

# Depression: An Enigma That Sucks

## JOE FERGUSON, PhD

PhD Clinical Psychology, Fielding University  
MBA, Wharton School of Business



I think I understand most of the emotions and what they are good for. I am in favor of them all. Fear, anger and anxiety activate in order to keep you from being eaten and they get you out of bed in the morning. Lust, love, hunger and greed provide direction and lay the foundation for satisfaction. Jealousy, guilt and shame reinforce love in cementing loyalty to the family, the pod, and other institutions. The list of useful emotions goes on and on.

All emotions have both physiological and cognitive elements. You literally *feel* a certain way in your body, but you also *think* something about it. Because of this interpretative element, most emotions can be experienced as some form of exhilaration, the realization of which is exhilarating in its own right! This is the foundation of my practice.

And then there is depression, which really sucks. Depression replaces motivation and activity with pain and paralysis. Depression reduces communication to the expression of suffering. Depression is simply debilitating. In evolutionary terms, emotions are enormously complicated and expensive so each of them must be very important. Or must have been important at one time. I cannot understand the utility of depression in our modern context so I must defer to the best historical theory I know about it, which is that it takes us down so that the alpha male in our group doesn't have to beat us to death. Specifically, when we come to the conclusion that we are inadequate to our aspirations, depression encourages us to abandon the struggle that might get us killed. Depression convinces us to lie down. We may be miserable but we can still propagate. This makes perfect sense in the brutally competitive primate environment of our forbears, but it is not desirable in Laguna Beach.

Depression is one of the most serious obstacles to progress in counseling and psychotherapy and it must be gotten out of the way. Fortunately, we actually *do* live in Laguna Beach rather than in the primate jungle and cognitive therapy works for depression in this town, sometimes in combination with a course of medication. There are too many exhilarating possibilities in life to spend much time in depression.

## ***Relief, Recovery, Resolution***

*Primarily for men and adolescent males in transition and in crisis,  
and for women who want to understand them better*

332 Forest Avenue, Suite #17, Laguna Beach, CA 92651  
(949) 235-2615 ~ DrJoe@Fergi.com ~ www.Fergi.com