



An Open Letter Regarding Depression

Depression has reached epidemic levels worldwide including in America with 1 in 10 individuals having experienced depression.

Depression has become rampant among young adults of college age .

According to the World Health Organization "Depression is a common mental disorder that presents with depressed mood, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, low energy, and poor concentration. These problems can become chronic or recurrent and lead to substantial impairments in an individual's ability to take care of his or her everyday responsibilities. At its worst, depression can lead to suicide, a tragic fatality associated with the loss of about 850 000 lives every year."

Depression is the 2nd leading cause of disability in ages 15 – 44 and the 4th leading contributor to years of potential life lost due to premature mortality and loss of productive life due to disability and affects 121 million people worldwide.

The following findings were included in the National College Health Assessment Executive Summary from the Spring of 2011

College students reported the following experiences at some time during the past 12 months:

Felt things were hopeless	45.1%
Felt very lonely	57.3%
Felt very sad	61.1%
Felt so depressed it was difficult to function	31.1%
Felt overwhelming anxiety	50.6%
Felt overwhelming anger	37.1%
Seriously considered suicide	6.4%

The above statistics are the result of almost 120,000 surveyed students representing a cross section of society attending 129 different post secondary institutions. Depression is an equal opportunity illness impacting people of all ages, genders and backgrounds.

The statistics reflect generations that do not know how to be happy.

Happiness is not the momentary good feelings one associates with various activities such as receiving a good grade, a smile from that cute co-ed, receiving a long-desired gift or a pleasant surprise, shopping, a good meal or other physical pleasures, or any other thing that brings what we call 'momentary pleasure'. The happiness that Happiness 1st Institute teaches is far more substantial and sustainable than those momentary pleasures. This happiness is deeper and comes from the very way we think about others, about life and about ourselves. This happiness is not dependent upon outer circumstances or upon factors over which individuals have no control.

For example, a student receiving a poor test grade who has not had the training we provide could have many different negative responses all the way up to and including 'giving up' on the class or even on life.

A student receiving a poor test grade who has had the training would be able to see a path to doing better next time. The student would accept full responsibility for the grade but would not crucify him or herself over it. Students who have taken our classes understand that we all learn from failure and within every failure is an opportunity for greater knowledge and success. Perhaps it is that this particular professor's exams are more difficult than most so more time will need to be devoted to preparation while a negatively focused student might use a broad brush and use the poor grade to paint him or herself as a failure who can't do anything right.

Likewise, in matters of relationship a student who is negatively focused might take the end of a romantic relationship as there being something inherently wrong with them rather than it being just not a good match for them.

It is not that we teach that no improvements are necessary. Quite the contrary, we empower students by teaching them that we all continually improve throughout life but that deciding to improve in an area does not require one to denounce their current state. The best example is a toddler learning to walk. The toddler does not criticize herself for not yet knowing how to walk. The toddler keeps trying until he has mastered the art of walking never doubting that he will succeed.

For some reason much of society stops seeing the progression of improvements throughout life as natural and deems room for improvement as indicative of a flaw rather than room for additional growth. This type of thinking results in negative self-talk that does not serve our higher good and can lead to anxiety and depression. While we cannot guarantee that a student having completed our training will never experience depression we firmly believe that our training greatly reduces the risk of depression and that it can have a positive impact on those who suffer from depression.

Scientific studies have shown that increasing optimism, which is one of the outcomes of our program, can relieve depression and reduce its reoccurrence and new evidence has been coming in that shows that training like ours can help prevent depression.

We are asking students to agree to provide information into the future so that we can gather greater documentation of the positive impacts in this area.

An individual who is suffering from depression would need to be somewhat more diligent in applying the tools and techniques that we teach because their thought paths would work against them in the beginning but the gains would have even greater benefit than those experienced by someone who is not depressed. The best thing is that, as they use the tools and techniques, improvements would come right away and continue to increase over time. The processes are not something you have to do for many days, weeks or months before feeling some benefits.

It is our sincere desire that the reports of depression decrease worldwide as the result of the skills and techniques we teach becoming more widely known and understood.

There are many reasons to choose to learn how to be happier and all of them are valid.

For individuals who suffer from or are at risk for depression the choice to learn how to be happier is a significant step in the right direction.

With sincere wishes for a happy life,

Jeanine Broderick, President
Happiness 1st Institute
www.Happiness1st.com

Disclaimer

We cannot recommend anyone suffering from depression forgo traditional forms of help while attending our classes; those decisions are best left to you and your medical providers.

Citations:

Healthline, What is Depression, Retrieved on December 8, 2011, from <http://www.healthline.com/health/depression-overview>

National College Health Assessment Executive Summary (Spring 2011), Retrieved on December 8, 2011, from http://www.acha-ncha.org/docs/ACHA-NCHA-II_ReferenceGroup_ExecutiveSummary_Spring2011.pdf

Tartakovsky, M. (2008). Depression and Anxiety Among College Students. Psych Central. Retrieved on December 8, 2011, from <http://psychcentral.com/lib/2008/depression-and-anxiety-among-college-students/>

World Health Organization/Mental health/Depression, Extracted on December 8, 2011 from http://www.who.int/mental_health/management/depression/definition/en/