

Nurturing Oneself During An Experience of Depression

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When Not In A Depressed State:

- Make a list of things you enjoy, things that bring you pleasure.
- Find one person you trust who you can call or who will be willing to BE with you. This person can remind you of who you are when you can't remember. The goal of this person is not to "snap you out of it", but someone who can remind you that you are a loving, beautiful person, even when you are feeling worthless.
- Prepare some meals for the freezer for those days when feeding yourself feels really hard.
- Create a daily practice: yoga, meditation, walking, prayer, lighting a candle, facing the four directions, smudging with sage, whatever fits with your belief system and feels good to you.
- Take a notebook and fill it with inspirational sayings, poems, verses, jokes, photographs that make you feel good.
- Depression feels like it will never end because memory cannot transcend vibration. Every emotional state is a different energy frequency. Our memory only travels along the current vibrational frequency, so when we are depressed, that's all we can remember. Write this in your notebook. It does not change the experience, but it helps me to know "This too will change"

When having an experience of Depression:

- Nurture yourself
- Listen to music, watch videos, take a walk, eat chocolate, wrap up in a warm, cozy blanket; whatever makes you feel good. It is ok to take care of yourself.
- Do not beat yourself up. It is counter productive. You cannot be anywhere other than where you are. Like it or not, this is where you are in this moment. Be here now.
- Cultivate Compassion for Yourself
- Rather than fight the experience, give yourself permission to rest, cry, sleep, journal, do what feels right to you.
- Trust your wisdom, even though it doesn't feel like it, you know what you need.
- Trust that this is a process. If you don't fight it, it can and will move through you.
- Ask your depression what message it has for you. If there is none, that's o.k.
- It is ok to be right where you are. There is nothing you must do to earn your place in this world.
- Dream, imagine, and visualize images of safety, comfort, beauty, love and support.
- Call someone who can remind you who you are. (Do not call anyone who has an agenda of "snap out of it!") (Do not call anyone who will commiserate with you. You do not need anyone else to tell you how worthless and meaningless life is, you're already doing a good job of that yourself.)
- Pray to whatever source or intelligence that makes sense to you. Ask for help. Know that even though you do not feel it, you are not alone and you are deeply loved

Self-Nurturing Practices

Conscious Breathing Practice:

In times of stress we generally begin holding our breath or breathing in a very shallow way. Bring awareness to the breath, breathing deeply, from the diaphragm. Breathing through the nose, take a long slow breath in, noticing your body expanding. Release the breath with a sigh. Sighing sends a signal to relax, throughout your whole body. Take two more deep breaths, releasing them with a sigh. Expanding the belly, breathe into the torso, then the chest, filling your whole body/being with breath.

When you have filled your body/being with breath, hold just a moment. Then release the breath, slowly, being aware of your body contracting as you breathe out. As you expand with the next breath, imagine that everything you need is coming to you and filling you up with the breath. Hold a moment. Release the breath being aware that all you no longer need may be released with the breath.

Breathe in all that you need, feel yourself being expanded. Release all that you no longer need. Stay with this slow, intentional breathing until you feel yourself soften and your body begins to open and relax. This generally provides an ability to be calmer and more accepting of this moment.

As you breathe in you may wish to say, "All I need comes to me and moves through me with the breath." As you breathe out you may wish to say, " All I no longer need is released effortlessly through the breath." Give thanks.

Self-Nurturing Bath

(Adapt this bathing practice to your own needs and belief system)

A hot bath can be relaxing and nurturing. Fill your bath with whatever gives you pleasure: bubbles, Epsom salts, lavender, essential oils. The bath section of most department stores have bath salts, oils etc. for relaxing, invigorating, or detoxing. Choose whatever pleases you. Light a candle. Imagine as you lie back into the bath that you are laying back into the strong supportive arms of a being or someone who needs nothing from you, but is simply here to support you. Take a deep breath, release it with a sigh. Relax. There is nowhere to go, nothing to do. This is important work you are doing...coming back into connection with your SELF.

As you lie in the bath, imagine that all the toxins that have accumulated in your body are being released into the warm water. Be willing to surrender and release all that you no longer need. Simply let it go into the warm water. Sigh.

Continue sitting in the tub as you open the drain. As the water drains out of the tub, continue sitting there, imagining that all the toxins, and "goop" of your life are flowing down the drain. Simply be willing to **allow** this to happen, there's nothing you must **do**. As the water drains completely from the tub, notice you are like a brand new creature. Naked. Like you were just born. Welcome yourself into the world. Each moment is new. You are new in this moment. You are loving and loveable. You are whole. You are divine. There is perfection in this moment. Welcome!

Now stand and turn on the shower, rinsing the final toxins from your skin. Imagine that that the water from the shower is sparkling white light, filling up all the places that were created as you released toxins from your body. Allow yourself to fill with this loving, nurturing, white light.

Dry yourself gently with a fluffy towel. Send love to all areas of your body as you dry yourself. Take a moment to rub your favorite body lotion on your feet, ankles, legs, torso, arms, back, neck, and face...telling each part of your body that you love it accept it just as it is. Look into the mirror and greet this new, beautiful, creature. Look yourself in the eye and say, "I Love YOU!" (Whether you feel it and believe it, or not.) This is a transformational practice and over time will actually change the way you look at yourself.

Energy Grounding/Releasing Practice:

Lie on the floor or in bed or sit in a chair with your feet flat on the ground. Imagine there are portals in the palms of your hands and the soles of your feet. Imagine allowing these portals to open. Take a deep breath and release it with a sigh. Do that two more times. Now imagine that energy is flowing out of your body through the portals in your hands and feet into the earth. Allow all those things that no longer serve you to drain out of the portals in your feet and hands. You might see an image of smoke or black goop or some other image, or you may have no image. You may wish to name that which you are releasing; i.e., the pain in my right shoulder, the sadness in my chest, self-judgment, fear, etc. You may wish to simply trust that whatever you don't need is leaving. Your own wisdom knows what is right for you. Continue with this image while breathing consciously. This practice is not about using your will to make anything happen. No effort is required. Just a willingness to release what you no longer need. Surrendering the need to DO anything. Spending as much time as feels right, allowing what you no longer need to drain out, imagining that it goes into the earth where it is transformed or transmuted.

When that feels complete, seal your hands and feet up. Thank the earth for receiving and transforming these things. Then imagine that you open another portal at the top of your head. (The crown chakra) Imagine now that you are being filled with sparkling white light. (Picture sunlight as it reflects and sparkles on the surface of water.) Let that sparkling, brilliant white light fill all those places that just emptied. Continue with that image until you feel complete. Incorporate conscious breathing at the same time. When you feel complete, close the crown chakra. Give thanks. You may wish to do this exercise first thing in the morning or last thing at night.

Affirmations:

- I am in the right place, doing the right thing even when it doesn't feel like it.
- This is a process. I honor the process even when I don't understand it.
- I honor my own wisdom.
- I choose to be here now, for this moment is all there is.
- This too will change.
- There is nothing I need do to earn my place in the world.
- There is no need for perfection. Good enough is good enough.
- It's ok to just BE. Just BEing me is my gift to the world.
- I am divine, whole and perfect, just as I am.

Add your own:

Visualization:

Find a place of comfort. Imagine whatever setting feels safe to you. Image yourself lying back into the arms of a person or a spiritual being who embodies safety, support, love and total acceptance. Allow yourself to simply relax. Let go of tension and holding onto control. You are safe. You are supported. You are loved. You are not alone. Even though it has felt that way, you are never alone. You are loved. You are supported. It is ok to let go. Lean back. You are safe. I've got your back. You are perfect, just as you are. There is nothing you need to do to earn your place here. You belong. You are whole, divine, and perfect just as you are. Take a deep breath and release it with a sigh.

Stay in this image as long as you like and visit it often.

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