

“What you did is not okay! And I am going to be depressed to prove it!”

Nobody wants to be depressed! Or do they? If you have suffered depression, you might be aware of the irrational part of you that objects to letting go of depressed feelings.

In depression people are more inclined to feel the unfairness of life. You want to rail against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, knowing all the while that you cannot change them by your complaints, cries or tears. Feeling cheated by life, let down by a relationship gone sour, angry or hurt that your parents gave you such a rough childhood, you resist letting go, cheering up, or otherwise feeling okay again. You may be aware of an inner voice shrieking out, “No! I deserve this depression!” Dwelling on being unfairly treated does nothing to cheer you up or help you move forward, but rather makes you more miserable. Why would you want to hang onto it?

Why? I have consistently found that when people want to hold onto their depression, they have ***a faulty underlying belief: that depression proves what happened to them was wrong, unfair, or hurtful.*** Is this you? Listen closely to that part of you saying, “If I let go of this depression, it will be like I am saying it is okay that the bad thing happened. And it was most definitely NOT OKAY!!!” That part of you believes if you stop feeling hurt, then anyone who caused your pain gets off free – off the hook for their behavior. You believe your depressed state is a demonstration of how badly you were treated. But to whom are you making the demonstration? A parent who was cruel, a lover who disappointed you, a boss who fired you: none of them are noticing or being hurt by your depressed mood. This is the time to remember that the person who is hurt the most by your depression is you.

But how do you become willing to let go of the depression?

Honestly appraising why you want to keep your depression and not judging yourself or hiding your feelings, can lay the groundwork for letting it go.

1. No matter how depressed you still feel on the inside, you must make a rational decision to change your false belief that letting go means the hurt was okay. Replace it with a new belief: ***“The situation that hurt me was not okay regardless of how I feel.”*** Your feelings about it do not make it wrong or right. This belief shift that can help you get unstuck from the morass of depression.
2. Next, work to develop tolerance for other negative feelings and decide what to do about them. Pay attention to what has happened to identify your emotion. Then ask yourself and consult someone else to answer: “What will I do with anger at a person who doesn’t care, won’t listen, won’t change or is no longer around?” “How will I manage disappointment of unfulfilled expectations?” Sometimes being depressed and feeling worthless is easier than feeling grief and loss that go with disappointment. You can gradually develop a new repertoire of reaction. Try assessing:
 - What feeling do you really have under the depressed mood? Hurt, sad, lost, alone...
 - What practice have you had in expressing this emotion? You may ask someone else what they do, but then pick a method to express yourself: write your feelings down, draw them, play music, talk.

- Do something deliberate to counter the feeling? Get together with someone you enjoy, talk with someone who might cheer you up, distract yourself, go for a run, play a game with a child. Usually doing an activity that will make you feel connected to others helps the most.
 - If there is still a problem that exists, such as living with someone who verbally abuses you, you will want to do some problem solving about how to get out of that ongoing troublesome situation. For that, consulting with a trusted advisor or therapist might help.
3. Finally, ask yourself what you would do if you felt good? Then go do it. This is not a win-win situation. Say to yourself that anyone who wanted to hurt you does not win if you feel good despite them. The best revenge, as they say, is living well. Practice that!