

COUNSELING FOR DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

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For deeper understanding and healing childhood experiences affecting adult life and relationships with self and others, see the **reader-friendly** <http://www.amazon.com/Effective-Counseling-Skills-therapeutic-statements/dp/1442177993>

Depression can be caused by chemical changes in the body, physical illness, and different types of loss. Very often, depression and anxiety are the result of self-defeating life patterns that can be helped by incorporating caring self-talk and by supporting self-worth and assertiveness. We tend to do to ourselves and to others that which was done to us in childhood. Now as adults we must give to ourselves all the healthy things we needed from healthy parents. Here are some things to do to change the inner-dialogue foundations of depression and anxiety:

Step 1. Write down the negative things you think about yourself, others, and your circumstances.

This activity will bring to your conscious awareness the negative thinking and self-talk that is common to many kinds of depression and anxiety. The negative and self-critical self-talk demoralizes the ego and manifests as feeling down, blue, sad, anxious, fearful and self-doubting. This low mood and anxiety then affect sleeping, eating, and low energy. Common examples of negative self-talk are: I am incapable, I can't do it, I am unlovable, I am a failure, I failed again, I can't do it, No one wants to talk to me, No one cares about me, etc.

Step 2. Write down statements that are self-caring, nurturing, reassuring, supportive, and validating.

This exercise helps to identify the opposites of the negative self-talk: I can do it, I have strengths and abilities, I am caring and kind, I can get what I need and want, I deserve to be happy, I can succeed, I am just as important and valuable as anyone else, My pain is normal for what I have been through, etc.

Step 3. Write down negative things parents said or communicated to you when you were growing up.

Here you can write down what you thought parents felt about you by what they said or did such as: I wish you were never born, I do not like you, I do not care about you, I care about alcohol more than I care about you, I do not want to be around you, You are in the way, You are a bother, You should be seen but not heard, You can't do that, You could have done better, You will never amount to anything, Don't cry, etc.

Step 4. Write down things you needed or wanted parents to say to you as a child.

Here you can write the things you wanted or needed parents to say or do such as: I love you no matter what happens, I am so glad you are in my life, You can succeed, It's OK to cry when you're hurt, Everything will be OK, I felt the same as you sometimes, Imagine the possibilities, You are good at that, You are so helpful, You are so kind and caring, etc.

Step 5. Write down what you would do or say if you saw another child being treated the way you were treated in #3.

If you heard someone say mean things to a child or slap a child, what would you say? Maybe you would say things like: You have no right to say that, Be nice to the child, The child needs your love, You need to support your child and be reassuring and caring and loving and affectionate, You need to be encouraging, etc.

Step 6. If you had all the positive things as a child that you needed from healthy parents, how do you imagine your life might be different today?

If your parents had said encouraging, caring, and supportive things to you as a child, how do you imagine your life might be different today? This step helps you formulate and create a vision for how your life can be different in a healthy way. Depression that comes from negative self-talk is a form of self-abandonment and self-abuse. The ultimate self-abuse and self-abandonment is self-harm and suicidal thinking. Conversely, hope, optimism, self-worth, and self-confidence form the basis of a stable mood and sense of security, safety, confidence, well-being, inner peace, personal power, and happiness.

Step 7. Now you must be for yourself all the things that you needed your parents to be for you: encouraging, nurturing, loving, caring, supportive, and reassuring.

This means you need to say to yourself and be for yourself all the positive things you needed from healthy parents. If no one else can give you the caring that you need, who does that leave? Ultimately, you are the one who must care for you. So this means you must choose healthy people to be in your life, and you must be supportive of yourself and of that other healthy caring person you have chosen to be in your life. In this way you will be caring of yourself. Another important piece is to stand up for yourself and support yourself when you are treated badly by others.

Step 8. You must be assertive and say things like: I don't like your tone, I deserve more respect than that, I deserve a raise in salary, I feel annoyed when...., etc. Take care of that little boy or girl who was abused and mistreated. That little boy or girl is still inside you and needs your protection. Be for yourself now what you needed then as a child. Will you stand up for him or her? When will you start?

The readers can also submit a Life Story Questionnaire at <http://www.thecounselors.com> for in-depth analysis followed by counseling on an as-needed basis at no additional charge.

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