom you trust, even if it’s just to ask, “***Hey mate, do you know anything about...***?”

Try to have options whenever you can. Having options available to you, no matter how complicated they may appear to be, is better than having none. To know that you have an opportunity you can apply is beneficial, instead of falsely believing that you are useless, helpless, or a failure.

The point that I am trying to make is that demand and expectations on us all in today’s world have multiplied to such an extent that if a person appears not to be profusely productive, or a significant consumer, then they are a failure. And the feeling of failure is a depleting and defeating emotion at the best of times.

As an analogy for the non-sufferer to consider, my awakening to my complaint was like being caught with my hands down against Mike Tyson, and I had been hit on the chin with a stupefying punch from the truth, leaving me in Gaga land, not knowing which way was up, or which way was down. The great Mohammed Ali had termed it “***the clown’s room***” when he had been caught with a stunning punch, and he had to cover up and roll and dance with the stupidity or swirling confusion that was momentarily taking place in his head. It took me a while to sober up and to recognise and admit to myself that I was without doubt suffering from significant depression.

Then, after some time, I got down to brass tacks. When I had re-examined my past, I realised that I had been very fortunate, having been quite successful in the field of entertainment. Then I may have subconsciously started to think about my career coming to an end in the not so distant future. After all, I had reached the age of fifty, and in reality, only the legends such as the Rolling Stones, Aerosmith, and a few other entertainers could realistically carry on their careers and keep performing at a senior age, without appearing to be overly embarrassing.

I’m not really sure if I was actually conscious of this fact, but it just might have gotten me onto vaguely considering if it was it to be the end of my career and therefore of my worth. Had I really been successful enough, or was I a failure because I felt far too young and fit to hang up my gloves? I know I have a lot more in me to offer and if I wasn’t allowed to do so then maybe I must also be a failure? These thoughts I think slowly lured me into a mental pit of shit!

Eating became less important to me. My taste was diminishing or changing. Low sugar levels would come into play, also weakening me. It has recently been reported, and it frightened me, that stress has been proven to be a major triggering factor in the development of Type 2 diabetes.

I realised from the beginning that I could not merely rely on medication to act as a magic pill or bullet and cure me of my condition immediately, but it was me who actually had to contribute to the process with an awful lot of effort, focus and dedication. This was a fight like I’d never had in my life before, and I can assure you that it was more vicious and constant than any encounter that one might experience out on the cobbles.

As my attitude towards things improved, I was feeling a lot more confident than previously. Yet one day I slipped back into the arena of doubt and depression, but at one stage I caught myself having a giggle. I don’t recall what but I realised that I had done so. This got me to thinking that, if I giggled or laughed for that tiny instant, I felt no crippling depression at all. This got me thinking further about my own sense of humour and how it had been an incredible aid to me in so many ways throughout my life.

After some time pondering, I realised that there was so much truth in the old saying that laughter is the best medicine. Then I realised “***Wham! Of course, it is!***” It was then that I decided that if I caught myself having a giggle, or a chuckle at anything, that this was my trigger to arrest the low I was in.

I figured that if, and when I catch myself in a rare moment, being light and carefree, I would try and remember that if I refrained from, or refused to enjoy that wonderful happy feeling of mirth. Then no matter how fleeting or brief it may be, that I would consciously abuse myself for being an absolute hypocrite because if I refused to enjoy the pleasure of mirth then I was merely wallowing in my own self-pity and misery and that would only keep me in the clutches of depression. This was the catalytic moment that I needed. It was the key to my salvation and the key to my much wanted inner peace.

A huge bonus in employing this attitude is that we know how belittling and insulting it is to be accused of being a hypocrite, so much so that the hypocrite will blatantly try to deny their hypocrisy. It is that insulting!

Remembering how much that I have relied on humour and how wonderfully beneficial it can give me the strength and courage to take my condition head-on and defeat it. I started to recall little tit-bits of fun that were always being bandied about at home, as I was growing up. Our mother, being a regular Celt and having ten children to look after, often used harmless sarcasm directed at nobody in particular as an aid in answering or dealing with us children. As an example, whereas instead of answering repetitive inquiries of “***What’s for dinner Ma***?” she would answer all inquiries with the same answer, “***Cow’s cocks and onions***!” with her knowing full well that cows do not have such appendages, only bulls. Of course, it still took time, but I now had a program to fight any future invasion by depression, and it is one that I have stuck to.

I feel as though I am justified in surmising that everybody at some time in their life has enjoyed the sheer delight and pleasure of having a good old chuckle at something really amusing or ridiculous, which does not restrict the frivolous momentary euphoria being experienced.

This is the level that is to be sought, the one I would like everybody to try to remember if the mist of doubt and failure starts to rise. One’s first priority is to recognise and accept your depression, then arrest and alleviate the condition. The second is working towards staving it off on a more permanent basis.

For those who may still be in doubt their actual state of stress, or possibly think that they are momentarily only out of sorts or a bit off colour: How long have you been feeling like this? Have mood swings started to slowly appear? Have you noticed a change in emotional mood, maybe like watching what you would generally regard as a soppy movie and find yourself unusually crying? Have you started to have outbreaks of weeping unexpectedly and not really knowing why? Do you feel as though you are always trying to punch underwater only to recognise the futile weakness of your efforts? There are just so many indicators that present themselves that we often foolishly try to ignore.

Are your concerns turning into fears? Are you merely wishing that everything, all troubles and worries, will disappear or suddenly become good? Are you embarrassed or afraid to talk to a professional or a doctor in case they confirm that you are not as medically sound as you think that you are? If so, I ask you to find the courage to open up and talk about your self-concern. If you do speak up, you may be surprised that sensitive people will not regard you as a “***whinger***,” or “***whiner***” sort of individual, but as a self-concerned person.

I still take my medicine without fail, and it is now sixteen years after my initial mental collapse, and I am incredibly pleased to say that I have been back to being productive and successful, and I am content with my progress in staving off the dreaded re-invasion of depression. A happy depressive! Now is that not an oxymoron?

My advice is to never assume that anybody is immune to depression. One glowing example of a highly valued depressive is the legendary “***British Bulldog***”, Sir Winston Churchill. Churchill himself was a long-term sufferer of depression. He had had a chequered career with some minor successes, but with some catastrophic fallout from some of the political and military events that he had been involved in. When he assumed the office of Commander in Chief, his condition was already known, accepted, and allowed for, as he was receiving professional medical treatment.

Also don’t be afraid to ask anybody if they are OK, especially if you recognise some of the apparent symptoms of depression shown by other people, maybe even offering them the opportunity for a real and understanding, confidential chat, if they feel like it.

After all, it is true that we humans are all equal. At least we are if you are not prepared to subscribe to my point of view that nobody is better than anybody else, nor are they any worse. They may just have a better or worse attitude than you or me.

Look forward to your next chuckle or giggle, no matter when it is, and enjoy it. Your first few giggles are not going to relieve your depression totally, but have faith, the more that you do giggle is a sure sign that you are on the right road to beating depression.

I urge everybody to remember that depression itself doesn’t understand or support humour. Therefore humour is the nemesis for depression, and it will always have the upper hand against if it is employed often enough. After all, doesn’t everything come down to attitude!

I recall a story on the attitude that I used to tell in my comedy routine and in golden hindsight it really is something to consider. I would talk about people’s views, as in how come when we are on holidays we tend to have a more relaxed attitude towards things?

We see advertisements that invite us to do things and take part in events that we would never usually even consider, like bait snorkelling with sharks, or paragliding in the nude and such. Then we find ourselves seriously considering taking on such an experience and sometimes even taking part. We tend to justify it with an attitude of, “***Oh, fuck it... I’m on my holidays!***”, as if we can be carefree and as adventurous as we like, without concern!

I’m not suggesting at all that you should try to live consistently with this sort of attitude, but the very idea of ignoring some grave concerns that you really can’t have any control over or do anything about may be treated with the “***Oh, fuck it... I’m on my holidays,***” kind of attitude.

As far as perceived guilt, shame, embarrassment, or any other doubt that may have crossed my mind during my years of self-analysis, I have at least come to a conclusion that, in a nutshell, I have made more people laugh than I have made cry. Plus, I have done more people a good-turn than I have a disservice. Plus, any sins or wrongdoings have been arrested, and all due penance has been paid. I term this my “***My name is Floyd***” therapy, after the comedy American TV series.

A suggestion: if a person has been feeling down, low, or blue for some time, rent or watch some comedy DVD’s, especially if they regard themselves as having a fair sense of humour, especially before their change in mood starts to take place. If you feel as if you will just not be able to thoroughly enjoy, appreciate, or even get to the end before disengaging from the suggested comedy DVD, maybe then try renting a really poorly rated comedy movie and critique it! Look for the parts that not only make you cringe but make you think, “Oh, this is just utter weak and juvenile rubbish!”

But I ask you to keep in mind just how important and how much sarcasm is employed and relied upon in humour and comedy, and your own harmless use of mockery towards the said dud comedy (as if you had been asked to be the pointedly caustic critic of a lousy amateur talent show) can be employed. Give yourself the challenge of re-writing on the spot, some or all of the dud scenes.

This practice and attitude can often lead to a lighter mood being experienced for up to a couple of hours at a time! After all, isn’t the goal to firstly distract, and then to dominate, the proverbial black dog?

I have a strong recollection of a short non-spiritual or ethereal experience, merely the catching of some bright moments that I had in my kitchen not so long ago, like a silent déjà vu, as I sat at the breakfast bar in the kitchen making various notes and pondering on this and that. I noticed that I was surrounded by an unusual silence. I do not have a TV or radio, or any other audible distractions if I am working on projects. As I looked around me, I heard nothing except for the low vibrating hum from the refrigerator in the kitchen.

From my sitting position, I could see out of the kitchen window into my back garden, which is in its-self is usually conducive to inspiring a relaxed mood. It dawned on me that the branches of the trees in my backyard and the surrounding bushes were moving and swaying in the breeze, and I could see birds perched on the power lines and some in flight.

The sky was a summer blue, with distinct white slow-rolling clouds, but there was absolutely no sound that I could hear to the accompanying vision that I had, apart from the low drone of the refrigerator, reminding me that there was some form of other energy about me.

There was not another soul about. There were no neighbours to be seen because of the high surrounding yard fences, and even my dog was asleep somewhere else in the house.

Then I had the thought, “Could this be death?” Not, “Is this death?”, but “Could it be death?” We maintain our physical being along with our thoughts and memories of nature, but what we see and interpret without accompanying sound or the company of others is nowhere as beautiful and satisfying as the real thing! This culminated with me deciding that this would be quite a sad eternal existence for me if it were so. Thankfully, the brief silence and loneliness were broken by the noise of my neighbour’s garage door opening and him driving in.

For those who may be still questioning, if they are feeling a bit doubtful or if they suspect that it is depression that is bothering them, that they should forget about futilely trying to go it alone and seek help, or at least communicate with somebody! You may very well be surprised by who does indeed care.

Let me pose an unloaded question: if you were suffering from a terrible toothache or an earache, for example, would you take a couple of painkillers to arrest it, or would you try to ignore the pain and discomfort? That’s how simple it can be. Recognise the need for help and do something to help alleviate the problem now!

I do not arrogantly expect anybody to merely take my word, or adopt any advice offered by me in this writing. There are many available points of help, both professional and supportive, that can be accessed. They are more than happy to be approached, but once again, importantly, it must be the individual who makes the initial approach!

Try thinking of things as a straightforward, uncomplicated 50-50 bet or decision. You only have two options to choose from, but at least they are decisive***. If something is right for you and others... then do it! But if something is not suitable for you or others... then don’t do it!***

The same simple application of decision can be used in any situation. If you wish to diet, for example, you know full well that there is both delight and danger in your sense of taste - what and how much you eat, what sort of foods, snacks, and treats you consume. You can open the refrigerator and scan the contents. Before you reach in and grab anything, ask yourself the question “***Is it good for me, diet-wise?***” If your honest answer is “***No***”, then simply don’t eat it. As the saying goes, “***If you don’t want it on your hips... then don’t let it past your lips.***” The success of this exercise will depend on an individual’s own willpower and determination. Once again - attitude!

An attitude, or at least a subscription to an opinion that I have regarding reasoning, is: “***Truth, fact and logic, combined with passion, often out-influences mere passion alone***!”

I suggest that everything comes down to attitude, and a negative one, or one that is of a procrastinating nature, can be such a damaging one. Whereas a right and healthy attitude may be seen in this quote, “***Life is not meant to be easy..., but do have faith, child..., it can at times be wonderful!***”

HK Mayfield is a dedicated supporter of Beyond Blue.