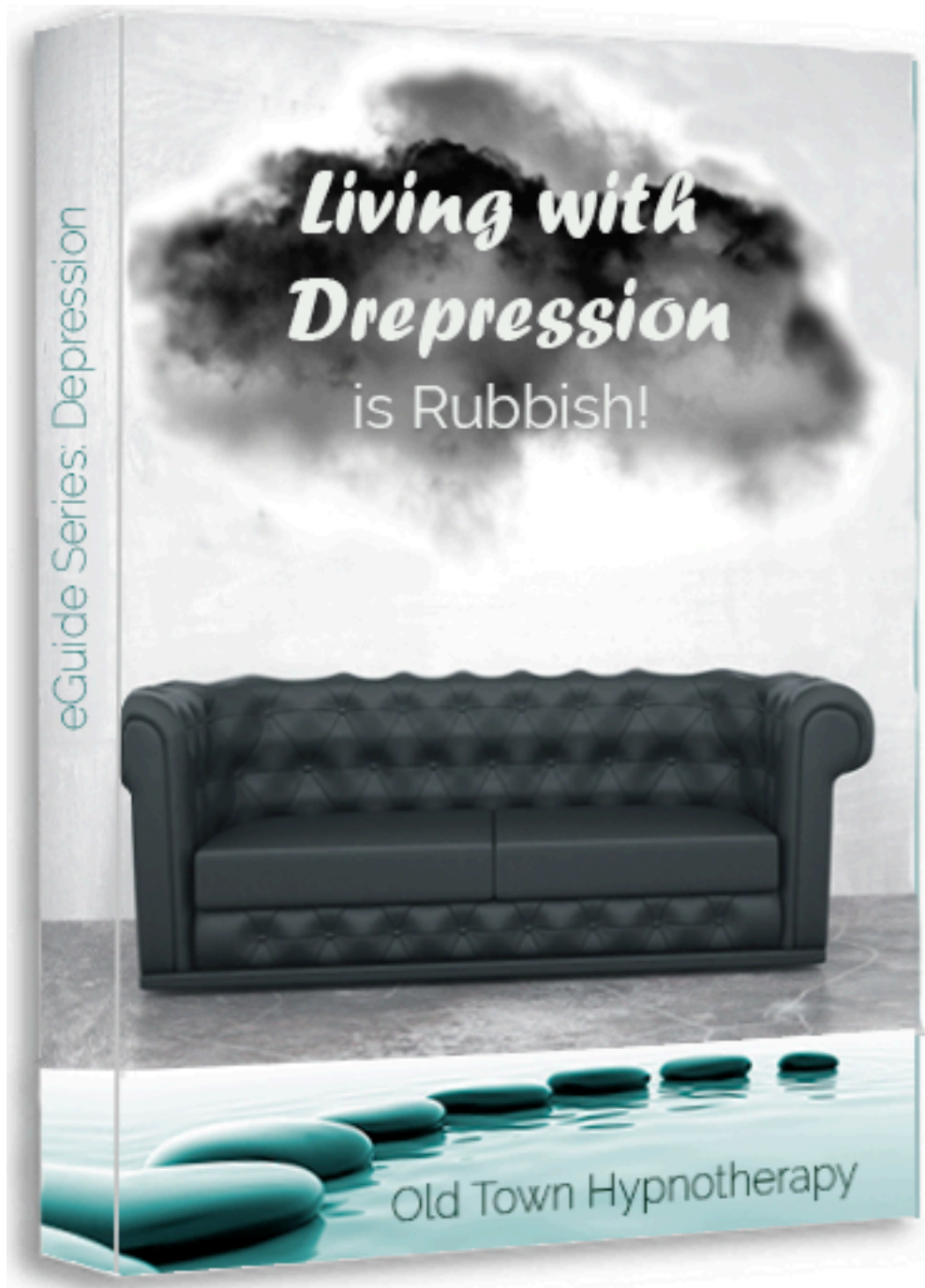


Living With Depression is Rubbish!



why you don't have to.

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About the Author



Emma Triplet HPD, DPH, MNCH(Reg) AfSFH Hypnotherapist, Psychologist & Life Coach

Emma is the Founder of Old Town Hypnotherapy Ltd, having opened the first branch in Swindon in 2011 after successfully qualifying in Solution Focused Hypnotherapy at the prestigious Clifton Practice in Bristol.

Emma is no stranger to depression herself. In 2002, after a 15 year career in IT sales, she crashed and burned out of the industry. The company doctor informed her she had depression and should be on antidepressants. At that time Emma knew nothing about depression and it wasn't until retraining as a solution focused hypnotherapist that she understood the truth behind the perceived causes and is now determined to demystify

depression and the misunderstanding and stigma around it, in particular the false belief that it is something you have to 'live with' for the rest of your life – it's simply not.

Emma's direct approach empowers people suffering from depression to take control of themselves and their lives and cure themselves of this horrible disease that affects not only them, but their families, friends and the world around them.

Emma has helped literally hundreds of people rid themselves of the life debilitating symptoms of anxiety and depression, opened six branches of Old Town Hypnotherapy in the UK and is now on a mission to empower others to make the internal changes necessary to rid themselves of these toxic diseases and live a happy, empowered and fulfilled life.

Emma is the owner and director of Old Town Hypnotherapy Ltd and also runs her own Life Coaching business, EmmajTriplet.com where she regularly holds Personal Development & Coaching Retreats on the Island of Gozo where she now lives.

Emma J. Triplet

'Living with Depression'

Who says you have to live with it?

I'll tell you who - 'Living with depression' is a phrase invented by depressed people who don't understand how to cure themselves of depression.

In itself this is a potentially damaging phrase as it implies to people who are depressed that they have to 'live with it'.

Whose attention is going to be drawn to that phrase? People who are depressed.

How do people with depression think? Negative, global, all or nothing, 'it's all about me' thinking. Plus symptoms of depression include difficulty in getting motivated, feelings of despair and hopelessness.

The phrase 'living with depression' will resonate with someone who is depressed.

The internal dialogue will go along the lines of

"OMG it's terminal, I will NEVER be cured of depression, it's something I'm going to have to live with and there is NOTHING I can do about it"

Every part of that self sabotaging phrase is NOT true, but the danger occurs because that person who now believes there is no choice in the situation will not try to do anything, just give up and resign themselves to it being something they will have to live with for the rest of their life.

Evidence

Neurologically, your brain will look for evidence to back up a statement up that's believed to be true – and find it. Your brain will find whatever it's looking for.

You get on the internet and you find people on social media describing themselves in their profile as 'living with depression' – evidence!

You try some of the remedies you discover for a week or two – nothing happens – evidence!

You talk to lots of people about it, describing how bad you feel, all your symptoms, how bad life is and, in their well-intentioned but ill-informed attempt to make you feel better, they tell you about all the other people they know with depression – evidence!

You find people who have had depression for 20 years – evidence!

People tell you their depression is hereditary and you realise your mum has depression – evidence that it's out of your control.

You go to the doctor and get diagnosed with 'clinical depression' - it sounds wonderfully serious, doesn't it? Be careful of 'labels,' they are disempowering. So you are labelled 'clinically depressed' or something equally traumatic – evidence.

The doom and gloom deepens, the black cloud gets thicker and your belief that there's nothing you can do is reinforced, so you resign yourself to 'this is something I'm going to have to 'cope with' for the rest of my life.

Rubbish!

Let's destroy that myth once and for all...

First of all, let's take a closer look at the 'evidence' above :-

- a. They are **opinions** of people who are depressed who are finding excuses for staying depressed.

- b. It didn't take you two weeks to get depressed, it's going to take a little bit longer than that to get better, but one of the symptoms of depression is difficulty with motivation, so sticking at anything with conviction and belief is not second nature right now, but it can be.

- c. Depression is one of the most common conditions in the modern world – 1 in 4 people a year in the UK alone experience symptoms of anxiety and/or depression, anyone you talk to will know someone who has it – that does not mean it's for life or there is nothing YOU can do.

- d. 'Clinical depression' just means you have at least 5 of the recognized symptoms for two weeks or more, it doesn't mean permanent or terminal.
- e. There is no hard evidence that it is hereditary (passed on in genes), but there is evidence that, if there is family history of depression, you are eight times more likely to develop it – these two things are NOT the same. But people hear 'family history' and wrongly assume 'hereditary'.

You were not born depressed, you learn how to be depressed as you grow up. If there was depression in the household you grew up in, your thought patterns and behaviour will have been influenced negatively and you will think and behave in a similar way. We have these brain cells called 'mirror neurons' which help us learn by mimicking those around them, but they don't discriminate between learning good and bad things, they just mimic.

The good news is that it's not permanent, you just need to learn how to change it – and we can help with that.

Evidence that you DON'T have to LIVE WITH depression from credible medical sources

The following quotes are from clinical and medical websites – the links are provided if you want to check them out for yourself

[NHS UK](#)

"The good news is that with the right treatment and support, most people can make a full recovery."

[American Psychiatric Association](#)

"Depression is among the most treatable of mental disorders. Between 80 percent and 90 percent of people with depression eventually respond well to treatment. Almost all patients gain some relief from their symptoms."

[Rethink Mental Illness](#)

Depression is:

- a mental illness that is recognised worldwide.
- common. It affects about one in ten of us.
- something that anyone can get.
- treatable.

Depression is not:

- something you can 'snap out of.'
 - a sign of weakness.
 - something that everyone experiences.
 - something that lasts forever.
-

[Royal College of Psychiatrists](#)

- Many other people have had depression.
- It may be hard to believe, but you will eventually come out of it.
- Depression can sometimes be helpful – you may come out of it stronger and better able to cope. It can help you to see situations and relationships more clearly.
- You may be able to make important decisions and changes in your life, which you have avoided in the past.

[NIMH \(National Institute of Mental Health\)](#)

Depression, even the most severe cases, can be treated. The earlier that treatment can begin, the more effective it is.

I particularly want to draw your attention to the statement from

[WebMD](#)

... people with depression sometimes fail to realise (or accept) that there is a biological cause to their depressed moods. As a result, they may search endlessly for external causes.

They haven't highlighted the bits in red, I have because these are hugely important statements that I'm going to come back to.

So why do you notice the bad 'evidence' that tells you that you have to live with it?

There are two reasons

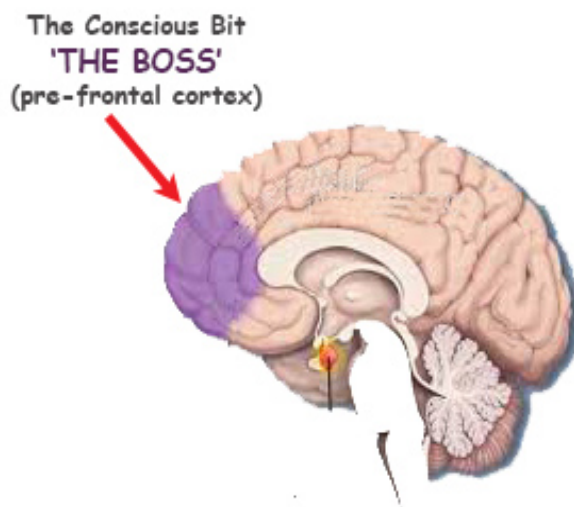
1. Because that's how someone with depression's brain works, it does a risk assessment looking for the worst possible scenario and
2. You, or someone else you respect the opinion of, has labelled you as having depression which has given your subconscious brain an instruction to look out for and bring your attention to anything to do with depression, especially the negative stuff, because it's relevant to you and the part of your brain that does the risk assessment looking for the worst.

Let me start at the beginning and explain how we get into depression and what it is – **biologically**.

Your Brain – How it works & what's gone wrong

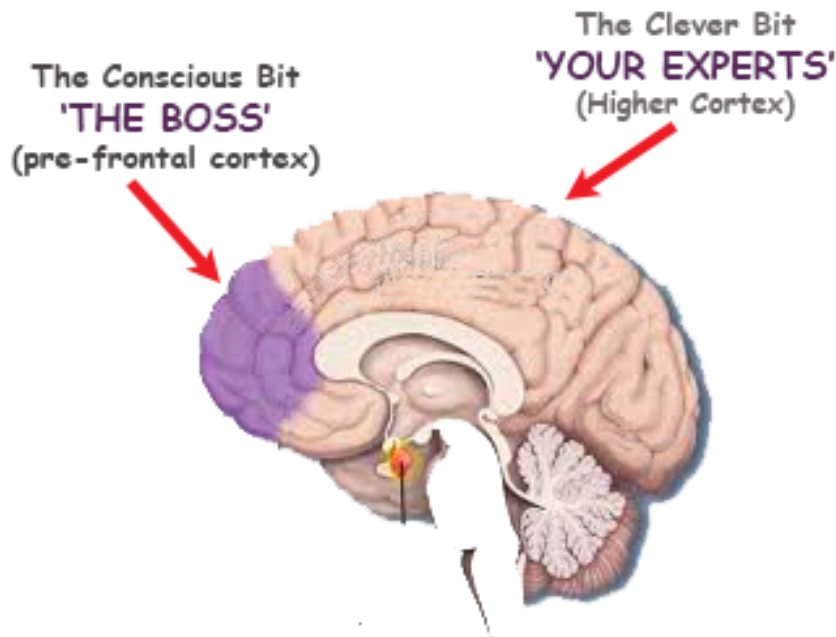
So let's have a look at the elements of the brain we need to be concerned with – stick with this bit, it's important and not overly scientific or technical.

The first bit we need to know about is our Conscious Brain (the left pre-frontal cortex). This is the bit you use to interact with people and with the world generally, you're using that bit at the moment to read and make sense of this. We call this bit 'The Boss' and ultimately it calls the shots and makes the final decisions of who it wants to collaborate with.



At the moment (because you're reading this and actively engaged in something clever) your conscious brain is connected or working with your vast intellectual resource, your intellectual brain (the higher cortex). This bit is split into the left

and right cortex, the left is your logical side and the right your artistic side; you may have heard people talk about they are left or right brained. We actually swap between the two regularly.



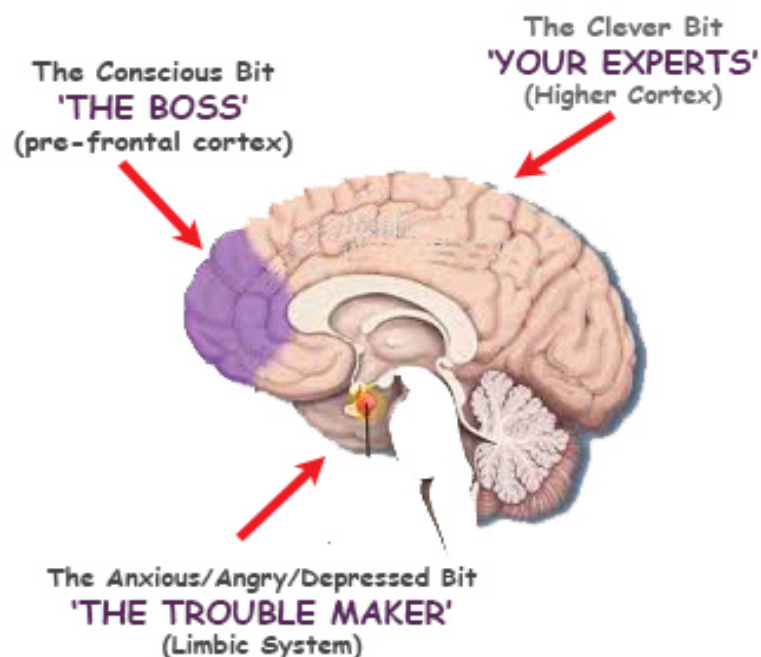
When you are working from your intellectual brain, you normally get things right in life; it will always come up with answers based on a proper assessment of a situation and is generally very positive. This bit we don't share with other animals which is why you don't see dogs driving around in cars or inventing mobile phones with keypads to suit their paws.

So far so good! We've got a conscious thinking bit which works excellently with a clever intellectual, rational, artistic, positive bit. So if we could stay here all the time, life would be pretty hunky dory wouldn't it?

But there's another bit and this is our primitive bit.

This is the original bit, well to tell the truth, is the second bit to evolve, before that was the reptilian brain, but we don't need to be concerned with that just now. The primitive bit we're talking about here is technically the Limbic brain, our mammalian brain which we do share with animals. The central and influential bit of this is the Amygdala, the bit that we refer to as the flight/fight centre and this works very closely with two other primitive bits, the hippocampus which holds our primitive, and sometimes inappropriate behaviour patterns or habits and then there's the hypothalamus which regulates the chemical responses in our body and mind.

Now we have the boss, the clever bit and the primitive bit. So, how do they interact with each other? Let's put it in perspective:-



Imagine that you went outside the house and there was a sabre tooth tiger in the street, what would happen?

Well, your heart rate would go up, your stomach would start churning, you would get all sweaty and you would be off like a shot.

You would have moved from your intellectual brain to your primitive brain.

This happens so quickly, it wouldn't register in your conscious brain immediately and you wouldn't want it to; you're not going to stay alive long if you're standing around in the street having a conscious conflagration with your intellect asking "Golly Gosh, is that a dangerous sabre tooth tiger I see charging towards me, what's that doing here?" you would end up a quick tiger snack.

When your primitive brain steps in and takes control, it does so very firmly and you are compelled into action without thinking.

This is entirely appropriate for sabre tooth tigers and you would be pleased, but the same thing tends to happen in modern life; when your anxiety levels go up - and it can be a gradual process - you lose intellectual control and, to a greater or lesser extent, the primitive brain steps in and takes control.

Your primitive brain always works within the parameters of

Anxiety

Depression, and

Anger

Or all three, we're actually very good at doing all three simultaneously.

Anxiety, depression and anger are all primitive opt out clauses and, if you think about it, it would be appropriate back in those primitive times, it was a dangerous world. If you had been out in the jungle hunting or picking berries or doing whatever you did in jungles then, there would be danger all around and I doubt you would be far away from your panic button. But if you couldn't go out because there was snow or ice or danger outside your cave, you would probably go back inside the cave, pull a rug over your head and not interact with the world until the situation changed – this is often how we react with depression.

Anger is just a primitive way of increasing our strength so we can fend off wild animals or other wild tribesmen/women.

So, whenever your primitive brain thinks that there is some sort of crisis, emergency or danger it steps in and reacts in this way.

But there's more: when your primitive brain takes control, it behaves in certain ways:-

- 1 It always looks at the worst possible scenario – appropriate for sabre tooth tigers, you're not going to assume it's already eaten down the road before you saw it, of course you're not, you are going to think its going to attack you.
- 2 It's also very vigilant, it's not going to let you forget there was a sabre tooth tiger outside, it will keep reminding you, so although you can distract yourself with someone else, when you stop, it will bring your attention back to your problems.
- 3 But this primitive brain is NOT an intellect, it can't work out what to do about a situation, it can't come up with solutions, all it can do is refer to previous patterns of behaviour. If, after whatever you did yesterday or last time you invoked the same feelings or circumstances, you survived, then you will be compelled to do the same thing again. This is where, as things get more extreme and embedded in the primitive brain, people develop habits, OCD, behavioural disorders, rituals etc or, common in depression, withdraw from the world, retreat into your cave, pull the duvet over your head and push the world and problems away.
- 4 It is about survival, so it will look at everything in terms of how it applies to you and it will make everything about you. It becomes paranoid about other people and what they're thinking and it makes assumptions that other people are thinking negatively about you.

5 It thinks in terms of all or nothing. It comes from a time of kill or be killed, eat or be eaten, so to this brain, there is no grey area in the middle - it will tend to think – this **always** happens to me, I **never** get to do that, why are the lights **always** red when I'm late for work, I'm **always** the one to apologise, you **never** say you're sorry, etc etc. None of that is true of course, but this primitive brain looks at the negative and makes it an all or nothing situation.

This is important because while you are locked in your primitive brain, looking at everything in a negative light, suspicious of everything and everyone, your intellect is not able to work out solutions and you become more and more obsessed with the problems.

This part of your brain cares only about keeping you alive, it's not rational, it doesn't care if the behaviour is appropriate or even makes any sense to your intellectual brain; if it keeps you alive, then it's done the right thing and it will make you do it again next time.

Smoking is a particularly good example of this in action. A smoker will associate their smoking habit with alleviating stress (it doesn't by the way, it's a stimulant to increases anxiety), but we were first introduced to that propaganda in the First World War and smokers still believe it relieves stress. What is actually happening is the smoker's anxiety levels (stress levels) rising which leads to loss of intellectual control and the primitive brain steps in. It then refers to the hippocampus and says 'we've got

stress, what do we do?' and the hippocampus refers to its database of survival tactics against the stress level it's experiencing and it replies 'Oh, we smoke a cigarette' so the smoker gets a craving – the message of what to do, they smoke and they survive. The hippocampus puts a tick in the box because once again it has advised correctly, its human has survived, therefore the strategy works and must be correct.

Intellectually, everyone knows that smoking does not help you stay alive, it is not a clever survival tactic, in fact all the evidence points to the opposite, but we don't smoke from our clever, rational, intellectual brain. We smoke from the primitive brain.

So to clarify- when your anxiety levels go up (stress), the primitive reactionary brain takes over and tells you what to do, even if that's withdrawing from the world and staying in bed.

Which begs the question of course, why do your anxiety levels go up?

Negative Thinking

Well, it's not circumstances or events in your life which cause anxiety, if it was every student at university would be having panic attacks and they're not all having panic attacks, so we know it is not events. It is your thought patterns surrounding events.

The primitive brain is a negative brain and it will negatively forecast the future, and it could be big things, like 'I'll never get that job' or 'I'll never get married or have children', or 'I'll never

get out of the financial predicament', but equally, it can be everyday things – there's no point going to the shop now, I'll get stuck in traffic and miss it, that will never work for me, I never get the opportunities, my partner's going to come home in a bad mood, etc etc etc. Someone who is operating from their primitive brain will be negatively thinking about just about everything, often without realising.

People who negatively introspect about themselves, their life or the past have a tendency towards depression, those who negatively forecast the future lean towards anxiety – but we can do both, and frequently do. It's your personality type and influences growing up and around you that will determine whether you go into anxiety, depression or anger - or jump around all three.

Take this as an example: - You have been called into a meeting with your boss. But you're stressed, so you start negatively forecasting what the meeting is about and immediately think the worst and make a mental leap to the worst possible scenario. As the meeting gets closer, you go over and over it in your mind, you go over it fifty times and, fifty times, it's going to be a disaster, there's a problem or you're going to get made redundant or whatever other disastrous conclusion you can imagine.

The meeting goes OK, they generally do, but by this time you've been through it 51 times, 50 times of that in your head - and what is really important to understand here is that your brain does not know the difference between imagination and reality.

It is YOUR brain, it only know what information you give it, what you think, what you learn and choose to believe, but also what you imagine.

So, when you negatively forecast the future, imagining something is going to happen or go wrong, your brain doesn't know the difference between that and a sabre tooth tiger, it just interprets the negative forecasting it as crisis, emergency or danger and steps in and takes control.

When you negatively introspect about the past, your life or yourself, your subconscious brain doesn't understand time in the same way your conscious brain does. You recall the feelings you had at that time in your mind so again your primitive brain interprets it as a crisis, emergency or danger.

Then it does the risk assessments and imagines everything else which could go wrong focusing on everything in negative terms. It will look for threats or danger everywhere, in work or outside, in your relationships, how other people might be thinking about you - and the more you do it, the more you get locked in.

The Default Mode Network

The problem for us humans is that our default operating system or the part of our brain that we default to when it's not actively engaged in something positive is this primitive survival bit.

It is the reason why we have survived so long and evolved; if our default was positive, always looking at the bright side, we wouldn't have survived very long at all. If we were skipping

along in the jungle and there was a dark shadow in the undergrowth, it is good for survival to assume it is that sabre tooth tiger and not a rock. If it was a rock and we assumed the sabre tooth, then the consequences are just feeling a little bit stupid perhaps, but the other way round – yummy lunch for said sabre tooth!

So, in primitive times, we were perfectly functioning, evolving and, most importantly of all, surviving humans.

But where are the sabre teeth today? They're not in your back garden and they're not down the street or in Tesco's either. Humans have become top predator in most circumstances, but our brain, instead of updating itself, has applied the same principles to modern life.

Today our perceived dangers tend to be health, money and material possessions, and relationships, not angry tigers on the loose. Our primitive brain still interprets the feelings of anxiety or worry and crisis or danger, just as it did half a million years ago, but where do those feelings come from?

The answer lies in our thoughts – it is not the situation, but **how we are thinking about** the situation.

***How we think determines how we feel and
how we feel determines how we behave.***

Negative forecasting = negative feelings = negative action or reaction.

Understanding this concept of the negative thinking primitive brain vs the positive solution thinking intellect is central to taking control and directing your thoughts in a positive way to reverse depression.

People who think they are a glass half empty unlucky soul have unleashed the power of their primitive brain – are these people super successful enjoying life to the full, living life on their terms? Doubtful.

More likely they are looking for reasons for their misery, blaming other every man and his dog for his poor luck, smoking, (do your own research – how many successful people smoke?) disassociating themselves from any responsibility, wondering why they can't hold down a job or never get promoted, why friends don't invite them out any more or come round, why they can't afford this or that – it's not their fault, it's everyone else's and the world owes them.

It is this negative thinking about the future or negatively introspecting about yourself, your life, circumstances or your past that is converted into ANXIETY which we store up in what we call the STRESS BUCKET.

The Stress Bucket



As we go about our day, we fill up the stress bucket if we're prone to think in a negative way, we will fill up our stress bucket quickly until we get to 'max fill level' a bit like your kettle.

You're generally OK as long as you keep below the max fill level, but put too much in and you will start to lose intellectual control and your primitive brain will step in and take over

How much you are keeping in your stress bucket will have a direct correlation with how much your primitive brain is in control.

Left unchecked and if nothing changes in your life, eventually your stress bucket overflows and this is when your primitive brain steps in and will take some sort of physical action to stop

you doing whatever it thinks is creating the danger. Some people start having panic attacks or develop physical illnesses. Others 'shut down' mentally and just can't cope any more – this often happens with depression.



When my stress bucket overflowed in 2002, I didn't understand what was happening at the time, but I still remember it vividly.

I was working for a well known international electronics company at the time in IT sales; I was working on a project involved with computerising the NHS and so as my customers were located all over the UK, I worked from home when I wasn't travelling to meetings in my home office.

I was under a lot of pressure from my company and the stress had been building for a while, but I didn't realise how bad it had

become – ie I didn't know my stress bucket was about to overflow.

One day I got up as normal, got dressed for work and sat in my home office in front of my computer and I just stared at it. When the phone rang. I had a surge of anxiety and just stared at it - I couldn't answer the phone. I was shutting down mentally.

I managed to do the minimum possible which was to answer emails from my boss and send him a question around 9am as a signal that I was working. But I wasn't really, I wasn't thinking about anything much except worrying that I should be doing something, couldn't and would get found out and I would be sacked.

This went on for several weeks, I would get up at the normal time, get dressed and sit in front of my computer staring at it and I would stay there all day until 5pm. I wasn't skiving, I wasn't outside in the garden or doing the washing or watching TV, I just sat there numb.

Eventually, after being persuaded by a friend who could tell there was something wrong, I went to the doctor. I remember I just sat there and cried, I could hardly get the words out and didn't know what to say because there was nothing physically wrong with me and I felt stupid. She immediately signed me off with stress (she wrote virus on the sick note) for two weeks.

I remember it was such a relief I wouldn't have to face work for two whole weeks, but the thoughts lingered in the background, what was I going to do after two weeks?

The company called me in to see the company doctor – he took one look at me and said “you have depression, you should be on antidepressants”.

I went into denial immediately, I don't have depression, it's work related stress – this job has caused me stress, I don't need antidepressants.

All in all I was signed off work for 3 months, the thought of going back to the same job and facing what I perceived to be getting worse in my absence with my boss being angry that I had been off for so long had me relapsing every time (this was all made up in my imagination).

The day I started getting better was the day I decided to resign – I didn't know what I was going to do, it meant leaving a six figure salary job, I didn't know how I was going to survive and pay the mortgage, but I would deal with that, anything was better than feeling like this any longer.

Now with hindsight and the training in psychology, neurology and solution focused therapy I understand exactly why it happened, how I created it, not the company I worked for and why I started to get better the day I made a decision to do something different and make changes, and I explain how the 'cure' happened in *Climbing Out of the Cloud*.

But what had gone wrong in the first place, how had I created my own depression?

Screwed Up Thinking

I want to bring you back for a moment to part of the statement from WebMD.com that said

"... people with depression sometimes fail to realise (or accept) that **there is a biological cause** to their depressed moods. As a result, they may **search endlessly for external causes.**"

It is my experience after over 6000 clinical hours of working with people who have depression and my own experience with depression that this is most certainly true from several different perspectives:-

'Searching endlessly for external causes'

Unfortunately the culture around depression seems to have created a 'detachment' from the condition that leads to a failure to take responsibility for one's own thoughts and actions that are causing the depression.

The statement in itself 'living with depression' implies that there is some other entity that has moved in and you have no control to evict it – detachment from responsibility.

At the initial consultation with a new client with depression, invariably that person will explain they've either been diagnosed with depression or have depression and then go on to list all the reasons why they think that is. Things to blame:-

"It's hereditary"

"My partner left/my relationship broke down"

"I lost my job, I hate my job, I can't get a job"

And so on. In my case, my blame was my own feelings of failure, I was struggling to bring in a big contract, I didn't know what to try next and I believed I was going to fail and everyone would think I was rubbish at my job.

Apart from 'it's hereditary', these are all events, and yes they are tough things to deal with, but does everyone who encounters these events have depression? No!

Depression Detachment

I had a conversation via social media recently with a woman who had as part of her profile 'living with depression', she actually ran a support group called living with depression and I asked her rather directly:-

"Why do you choose to live with depression?"

Of course, predictably and understandably, she came back to me saying

"I don't choose to live with it, I have to?"

"Why?" I asked "Do you know it's the way you think that is causing the depression"

"What do you mean?" she replied

I said "It's the negative thought patterns, negatively introspecting about yourself, your life and the past that's creating the condition and the lack of serotonin"

She said "I do have negative thoughts, I admit, but I can't get them out of my head, that's the depression. When I'm alone especially, negative voices in my mind just go round and round, they intrude into my thinking and invade my thoughts, I find it difficult to get rid of them"

I asked her "whose voices are they?"

"It's my voice" she said.

"And you can get rid of them at times" I replied.

"Yes" she said, "when I'm busy doing something."

I said to her:-

"So they are your thoughts and you can get rid of them at times? It is your brain, they are your thoughts, you're creating them with your imagination and believing them."

This is what I mean by the damaging statement 'living with depression' and the detachment from responsibility of doing anything about it – if you blame something or someone else for the cause, then paradoxically you are creating your own reality and depression.

Pity Party

Unfortunately depression is a self perpetuating condition, the more you focus on how bad you feel, the worse it gets and the worse you feel, then you focus on it even more, you talk to people and they help you focus on it – it's a downhill vicious spiral.

From a neurological point of view, in doing this you are building and strengthening neural networks in your brain that reinforce this negative thinking and behaviour.

Every time you think about past events or talk about 'problems' you are replaying a video in your mind. A thought is not just a thought, it's a 5D video that brings in all your senses, what you saw, smelt, tasted, heard and felt and this is exactly the same for imagined events, you will have associations with your senses to imaginary problems as well as those based on past experiences.

Think of the first (and perhaps only) time you have accidentally drunk sour milk – yuk!

Now examine what happened in your mind when I asked you to do that, did you get an image of yourself drinking it, did you get a feeling in the pit of your stomach of disgust or nausea, did you smell the milk?

The opposite is also true, if you think of a great time in your life (yes I know that's hard, you've got depression, but there will be some good times – when you passed some exams for example). Do you get a feeling of pride, a picture associated with it, the sounds around you at the time?

Of course they will vary from person to person and some senses will be stronger than others, but we will all get a video.

A memory or an imagined event is not just a picture and every time you recall it, either to yourself or to tell someone else, you are reliving and reinforcing those miserable feelings.

Now, why did I start this section with 'pity party'? Well, people with depression negatively introspect about themselves, their situation or their past, often in a self-pitying way – this is not helpful.

In addition, they will tell everyone who cares to listen, recalling the video and reinforcing it again and again. Well-meaning but misguided friends and relatives can inadvertently buy into the pity party, sympathise and encourage you to tell them just how awful it is and every time you see them you go through the same ritual of misery telling.

Having depression is unfortunate in that other people want to be with people who are happy, calm and enthusiastic about life. Depressed people are difficult to be with, they're hard work and bring the people around them down, so eventually they push people away.

This is one area where I strongly and perhaps controversially disagree with some of the advice available about how to overcome depression. It promotes a combination of three main things, which I do totally agree with;-

1. Antidepressant medication (it can be helpful, see my blog ['what your doctor doesn't tell you about antidepressants'](#))
2. Therapy

3. Self Help

It's number 2 that I have an issue with. Therapy is a helpful part of recovery, and choosing an appropriate therapy will make the difference between whether you recover in a few months or five years from now. But some talking therapies that encourage you to look into the problems DO NOT help, you will be in therapy for years. The solution is NOT in the problem, it never is, and from a practical point of view, why pay someone to listen to your problems when you are telling anyone who will still listen anyway and going over it in your head again and again? You're very good at thinking and talking about the problem, that's NOT where you need help.

The therapy should be solution focused not problem centric. You might eventually get better with problem centric therapy, but it will take years and can even prolong the depression, opening many cans of worms along the way, looking for reasons and things to blame. The websites that recommend these therapies do actually say that 'sometimes the depression can get worse initially' – that's because it's not the RIGHT therapy. No therapy should make you feel worse before you get better, that is NOT acceptable. If you have depression and you are looking for a therapy, look for a Solution Focused Brief Therapy – this usually takes up to approximately 3 months, sometimes a bit more or less, but you will not be in therapy for years and should not be.

What problem centric therapies fail to understand and update with the recent discoveries of how the brain operates is that going over and over the problem reinforces it.

In the next eGuide: 'Climbing Out Of The Cloud' I go into much more depth about how these neural networks are formed and what you can do to create and reinforce new positive neural pathways so the old ones fade away with non-use.

You Are What You Think and Believe

A diagnosis of depression is helpful in that it's a relief that there's an explanation for how you're feeling and it points in the direction of effective treatments, however, this can be a double-edged sword.

Labels are disempowering for someone who does not understand the condition or has preconceived ideas about depression - and there is a lot of misunderstanding around depression. As this culture of 'living with depression' has grown being given the label by someone in authority (or yourself) is an opt out of doing anything about it.

One of the first clients I had as a trainee hypnotherapist sat down in my clinic and proudly announced "I've been diagnosed with having a co-morbid condition". "Well done" I said with a smile on my face, "do you want to tell me about it".

It was almost as if it was a challenge to me - 'I have this thing, I bet you can't cure me' . What she didn't realise is that it wasn't up to me to cure her, it wasn't my responsibility, it was hers, I

was there to help point her in the right direction, but I couldn't do it for her.

I came across a quote recently that said:-

'Be careful what you tell yourself – You're listening'

That's more profound than at face value when you understand how the subconscious behaves.

When you tell yourself something, and you believe it at a subconscious level, you take away your ability to overpower it.

Think of your conscious brain as you for a moment, and your subconscious as an elephant. Which one is more powerful?

You are an elephant trainer and on the whole your subconscious elephant is happy to go along with what you ask it to do, but if your subconscious elephant saw a mouse and was frightened, how much control do you think you would have of controlling the elephant then? Your elephant would bolt at top speed and you wouldn't have any hope of getting it to think rationally about the size of the mouse compared with it.

That's exactly how your subconscious behaves when frightened and you go into your primitive brain as explained above, but equally important is what you are choosing to believe and take on board and this is why labels can be disempowering.

You may think rationally that you're not going to give in, but if your subconscious believes that depression is a condition you have to 'live with', and you have friends and family who lead you

to believe that you'll have depression for the rest of your life and it can always come back - then that's what will prevail and you won't put 100% into getting over it.

You already know that if you don't believe you can do something you won't even try.

The good news is however, that you CAN change your thoughts at a subconscious level, you just have to decide and believe – they are your thoughts after all.

Take a moment to think of something you used to believe you couldn't do, but now do without thinking or where you changed your mind completely about something. We all can and do change our minds frequently. So why, when it's in your best interests to do that, does it seem so hard?

Fear and fear of the unknown in particular, the feeling of helplessness and lack of energy that is the domain of depression is why.

The Biological Cause

Back to that statement from WebMD

"... people with depression sometimes fail to realise (or accept) that there is a biological cause to their depressed moods. As a result, they may search endlessly for external causes."

So, what else makes up this biological cause?

We've discussed the neurological cause, the negative thinking and replaying the internal videos time and time again that's reinforcing the negativity leading to your primitive brain thinking there is some sort of crisis emergency or danger, sending you running into your proverbial cave.

Another biological cause is centred around the physiological responses of the mind and body – your chemical makeup. When you have depression, the neurotransmitters and hormones in your mind and body have become unbalanced. In particular serotonin and dopamine levels have dropped below acceptable levels, also altering the flight/fight responses to some sort of crisis, emergency or danger.

Serotonin and dopamine are essential neurotransmitters (chemical messengers) that are responsible for helping us cope with life, motivating us, helping us cope with pain, they make us braver (so we can face whatever we need to), help cope with fear, boost our immune system, help us sleep properly and also - and perhaps most importantly - help with healthy efficient functioning of the higher cortex or intellectual part of the brain.

When we have sufficient or abundant serotonin and dopamine levels we feel happy, joyful, motivated, energetic, focused etc – need I go on?

If you have depression you will recognise from these symptoms that you are lacking sufficient levels of these chemicals and your body could be looking for external substitutes (sugars & carbohydrates, nicotine, alcohol, gambling, illegal or prescription drugs).

You can understand that with a lack of these essential neurotransmitters you find it difficult to motivate yourself or find an interest or focus in anything much. Your sleep patterns will be all over the place with some people finding it difficult to sleep whereas others are tired all the time and just want to go back to bed. Weight gain and weight loss by more than 5% are on the list of symptoms indicating depression and the gain is often due to increased binging on 'comfort foods'.

The good news however, is that you can (and should) deliberately and consciously increase the production of these wonderful feel-good neurotransmitters. When you have sufficient levels, it's easy to maintain and it is everyone's responsibility to maintain their own balance.

Sadly with or modern lifestyle of convenience, life has become so distorted from how we were originally designed to live, that some people don't naturally produce enough as part of their daily routine, but we can all learn what it is we need to do to

adapt and tweak our lifestyle so this happens easily and naturally again.

I had a client recently who came to see me for depression, actually it was excessive alcohol consumption, but she also confided she was depressed. During the first part of the session, as I always do, I asked her what good things had happened this week. After a little thought she told me that one of her good things was that her cousin was coming to stay. I asked her why that was a good thing and she said "because he's always so happy, full of energy and enthusiasm for life", "Oh, and why is that?" I asked, "what does he like to do?" She looked at me a little confused and I explain what I meant was what does he do in his spare time. "Oh, he likes sport" she said. "Do you like having people visit?" I asked. "Oh yes", she replied.

Positive Activity, Positive Interaction

And we've already covered - Positive thinking

These are the three things you can do for yourself, as part of that self-help bit of the recommendations that will create serotonin and dopamine.

In 'Climbing out of the Cloud' I go into depth about how these neurotransmitters help, how they affect depression and what you can do to create them. From a physiological perspective I also highlight the effects of altering the chemical balances in our mind and body – something we do on a daily basis without realising that it contributes towards depression - and what you can do about it.

Relapse Rate

Whilst depression is successfully and easily cured, it does have a notoriously high relapse rate. These are the reasons:-

The person is relying on medication to make them feel better and when they do, they start finding solutions to the problems and the problems go away and they feel better again, life is back to normal.

But they never understand properly what has happened neurologically and practically. They don't learn what needs to change and that it's internal changes around their thought patterns and how they deal with situations, not the situation itself. Humans are by nature habitual, we follow the same patterns of behaviour again and again, but that doesn't mean we have to. It is our brain, our mind and our habits, we can change any part of it we want to.

There is a lot of ignorance and arrogance displayed by the person who says "that just how I am" the ignorance of not knowing there is a choice to be different and the arrogance of thinking no change is necessary – everyone else can use deal with it.

Learning what needs to change from within and practising doing things differently can prevent relapses.

However, another reason relapses happen is because along the way neural pathways have been formed in the brain for the depressive thoughts and behaviours. Although these pathways

fade away, if someone who is prone to depression lets the primitive part of the brain take control from time to time, those negative neural pathways will re-engage. The good news however is that when you have learned how to bring yourself out of depression the first time, you can do it any time you want and get quicker at it. It's not long before you notice little warning signs that your primitive brain is taking control and you will develop 'go to' quick fixes that will snap you out of it.

You can become aware of what you need to be doing to maintain a healthy mental state and notice quickly when the balance is starting to wobble.

It takes practice and it's a practice we all need to do – the people who don't have depression practice regularly.

Summary

Think of it like this:-

There is a neglected run-down house, for years it's not been maintained properly, it's just been patched up here and there using the wrong materials. No one has taken responsibility for this house, as they walk past looking at its sorry state, they might think, it's the weather, the rain, the wind beating it down, vandals, kids or tramps using it as a hideout, and they might think the materials were defective because all the houses around it look OK. They might even think the local council should do something about it, no one wants to live near a house like that, some one else should take responsibility for it – whose fault it is anyway?

It's not the house that's defective, it's how it's been taken care of.

You are that house and now, if you choose to, you are going to take responsibility for rebuilding it into the finest house on the street. You're going to do it! You can get advice on the right materials to use, the techniques and knowhow, but you are going to do it and when it is the best it can be, you're going to learn how to maintain it so it never falls into disrepair again.

The first step is to decide you're going to do it.

The second step is to take responsibility for doing it.

The third step is don't give up on it.

Even if you don't know the whole journey yet, just keep putting one foot in front of the other, one step at a time, until you get there. And you will get there, you just need to start the journey and not give up.

It's not always going to be easy – but nothing worth having in life is, that's the reward and the harder it seems, the bigger reward at the end when you know you've done it and you've done it by yourself.

You can do it.

Taking responsibility for doing something and taking action is the key.

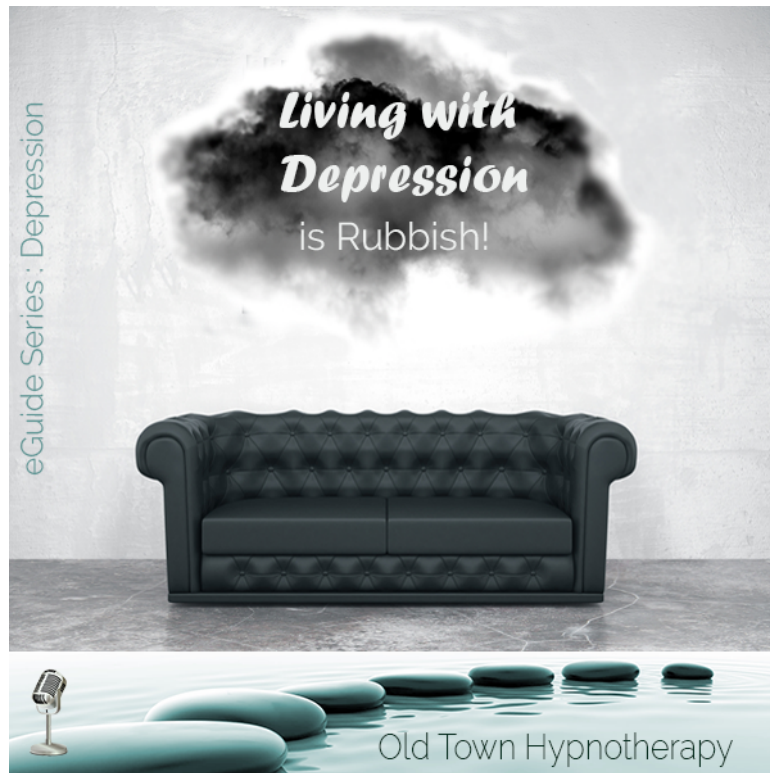
No one can blame you for the depression because no one ever explains these things to us or tells you what to do to prevent depression. It creeps up on us and before we realise, we're unable to function, unable to focus and we crawl back into bed and pull the duvet over our head.

But you can put it right by changing how you think about things and readdressing the chemical balance in your mind and body by doing the positive things in life that will create serotonin and dopamine.

It's up to you.

Link to Download Page

You can download the hypnosis MP3 and the audiobook by clicking the pictures below.



Further reading

