



## Depression: Bright Hope for the Stress of Clinical Depression by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

*“The tide is high, but I'm holding on.” -Blondie*

**Q:** Dear Susie, What can I do to relieve the stress of what is happening to me? I've been diagnosed with Clinical Depression. I just can't snap out of it. I am anxious and lonely. My life is falling apart.

**A:** I'm so sorry. This must be a very difficult time. The good news is that your diagnosis means you now know why you've been feeling so miserable and perhaps, in a way, the worst is behind you. Those suffering from Clinical Depression can now receive excellent support to see them through to the light again. Sometimes we can't simply "snap out of it," but rather, we gradually surface. I understand that you feel as if it's all falling apart. But sometimes during such a slump, your body-mind is actually figuring out how to pull itself *together*, and to be even healthier and happier this time. You are rebuilding your engine. Now, you have a place to start.

You ask an important question about relieving some of the stress associated with depression. I recall thinking once during a case of the blues, *"I know my glass really is half-full, but I still feel like I'm drowning in it."* There are many new insights about genetic and biochemical factors, even food sensitivities. Unfortunately when undiagnosed and untreated, some resort to self-medicating for a quick (*albeit highly counter-productive*) fix with alcohol, drugs, over or under-eating, or other compulsive behaviors to dull authentic emotion. Many find great benefit in healthy nutrition and daily exercise, skilled counseling, personally meaningful spiritual practice, breath-work, bodywork and other stress-management techniques. When we're sad, it's not easy to remember to take extra-good care of ourselves. Let friends and family help. Journal your feelings, and give these Simple Soothers below a try. One day, this time will be just a memory, as you move forward into new, as yet unwritten, chapters and adventures of your life.

### **Not All Sadness is Depression**

We've all been there at one time or another, “The Black Hole” in which stress is pervasive and peace, elusive. The healthy human experience will encompass struggles and victories, anger and tenderness, bitter disappointment and exuberant laughter. We will know loss, perhaps the end of a love we thought would last a lifetime or a career from which we derived self-esteem. We may lose a cherished home, our health, daily dinners with our children, and the beloved parents we relied upon to keep us safe.

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Clinical Depression, also known as Major Depression or Unipolar Depression, can be a devastatingly lonely, confusing place. Dick Cavett, best known for his quick wit and bright mind, aptly described his own paralyzing depression, *“When you’ve got it, if there were a magic wand across the room that would make you happy and give you everything you want, it would be too much trouble to cross the room and pick it up.”* The desolation of depression seems insurmountable at times, but there are new insights into what depressive illness is and is not. It's not a bad mood nor an attitude problem. Remember that Clinical Depression is a medical condition, and medical professionals may address it in a variety of ways.

*“There is a crack in everything. That’s how the light gets in.”* -Leonard Cohen

The isolation of depression creates stress not only for the person engulfed by it, but also family and friends who wish they could make it better. Loved ones may experience a sense of helplessness and loss as a result of their loved one's depression. It is important to remember that with skilled health care, compassion, and the resilience of the human spirit and tincture-of-time, somehow we will smile again. We will know joy again. We'll want to try that new restaurant, or paint a room or be with friends. First, the shadows part, a little light streams through, and then, we begin to surface.

**Where Do You Start?** There is real work in exploring and finding one's way back from depression, and a skilled, compassionate counselor can offer support, fresh perspective, a safety net, and help us to rediscover who we can be. Ask your physician about what you are going through, and have an overall physical exam to either reassure yourself or to address anything that needs attention. Chemical intervention is not appropriate for everyone and is best determined by your health care professional and monitored on a frequent basis. In some cases, however, a licensed practitioner may advise anti-depressant medication or nutritional supplements that may be useful, even for a short time. Some medical conditions, medications and even food sensitivities can mimic depression, so first schedule a check-up to reassure yourself or to address anything that needs attention. If you are one of millions living with depression, it is essential to establish a comforting, ongoing relationship with a skilled mental health professional you like and trust. Together, you can determine how best to proceed. Antidepressant medication is not appropriate for everyone, but in some cases, a physician may prescribe one to be monitored closely over time. There are many new insights into genetic and biochemical factors, including sugar and other food sensitivities that can impact depression. (*Also see my tip on the potential impact of sugar on mood at [www.relaxintuit.com/tips.asp](http://www.relaxintuit.com/tips.asp)*) Many find tremendous benefit from healthy nutrition, creative expression, mindful breathing, bodywork, time with friends, meditation, relaxation tapes, and moderate daily exercise.

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### 10 Simple Soothers to Chase The Blues

*"I get by with a little help from my friends."* -The Beatles

Remember endorphins? I often encourage clients to think of daylight as an essential daily nutrient. (Use sunscreen, of course.) Nearly everyone can benefit from optimizing window exposure and spending a little time outdoors each day. Life can be very difficult. I have come to the unwavering conclusion that it is often Hope, above all else, that sees us through the most difficult moments in our lives. Just a spark of Hope will do it. So for those of you who may know someone who suffers from depression, I share the following.

1. Take a brisk walk, varying your route, and find six things that make you smile along the way.
2. Take a class in something that engages you: Try Tai Chi, Cooking, Bridge, Water Colors or Dance, etc.
3. Get a free makeover in a department store.
4. Tense day? Pop in some oldies and sing really loud! Rent a movie you'd never normally pick.
5. Adopt a pet.
6. Plan a trip.
7. Schedule Massage, Reflexology, Reiki, or change your hairstyle.
8. Smile. You don't even have to feel like smiling, but do it throughout each day.
  - a. Smiling sends the brain a message that says "I must be okay, I'm smiling."
  - b. Others are likely to smile back, which sets off a positive biochemical reaction in both of you to support a sense of well-being. Try it as an experiment for a week, and see if you notice any difference. What have you got to lose?

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9. Plan time with someone you can trust to accept you just as you are today.

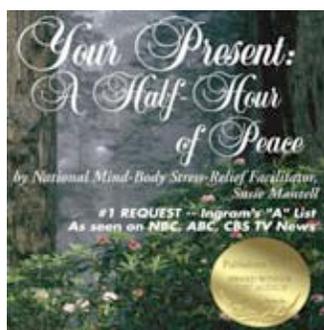
10. Set small goals. A walk around the block may be a small goal to one person or a monumental one to another. Maybe today's goal is getting out of bed, or spending a half-hour on the porch, or organizing 1 drawer. See what I mean?

**Bonus:** Ask about how others are doing today, and really listen. One of the most effective ways to feel better can sometimes be to focus on others. Can you do someone a small favor today? If that is beyond your reach for today, can you ask someone else to help you with one small thing today? Beside my own front door, hangs this reminder: *"Isn't it a comfort to know that some of the best days of your life haven't even happened yet?"*

**Safety Note!**

*Always err on the side of caution. If danger of hurting oneself or another is ever a concern, get to an emergency room immediately for support. While gloomy feelings are not uncommon, thoughts of injury should be addressed professionally and promptly to keep you safe. There's too much life out there to live to ever risk injury. As the adage goes, "Don't give up an hour before the miracle."*

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