HOW TO BE DEPRESSED

Dimension 1: Thoughts

- **Focus on the negative:** disappointments, losses, deprivations, injustices, etc.
- **All-or-nothing thinking:** Eg., “If I’m not perfect, I’m worthless.” Even more effectively destructive with labeling (“dumb, failure,” etc.)
- **Always/never thinking:** build broad, permanent, negative interpretations from brief, specific events or circumstances.
- **Blame yourself or others:** Inappropriately and excessively - “It’s all my fault” or “It’s all their fault.”
- **Let the critical inner voice chatter:** unperceived, uninterrupted, unchallenged. Internalize and act on that negative input.

Dimension 2: Behavior

- **Act badly:** Say and do things you know are wrong, that you know you’ll regret later. Hurt yourself and others, go against your values.
- **Be defensive and stubborn:** esp. about damaging behavior and its impact.
- **Stay stuck** in old, destructive, or ineffective ways of doing things (parenting, housework, communication, socializing, etc.)
- **Act depressed:** Withdraw, isolate yourself, do nothing. This will push others even farther away, and leave you even more depressed.
- **Ingest poison and avoid nourishment:** to body, mind, and spirit. (junk food - esp. sugar; junk TV; negative music/books/websites; etc.)
- **Ignore your physical needs:** for food, water, rest, exercise, sunlight, fresh air.
- **Neglect your living space:** Let junk, dishes, and clutter collect; allow things to fall into disorder/disrepair. This will depress anyone!
- **Try to do everything perfectly:** This almost guarantees procrastination & despair.

HOW TO CHOOSE JOY INSTEAD

Dimension 1: Thoughts

- **Focus on the positive:** uplifting; funny; lessons learned; compensatory blessings.
- **Continuum thinking:** Give yourself and others credit for the good you all do - even if it’s not completely perfect or flawless.
- **Think specific:** regard setbacks and disappointments as temporary, specific, and surmountable.
- **Share responsibility and accountability:** Which part is mine, which is yours? Correct your part; let them be in charge of their part.
- **Keep track of your thoughts** on paper; notice patterns. Consciously find satisfying replacements for negative items.

Dimension 2: Behavior

- **Act well:** Say and do positive, kind things that can bring satisfaction later - even if you “don’t feel like it” now.
- **Be humble and repentant:** willing to change and grow with feedback.
- **Learn and apply new skills** to replace old patterns. Read, attend classes or therapy, seek counsel from friends, family, leaders.
- **Act “as if”**: Do things you normally enjoy doing, or know you should do. Act “as if” you weren’t depressed (mastery and pleasure ex.)
- **Ingest nourishment and avoid poison:** to body, mind, and spirit. (Positive, wholesome food, input, entertainment.)
- **Meet your physical needs** in an effective and consistent way.
- **Dejunk, clean, and organize** your living space. This effort will return far more energy to you than you put into it!
- **Do a little at a time:** Rather than everything or nothing, just do “something” meaningful.

Source: Carrie Maxwell Wrigley, LCSW. This model is informed by cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), Interpersonal Therapy (IPT), Assertiveness Training, and Positive Psychology. See, for example, Michael Yapko’s Breaking the Patterns of Depression, and David Burns’ The Feeling Good Handbook.
### Dimension 3: Spirituality

- **Stop praying:** Or just pray prettily, superficially, w/o really opening your heart to God.
- **Avoid the words of Christ:** scriptures, words of the prophets, spiritual talks/lessons, etc.
- **Offend and repel the Spirit:** through negative thinking and behavior, leaving yourself alone and vulnerable to attack.
- **Don’t believe Christ:** Find reasons to suppose that the Gospel and the Atonement don’t relate to you and your challenges. Don’t believe that He can heal you.
- **Stop going to the temple:** Even better, lose your temple recommend. Best of all, go instead to places of worldly “comforts.”
- **Focus on yourself and your problems:** (self-pity.) Or - try to fix others instead of yourself (codependence.) Get out of balance.

### Dimension 3: Spirituality

- **Pray always:** over everything, including (especially!) your trials and afflictions.
- **Feast on the words of Christ:** If needed, also request a blessing, or take a personal retreat.
- **Invite and follow the Spirit:** So you have a constant companion, guide, and teacher, through everything you experience.
- **Believe Christ:** Trust and apply His atonement to your challenges. Know that He understands and accompanies you through everything, and can and will heal your pains.
- **Immerse yourself in temple worship:** Drink in the healing, comforting, sanctifying, revelatory impact of the holy temple.
- **Find meaningful ways to serve and comfort others,** while still meeting your own basic needs. “Love thy neighbor as thyself.”

### Dimension 4: Relationships

- **Have media on constantly:** especially negative TV music, movies, etc. Crowd out opportunities for meaningful interaction.
- **Trust too little, or too much:** Guard and close your heart to everyone; or throw it wide open to everyone, inviting betrayal & abuse.
- **Have too-thick or too-thin boundaries:** Apply the same rules to everyone.
- **Be too dependent or too independent:** Cling; or find ways not to need anyone.
- **Complain and criticize:** This drives others from you faster than almost anything else.
- **Be selfish, or self-effacing:** Care too much - or too little - for yourself.
- **Hold on to old hurts, mistakes, and grudges:** Stay stuck in the past; focus on the negative.
- **Demand or passively wait for change** (aggressiveness or passivity).
- **Try to be someone you’re not.** Spend your time in environments/activities that go against your natural grain; compare w/others.

### Dimension 3: Relationships

- **Minimize your media use:** Give your focus to real relationships with real people. Make careful, positive choices when you use media.
- **Build incremental trust:** Open your heart to people to the extent that they have proven themselves trustworthy over time.
- **Have appropriate boundaries,** balancing intimacy with independence.
- **Be interdependent.** Use your own good gifts in effective cooperation with others.
- **Appreciate and praise:** Sending out positive energy draws others to you.
- **Love thy neighbor as thyself:** Balance your needs and desires with those of others.
- **Forgive and move on:** Free yourself from old pain, to embrace a happy present & future.
- **Clearly and kindly express your needs**, and work positively for change (assertiveness).
- **Develop a clear sense of identity:** Then structure a meaningful life and mission around it, and don’t compare yourself with others.

For additional handouts and a talk recording on this topic, see [http://covenant-lds.com/wrigley.htm](http://covenant-lds.com/wrigley.htm). For a video introduction to this approach, see [http://byubwmv.byu.edu/edweek/2005/CWrigley05.wmv](http://byubwmv.byu.edu/edweek/2005/CWrigley05.wmv).