

## **SOME PERSONAL STORIES FROM " DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS MANUAL."**

Members of Depressed Anonymous speak about their recovery from depression.

### **#1 "I no longer experience those black, bleak, hopeless periods. My life is joyful."**

The blackness -- the despair -- withdrawing more and more into myself -- the hopelessness -- there was NO joy and I could no longer pretend. My husband said, "You need to get some help." I knew that he was right but I was always the one who helped others. Our newspaper carried a listing of all of the support groups in the community and I found the notice for a 12 step Depressed Anonymous group. I had never heard of it before but I knew it fit. The group was just forming and was there when I needed it.

I had a knowledge of 12 - step programs and actually believed that I lived that life. Today I know that I previously had a head-knowledge but today I live the 12-step life.

It was December of 1992 that I made that decision and I knew that I was "powerless over depression --my life had become unmanageable." I was willing to do anything that DA offered. I wanted to get rid of the pain. If DA had told me I would get well if I stood on my head three times a day --I would have done it. Daily, I read from the book and consciously worked the 12 steps. I worked them one at a time, from 1 through 12. 'Working the steps' to me meant posting the step I was working on and consciously pondering it throughout my day.

Unlike other established 12-step programs, there was no evidence of recovery at these first meetings. The group was just forming. There was no one there with longevity in the program. The book gave me a formula on page 59. It promised me that I would feel better if I "attend meetings, work my twelve step program, eat properly, get an exercise program and talk about my sadness with others." I also began to journal -- not just to state my woes but with the intention of finding a

solution. Each week I articulated my unhappiness and my story to people who listened and, over time, inner wisdom began to unscramble the mess.

Step three (Made a decision to turn my will and life over to the care of God as I understand God) required much time and thought and daily meditation. My Higher Power no longer was a permissive parent whom I begged to give me what I thought I wanted. All of the love, the caring, the intelligence was there, I just had to accept it for myself. Today, the God of my understanding is different than when I began this journey. A professional, educated woman, spiritually I was still in kindergarten. I badgered Hugh S., for a guide to assist me in taking my 4th Step Inventory. I wrote for months and then quickly moved to Step 5 before I could rationalize it all away. The therapist who is responsible for beginning DA in our area became "another human being" from our 5th step.

I no longer experience those black, bleak, hopeless periods. My life is joyful. Then why do I continue to go to DA five years later? The Twelfth Step of this program: "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry the message to others at the meetings and I am so grateful to DA that I want it to be there for those who are still suffering.

The final situation that brought me to my knees and to DA has not improved. In fact, it appears to be deteriorating. Our book says, in the section which discusses step six, that many would "no longer depress themselves if they could be sure there wouldn't be any more pain." No one can be promised a bed of roses -- no pain.

During my recovery there were times when I would begin to interfere and I would remind myself of what it was like when I was attempting to run the show. Aloud I would say, "Oh! I turned that one over to you and I trust you. I don't need to take it back."

Today I view the situation as "unfolding" and my spiritual journey is unfolding with it. My Higher Power is in charge.

Lois

## **# 2 "I depressed myself, I can undepress myself!"**

My name is Linda and the first time that I read "Depressed? Here is a Way out!" I did not like it and I got angry. The first part of the book about turning over our minds and life to a Higher Power sounded good. I was ready to do that! Hey! Here it is God! You take it! No more depression! But then came the part about a moral inventory, shortcomings, and the big one is that I depressed myself.

"What's he talking about" I said to myself as I read the book. I had tried to undepress myself many times. I put the book down, and went to work. But as I was walking around at work that night feeling very depressed, bits and pieces of the book kept popping into my head, and I started to think the word STOP just like the book suggested to do. "I depressed myself, I can undepress myself," I said to myself.

Look for SUNSPOTS, memories from the past that were happy times and ones which bring back happy feelings from years gone by. I tried, but none came to mind. But I did find that just thinking about the book, and what it said did make me feel a little bit better. Then a piece of a song popped into my mind. "Seek you first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all the others will be added unto you." Hey! A SUNSPOT!

I said to myself.

Then I felt a warm glow and then I did feel better. . I did it! I made myself feel better. I can undepress myself! So Hugh was right! I had mixed feelings. I wanted to feel better, but admitting I depressed myself was not an easy thing to do.

I went back and reread the book, but now with an open mind. I have started to follow the 12 steps and with the help of the HIGHER POWER, I can have a brighter future. And I am making and putting in my memory a lot of SUNSPOTS for those times when I am feeling depressed and which I can choose to draw upon when I feel I need them.

I put up the STOP sign, and bring out a SUNSPOT to carry me through..."

Linda

### **# 3. The way it was and the way it is now for Frances.**

I joined DA in 1988. At that time, I was totally depressed, with no interest in anything or anyone, and especially no interest in myself. I felt I had no worth, a feeling I had for many years. I am sure since a child, very young.

Having lived with this feeling for so many years, I guess I thought this was normal, and probably most people felt the same way. I had all the symptoms of depression but I knew nothing about the sickness except to live with it, which I found to be a terrible fate, until I discovered Depressed Anonymous.

I attend Depressed Anonymous meetings quite regularly. I have found that if I can attend the meetings regularly, I get the support of the members, who I have found to have about the same kind of problems as I have, maybe not quite as bad as mine, but I guess each of us feels that our problems are worse than anyone else. I know mine are. But with the regular meetings and my friends support, I find that I am able to manage pretty well from week to week. I find that I am able to manage pretty well from week to week. I have more faith in myself since I work the Twelve Steps the best that I can and trust my Higher Power (God Almighty) with all my heart. I pray to the fullest extent that I will continue to have faith in myself and others. I have become a more whole being than I have ever been. I work a lot, I volunteer a lot and have a far better outlook on life than I have ever had, and I attribute all of these good feelings to Depressed Anonymous.

I just hope that I will always be able to attend Depressed Anonymous meetings regularly and wish

more people had the opportunity to do the same. Depressed Anonymous has helped me so much. I cannot begin to explain sufficiently the support the meetings can give one who is depressed. Depressed Anonymous has been and is my salvation and I know the Twelve Steps program is the only way to go to get one on the right track and it takes the meetings to keep you there. They are also a "Godsend" for me and I know for a lot of others who are depressed.

I thank Depressed Anonymous and my Higher Power for a life worth living.

#### **# 4. Depressed Anonymous is Ralph's Guardian Angel.**

I felt I had to sit down and write you this letter Hugh to let you know how you and the Depressed Anonymous group are helping me through my troubled times.

I was thrown into my deep depression by the notice of our plant closing which I had worked for 24 years. I felt my whole world as I had known it had folded in on me. I could not visualize my working at another place. I thought of all the negative things about starting over ( my pay would be less, lousiest job, 3rd shift, first to be laid off, etc.) it went on and on.

This was just some of all the living hell that was going through me inside. But then my eyes and ears started to open through the Depressed Anonymous group here in Louisville, Kentucky. I just knew that God was speaking to me through them. He started letting me know that he hadn't deserted me or let me down. That my life wasn't over, but going through a new phase, a new rebirth.

He told me I must first forgive the company I had worked for over 25 years. This was the greatest hurdle of all, but somehow I did it. From the moment I did it, my depression started to lift from my body. Next he said I must have faith in him, that he was going to take care of me and make me happier than I have ever been in my life. So he did just that.

I have a new job which I love and the pay is great! He said to quit bashing myself and to believe in myself, that I can conquer all. But he never did ask me to forgive him, and now I can understand why. There was nothing to forgive. My Higher Power knew what he was doing all the time. I believe now I have become much closer to my God and have a greater amount of faith in Him, namely, a faith that he will take care of me till the end of time.

I have come a long way since that first day I walked through those doors and into all of your open arms. It was good to know that other people had the same feelings that I had experienced. The feeling of loneliness and despair, no way out of the living hell that was going through me inside. At that time it was like my heart and my soul had been ripped out of my body. I felt that my own mind was my worst enemy and its mission was to destroy me. I had many sleepless nights and my mind was forever racing with negative thoughts of gloom and doom. I did not think I would ever function like a normal human being again. I felt my negative thoughts would win the battle and I would forever be condemned to the eternal hell.

But you and the Depressed Anonymous group have proved me all wrong (thank God). You have been my Guardian Angels who were speaking to me all the time. You showed me that there was hope for me after all. There is a new rebirth in me spiritually, emotionally and physically. I believe now I can go on with my life without all the fears that we bottled up inside me. As long as I have faith in my Higher Power and the Depressed Anonymous group there will be no mountain I can not climb.

I am forever grateful,

Ralph

## **#5. "I couldn't get out of bed in the morning."**

When I first came to Depressed Anonymous, I was so depressed, I didn't even want to get out of bed in the morning. I hated the world and I didn't want to deal with it. Just going out in public was a major ordeal, even the grocery seemed like an overwhelming task. Ultimately, I lost my job due to my inability to function at work. I prayed that God would let me die.

I felt as if I carried this tremendous load of emotional pain around in my chest all the time. I wanted to put it down, I wanted to get rid of it but I didn't know how. I thought God had forsaken me because I violated some sacred code without knowing it and I believed I would never feel the sunlight of the spirit on my face again. That belief forged a bitterness and resentment toward God that grew day by day. I could not believe that life would ever be good again or that I could be happy. I felt emotionally dead. I have had depression for years, although I didn't know that's what it was. Being an alcoholic and an active member of AA, I thought my depression and sadness was normal. I hit bottom last year

in the spring, after 8 years in recovery, when I started to have "flashbacks" of sexual abuse from childhood. I didn't understand how God could have allowed this to happen, since it had happened so long ago, why did it have to come out now?

All my life I had this feeling that I had a deep dark secret; but I couldn't remember what it was. I lived in constant fear that people would find out that my terrible "secret" was out. Gradually I realized that the big black secret was out now. I had not died. The world had not stopped moving.

As I began working on the abuse issues in therapy, the pieces of my life began to fit together in a way they never could have before, as I had never dealt with this catastrophic event. In Hugh's book, Depressed? Here is a Way out! he talks about how people find their time of depression to be one of the great gifts in their life. The first time I read this I thought it was the craziest thing I had ever heard. Yet, during this time of depression I have learned and I have grown. I have come to understand myself and my god in a way I never could before

It's been nearly a year now. Life is starting to come together for me again, one day at a time by the grace of God and the fellowship of this program. From the very first time I walked through the doors of DA, I knew I was in the right place. Having been an active member of AA for so many years, I was already a firm believer in the 12 steps. I did what you people told me to do, even when I didn't believe it would help. I attended meetings. I worked the steps with my sponsor. I used the DA phone list and talked to people about my pain and my day to day problems. I read Hugh's book and followed the suggestions given in it.

God, through DA, this program and fellowship literally carried me through the darkest time in my life and god did not let me die, despite my best efforts to. I have truly experienced the "miracle of the group." I promise you it will work. I have heard it said that sometimes God's greatest miracles are unanswered prayers and I believe it, after all that I am one.

Anonymous

## **# 6. I was sexually abused!**

I don't remember ever not being depressed, even as a small child. `My Grandmother always said that I was too "nervous."

I was sexually abused and picked on in my childhood. I was picked on because to the other kids my ears were too big. I was told that I was ugly and a substandard human being and I believed

it. I was the butt of the jokes and didn't feel like I was worth defending so I didn't defend myself against the neighborhood bullies.

Around the age of 12 I began passing out. I was told by doctors that it was "emotionally" triggered but my parents did not believe it. I was into adulthood with these feelings of shame and inadequacies and even attempted suicide once. Then after over 20 years of passing out I hit rock bottom. I was tired of the strangle hold depression had on me. I began therapy. I realized through therapy sessions that my fainting spells occurred during periods of personal loss, loss of loved ones, and the loss of my childhood. I am learning that I am worth saving from depression and so what I think is important and is what matters, ultimately. I will strive for recovery from my addiction to depression one day at a time. One day at a time will help me get over my depression. I will conquer my fears. I am a good person and I care about me and I will resolve today to quit whipping myself over my past life. Today is all I have to make the most of and I plan to do just that.

Steve

## **# 7. "I am Bi-polar (manic - depression ) and found the Depressed Anonymous fellowship to be my miracle."**

I, being diagnosed as a manic depressive in 1981, have been in therapy and on and off medication for approximately thirteen years now. Don't think that all that therapy and medication didn't do me any good. They say to take things one step at a time. Well, if I could count the steps that I have taken with medicine and therapy, I'd say from 1981 to August of this past year 1993, I took some big, adventurous steps toward my progress...

But this year my progress has already surpassed all the progress that went before -- it is because of my discovery of Depressed Anonymous. I call Depressed Anonymous a miracle. So far, the most grabbing element of Depressed Anonymous has been the parts in the book ("**Depressed? Here is a Way out!**" HarperCollins, 1991 ) where the author refers to the depressed person as a saddict, that is, a person attached or addicted even to sad and hopeless thoughts. Boy, did I ever see myself in these sections. Since then, I have learned to control my thought process. Now, very seldom, do sad thoughts creep in. If I didn't know any better, I'd say the first time I saw the description of a saddict, a light went on in my head. The actual miracle took place at that moment. And the beauty of the

whole thing is, that thinking positive thoughts becomes easier and easier, automatic, then ecstatic at times.

But it is not all that easy. I followed the steps also. I work at them often. For just as sure as your mind is on the automatic positive gear, it can easily slip back to negativism without the proper maintenance, which includes: 1) weekly (not just regular) attendance at meetings. 2) Also, a very important part in one's recovery is the knowledge of and practice of the twelve steps and for those that need it, medication plus therapy as recommended by your doctor.

Good luck! And if just one other person reaches the point where I am then there is a hope that life can be different for you as well.

Julia

### **# 8. The more meetings I attend the better I feel!**

Like everyone else who had never done it before, I had no idea what to expect when I entered the room where a Depressed Anonymous meeting was about to be held.

I was instantly greeted by some women who introduced themselves by first name only and I responded, I believe, with my full name. I didn't know if I'd broken any rules or not, but I learned later that many others do the same thing before they learn what's going on. I suppose it's because the idea of not giving your last name is so new that you just blurt out your surname without really thinking. I did feel like a stranger for a few moments as more and more people arrived and jumped right into discussion with the others.

But when the meeting started, I began to hear how other people's stories applied to me. I knew it was where I belonged. We each took a few minutes to talk about the proceeding week and how we fared.

I had just finished a series of outpatient group sessions at a hospital where we really spilled our guts and the other people gave their opinions and offered advice. So, naturally I spilled my guts. I didn't realize until everyone else had spoken that I really didn't need to tell everything. I also found that no one was giving me advice or being critical or prying. They were just willing to listen. I was aware that others were nodding in agreement at some of the things I was saying as if to say "I know. I've been there." Or, "Yes, we understand completely."

I was somewhat surprised that some people cried as they spoke of their painful lives, although I

had a lump in my throat myself when I spoke. My heart leaped out to them immediately. I wanted to hug them and tell them everything was going to be all right.

I didn't really get the complete feel of Depressed Anonymous at that first meeting, so I took the advice given me as I was leaving and came back the following week. I kept coming back and the more I attended, the better I was able to handle my depression.

Depressed Anonymous did more for me in a month than the hospital group did in three months and the Depressed Anonymous meetings didn't cost anything ( although after the first meeting we voluntarily toss in a dollar at the end of each meeting to pay the light bill.)

I couldn't believe that Depressed Anonymous was run by the people who participated in it. I thought there had to be someone, somewhere making big money off the poor souls who so desperately sought help. Boy, was that a stupid assumption.

Perhaps the thing that has impressed me most about Depressed Anonymous is the wonderful friendships that develop. Depressed Anonymous members really care about each other.

I thought that I had one personal friend outside my family, but after I'd been to a few Depressed Anonymous meetings I found that I had many friends, all caring and, most importantly perhaps, understanding.

Sometimes we go out for coffee after meetings and get to know each other even better. We occasionally have a party and find that we can be completely relaxed and at ease because there are people who absolutely understand each other.

We know what depression is all about in Depressed Anonymous. We know how it takes the group to start to feel better. It may require medication and other things, but it absolutely requires Depressed Anonymous.

Tom

## **# 9. I found that my drinking and depression didn't mix!**

During the time of 1983, my mother had died -- which put me into severe depression. I felt overwhelmed and suicidal.

I never did actually attempt suicide because the alcohol came into my life. Even more so it dulled my senses and made me oblivious. Alcohol also at the same time gave me this feeling of

empowerment and happiness but at the same time resentment because I knew what was bothering me didn't quite want to address the issue.

It wasn't until 1993 that I joined AA, got into therapy which has been amazingly helpful. I'm growing and dealing with the death of my mother and with alcohol. My hobbies like gardening and my writing give me great joy and are therapeutic. I've been working the twelve steps with an open mind that everyday things will get better and if a problem does occur the Higher Power will give me the answer and the strength to deal with it, and not to run away or shut it away like before.

Depression is something that's so overwhelming. For myself, it's like crawling from beneath the earth and facing the light, with fear that no one would understand how I truly feel.

When in depression, isolation would follow being my only friend but actually it was my own worst enemy. I should have been opening up to someone, instead I shut myself off from the world.

Through therapy and a belief in myself and encouragement, facing the days don't seem as difficult.

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~~Working Higher steps of Depression Anonymous and reading Down Days."~~

gives me reassurance that we are not alone. I now appreciate what I do have when I work through the program.

Through prayer and appreciation I realize that there's more to life than alcohol and that I kissed a chunk of my life away because of it.

Now I'm gaining more through life than ever before being sober, I see my life as a gift and not as a heavy burden.

Rheatha

## **#9. "Today, two very depressed people called me for help.**

As I sit here late at night I think of the two people who called me today and who said that they are depressed. Both, one a man in his late forties and the other, a woman in her late sixties are both troubled. They both feel alone and stuck. I talked with both of them and tried to get a fix on how much hurt they are feeling. How hopeless are they feeling right now?

I wonder if the lady will take my suggestions, go to her library and pull out a book recommended for persons depressed. I wonder if she got out today into the beautiful warm autumn air.

The gentleman said that he had recently lost a job and was out of work for a few months. Finally he's back at work and things are a bit better for him he thinks.

I pray for both these folks tonight and wonder if they feel that maybe there is hope for them too? I wonder how I sounded to them? Did I actually promise hope and did they really believe me when I said that their despair would lessen the more they came to our Depressed Anonymous meetings.

Depression is a horrible experience. I believe that it is truly a defense, as Dr. Dorothy Rowe claims. It is more a defense which we have learned how to use, many of us, since our childhood days. It's more a defense than a disease. Too often persons depressed come to me and say that their depression really is a comfort because it protects them from something far worse than what they have. They would hardly call a disease a comfort.

I wonder what goes through a person's mind when they learn that persons much like themselves are gaining strength from persons just like themselves. I talk with them about Depressed Anonymous. They seem interested. They tell me that they will attempt to make a meeting. They are hurting so bad that they are willing to learn -- to come and see --to experience first hand how being part of a group may give them a sense of empowerment -- a sense that they have it within themselves to gain an exit from the prison of their depression.

### **Empowerment and prevention.**

These two realities are what gives us the push and the power for talking day after day with persons still suffering from depression. I know that some who hear about us will go with an expectant faith that they will find hope and peace in the group. This hope in itself may keep them from sliding down the slippery abyss of depression.

I pray tonight that whatever happens that these two folks find peace and hope. Life is too short and the pain too great for our one life to be brought down by a pain so devastating that only by sharing it can I ever hope to reduce its size. I wonder to myself if he and she will be at any of our meetings tonight?

In a few hours the dawn will be upon me and another day will roll around. I wonder if my friends are worried, hopeful or still afraid that their new day will be like all the rest -- or, I wonder, will they pursue their hope and present their needs to our fellowship --with its promise of a new birth -- a new hope and new friends. I wonder?

It is with a personal sense of awe that I see the empowerment that comes to those persons who work the 12 step program of Depressed Anonymous. The empowerment comes to those who are conscious of the various ways they will have to change if they are to grow and change. This of course is not without its risks.

One of the major obstacles that we have to face when we are depressed is to be willing to change the way we think about ourselves, the world and our future. And of course, to change the future we have to dwell and experience the pleasant as well as the unpleasant feelings in the present. We have to be willing to face the discomfort of living life with a sense of unpredictability. This is not an easy task, but it is a task that can be achieved with time, patience and work..

Empowerment comes from being informed and making choices that help us change our lives for the better. When I come to a Depressed Anonymous meeting I am making the first major step - namely, that I admit with my presence at the group meeting that my life is out of control. My compulsion to depress myself is at the root of my inability to take on the challenge of living life with risk and enthusiasm. But how can I possibly say that I want to depress myself? We are not blaming ourselves here but are taking responsibility for our own feelings, behavior and thinking. Now that I am conscious of some negative patterns of my own behavior I can get on with learning new strategies for my own healing. With the heartfelt energy of a monk's prayer, I now understand that it is by sharing the story of my life -- and with the conviction that someone is there to listen, that this can in time help me make it out of my prison of fear and sadness.

I can be empowered by taking the bull by the horns and choosing each new day, one day at a time and start to feel differently. I now have the support of the group -- -- support from people who have walked where I am walking.

I am investing in myself. I am making my recovery my highest priority. I may have been on all the antidepressant medications -- I may have seen all the best counselors, psychiatrists and

doctors but now finally I am going to a room full of depressed people -- people who understand me! These people I discover are investing in themselves. What will I find there? I will find some of the most caring people on the face of the earth. Some of the group will have been coming for months, and they say they are having more good days than bad and its getting better. The more meetings they attend the better they feel and the more support they receive. They are feeling empowered. It's

the miracle of the group. Instead of living with a compulsion to repeat old negative and life negating thoughts and feelings we now have a compulsion to live with hope plus a desire for a brand new way of living. We are now about to change the way we live -- not just the way we talk to ourselves. We are going to get a life!

I now feel that I'm getting better in learning *how to not to repeat my old way of thinking, feeling, believing and the isolating of myself.* I now know that this healing all takes time and that with work and patience I will get better. For most of us, it has taken us a few years to get here (depressed) so why not take the time and daily work toward getting better -- one day at a time -- one meeting at a time.

Anonymous

## **#10. My Psychiatrist recommended Depressed Anonymous and now look at me!**

In 1993, my psychiatrist recommended Depressed Anonymous for depression. I began going to these meetings and obtained immediate support and acceptance. I cannot say enough for the 12 steps of Depressed Anonymous (and my weekly therapist concurs); but then neither can I say enough about the unquestioning acceptance I felt at my first meeting. They kept saying to attend six meetings before making a final decision. Well, I didn't need six meetings before making a final decision as to whether or not the meetings were for me. But, since I lived about 25 miles away, I decided that a drive of that distance was a bit costly and inconvenient. So I thought "my community doesn't have a group like this, and I'm sure there are many people in that area that can benefit from such a group."

I wrote a letter to Hugh stating my desire to form a group and I received an immediate call from him. He seemed elated at the idea and has been of tremendous assistance and support in this effort.

We had an organizational meeting with some key people from one of the existing groups to put

our heads together and come up with good ideas about how and when to proceed. The rest is history.

I have found the community as a whole is very supportive of the group; however, individuals are a little reluctant to "come out of the closet" because of the stigma associated with depression. There is a tremendous amount of gratification that comes from helping someone that would not have otherwise known of this help.

Encouragement from someone else is essential. Even though you have an abundance of determination to make the thing work, it is very discouraging to attend a meeting and have no one show up. But thanks to a few stalwart believers in what I was doing, perseverance was encouraged and perseverance prevailed. Now I am happy to say that a strong, close knit group exists. As a matter of fact we're planning a chili supper soon and are looking forward to a night of socializing together. The tremendous rewards far outweigh the difficulties faced in the beginning, and I highly recommend this to anyone who has a strong desire, determination and perseverance.

I am going to be relocating to another areas where there is no Depressed Anonymous group and I'm entertaining the idea of starting a group there.

Barbara

## **# 22 . The "Miracle" of the group**

The recovery program of Depressed Anonymous is similar to Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12 step programs in two important ways: One, you must attend meetings regularly and two, you must have that vital spiritual experience that will change your whole life.

One recent American author speaks about the three A's in our society which determine whether you have "made it" or not: Affluence, achievement, and appearance. Jesus says "If you want to make it with me you must first die to self." His way is much different than the way of modern culture. To most the cross is anathema!

The Bible talks about loving the self: " You shall love the Lord the God with all your heart and all your mind and all your soul and your neighbor as yourself." It was also said that "Love is the fulfillment of the Law." We know that we must first love ourselves if we are to love others. God dwells in the self. "We are the temple of the Holy Spirit" and "The Kingdom of heaven is within you," which is at least one of the reasons why we as the depressed person need to quit beating ourselves up when we speak of a Spiritual Awakening.

Many of us as depressed persons find it hard to trust God - equally as bewildering is the idea of

trusting ourselves. In working the 12 steps and attending DA meetings I found that I can trust God. Gradually I became aware that God loves me. I can trust God. I can trust Him. Life is unpredictable and at times very difficult but this new understanding that we have of God and who loves me greatly wants to give us all the good that we can handle. Once I begin to trust God who loves me unconditionally then I might begin to love myself.

When we know our limitations, we know there is something greater than ourselves. In the Twelve-step program this something greater is called "The Higher Power" or "God as you understand God." I personally choose to call this power, God. I believe it cannot be less than personal, which is why I refer to my Higher Power as having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. But the main path toward freeing ourselves from depression is to have some personal God --and that God can be the God of our understanding! What freedom!

I have participated in many Depressed Anonymous meetings. I got to experience the "miracle of the group" in listening to other stories and in recounting my own personal trials. I became aware of what one author in a devotional meant in saying "All your trials are gifts to you -- opportunities to grow. You will not grow if you set in a flower garden ...but you will grow if you are in pain, if you experience losses .. and if you take the pain and learn to accept it as a gift with a specific purpose."

I met many people who were experiencing great losses and countless problems but had decided to take action by attending a meeting to gain insight into their own lives. In my own grief, I became more aware of the suffering of others and began growing as a person. I had the opportunity to lead a Depressed Anonymous meeting where I shared my own experiences with depression and my complete recovery through reading the book *Depressed? Here is a way out!* This book I believe was truly inspired by God.

Spirituality is emphasized in the Depressed Anonymous program, and through Depressed Anonymous I feel I've become much closer to God, myself and others. I plan to continue my work with Depressed Anonymous by attending meetings and making contributions to *The Antidepressant Tablet*.

When I first became involved with Depressed Anonymous I felt almost overwhelmed by the goals I wanted accomplished. I had been so inspired by the Depressed Anonymous manual that I wanted to do everything I could for the people at Depressed Anonymous. Through experience, my own personal vision became that of Mother Teresa of Calcutta who said, "There are no great acts, only small acts done with great love."

Nealia

## **#11. To be depressed or not be depressed? That was my choice!**

I believe I've been a depressed person all of my life. I've had a lot of lows but never as low as this past year. My husband of 10 years left me and my three children for another woman and I lost my job. Depression hit me and I couldn't snap out of it as I used to say. My life started to spiral down. I was in and out of mental hospitals and on different medications. I was diagnosed as having a chemical imbalance. In my mind this seemed to tell me I had a sickness. I had no control over and only drugs could cure. Then one night I began to have a horrible reaction to the last drug I was on. I was rushed to the emergency room and almost died! After that I refused to take drugs again. Then life really started going down for me. I started sleeping more, stayed in bed mostly and let the house go and let the children fend for themselves. I felt empty inside. No one or nothing could help me. If I hadn't thought suicide was the cardinal sin I would be dead today. So one night I lay on the floor crying and praying from my heart. In the past when I prayed I wanted God to do all the work while deep down I still didn't want to let go of my miserable yet

safe way of life. And as long as I wouldn't really let go, God seemed to have no answers for me. This time though, I was at his mercy. Life for me could no longer go on this way. I prayed the most releasing prayer. I offered up my entire self to him. Nothing magical happened after that except the sudden urge to call my church for Christian Counseling. They referred me to this very affordable, warm lady counselor who I had seen in the past but had quit going to. She suggested that I start attending Depressed Anonymous 12 step meetings. This was a great effort for me. I was scared and skeptical. Since that first night I've been attending weekly Depressed Anonymous meetings and reading **Depressed? Here is a way out!** I also attend drug free therapy, attend church and church activities regularly and continue to pray and walk regularly. I know that my life is being richly blessed. I'm also using the Depressed Anonymous literature and listening to people in the Depressed Anonymous meetings where I have received valuable tools and am putting them to daily use.

The moment that I read that I had a choice to stay in depression I immediately knew that I could make the choice to get out of my depression. Bingo! It wasn't an illness. This did not have control over me. And another tool I use frequently through the Depressed Anonymous manual is that "thoughts produce moods, moods produce feelings and feelings produce behavior."

So I began to realize that if I thought about sad or disturbing thoughts I could stop myself and

produce positive thoughts automatically. I had control. This is priceless to me. . Staying out of depression takes work on my part as well as God's. Thank you Lord above for using people through my church, my therapy, and the wonderful Depressed Anonymous members who give of themselves unconditionally. Thank you for answering my prayer.

Kim

### **#11. " I have to take responsibility for my own life!"**

I remember being very sad when I was very young, but I really didn't understand that the sadness which I always experienced was called depression. I was sad as a child. I was not too happy to be living. I felt that I was never quite good enough to compete in school, and I always felt that I should leave to someone else whatever we were doing. I suffered on and off with depression throughout school. I felt that I had a loving family, but there was always that depression.

When I went into adulthood I was always determined to be in control. I had a great need to be in control. I felt weak if I wasn't in control. I guess I thought that if I wasn't in control, complete control, then the feeling that I wasn't quite as good as someone else would pass. I was never satisfied with what I would do. I always thought that I could do better. I was taught to do as well as I could. I guess I was my own worst enemy, but I never expected that from others. I always thought other people were okay; I expected so much from me.

That inner battle went on; the depression went on. I could always sit down and talk with my mother. She made life so simple, After she was gone, I completely fell apart. I got more and more depressed. I didn't go out and find help because I was too scared. At first I didn't know if there was anyone who could like me. I seemed to be too scared. How could they accept a person like me? Somebody had to accept me the way I was or nobody could help me.

My children were all married and had left home, and I was divorced from my husband, I would come home to that empty house. I wasn't interested in anything. I didn't like television, radio, the video or anything that made a sound. I just wanted to sit quietly in the corner. At the time I was doing it, I didn't realize I was doing this. I was thinking of all the old negative thoughts that were making me so sick. I was not sleeping very much and had chest pains. That went on for a long time but I didn't really care what was wrong. I would think to myself, "You are a worthless person anyway, always have been. Don't go to a doctor and take up his time, you're not worth it." Daytime at work was okay, but when daylight came to be night-time, I would sit in the dark. It was

somehow a comfort and it felt good at the time. The only thing I could think was how I made a blunder on the job. "You could have done this or done that at work." I kept telling myself I should have been more friendly on the street to an acquaintance. I kept beating myself over the head about the things that happened a long, long time ago. I got to where I wouldn't see people. I would smile at people who came to my home and tell them that I was fine, couldn't be better. You weren't supposed to be rude to people who came to your home. If they find out who I am really, and what I am really, they will discard me completely. If I could tell all this to someone, but why tell it to anyone, who wants to hear it?

Then I finally knew after two years or more of sleepless nights that someone had to help me. I looked up in the back of the phone book and I found a card saying Depressed Center. It has a phone number and that was all. I talked to the man on the other end of the phone. I said to myself this man is too busy to talk with me, but anyway I made the first appointment myself. I made myself go. I thank God I did. I thank God that I went for help. It was a whole new beginning for me. I wanted to get well so badly. I think people do have to want to change. I went in with the attitude that I have to get well. If there is anything this side of heaven I am going to get it. I had heard things about counselors that scared me, but this was just all the old negative feelings that caught up with me and boxed me in. I got better and started to think differently. I started to get rid of some of my negative thoughts. I began to feel better and I continued to see my counselor. I started in Depressed Anonymous some weeks later.

It has been a year now since I gave up on those negative thoughts that I had over my lifetime. I gave them up one at a time. It wasn't like I dumped them all at once. It was like the people needed to show me a new life and that I can be happy again. In the beginning I thought the old familiar tapes had begun playing again.. The old tapes saying I was stupid began to play. But then I would attend Depressed Anonymous meetings every week and I would go and find that I could use things that other people said at the meetings which would help me. That it was one place where you could go and be fully accepted for whatever you had to say, and someone else there said that they knew exactly what I was feeling. I also began to trust in God. God is my higher power. More and more I turned it over to the Higher Power and said I can't do these things all by myself. I did pray as hard as I could. I prayed every night and I believed that this change was going to happen. I started believing in me. But the wonderful thing was that I began to realize that I was no longer alone. A Higher Power was going to be there for me. The chest pains soon subsided and I began to sleep again.

You don't get better overnight, but you do get well and you do get much better. I was as down in the muck as far as I could go. I had to go and open the door for the first time because there was no other place to go. I had already used up all the hiding places in my life. I still have many problems like anyone else, but if I need sleep very badly I turn the problem over to the Higher Power and go to sleep. I can always pick it up the next morning --somehow it all gets done. Nothing so bad has happened to me. I have trouble trying to figure out what I am exactly supposed to do. I am sure God points me in the right direction but sometimes I miss the message, but it will come to me eventually what God wants for me. All you have to do is reach out and get it. But my faith is stronger now in God than it has ever been in my life because I need that companion in my life. It is there for all of us if we just reach out and take it. It is there for everyone.

Now that I look back and see the way I was and see how I am now, I can't believe that I ever knew that other person. This person is different altogether. I like this person now very much. I am so thankful to the group. They are just wonderful. They are my family. They are my DA family. I also have my church family. It is a wonderful feeling to know that there is a Higher Power that can help you through these things. At first I thought, "I doubt that very much". when everyone was talking about the Higher Power, peace in my life. I said "I doubt that very much", and then it happened to me. Every few days the world dumps down on you and beats you down, but that's just life. I always think to myself that there is that extra strength that I didn't have before. I feel that everything is going to be OK with me. I have that peace now myself.

It can't happen overnight. I know what the people who come to Depressed Anonymous for the first time feel. When you go through the long weeks and days and give it all you got, it will happen to you just as it happened to me. There is no magic cure ---no magic pill. It is a long process. It will happen and does happen. It is so much better than staying in that dark hole and not getting anything out of life. No longer could I blame this one or that one for causing me pain. I know that it was me that was beating myself up. I was unequipped to handle the problems of my life without the Higher Power, without the tools and material to build the better life.

I also had to get my priorities straight. I put a lot of importance on things that were not important, like what somebody else might say about me. I was afraid to change, afraid that I would change into a person that would be selfish and uncaring, but it didn't happen that way. I just found a different way to go about it. In getting my priorities straight I discovered that if a person doesn't accept me the way I am, then that doesn't matter as I am going to do the best I can, and if someone

else can't handle that, I am awfully sorry about that, but it has to be. I want everyone to approve of me, but they are just not going to do that. I am not going to please everyone. I have got to take care of myself.. I was so busy trying to please everyone else that I wasn't taking care of my own needs. At the time I was doing it, I didn't realize that I was doing it. Now I won't deliberately hurt anyone else, but I am going to take care of me too..

T.

## **"I am no longer alone!"**

I am writing this information with the hope that it will help anyone who is suffering from "depression" brought on by stress, anxiety, loneliness, physical or mental emotions, death, insecurity, etc.

I am a thirty-four year old single female, who has been suffering from depression for a long time. Most of my depression was brought on by feelings of insecurity, not being able to express my inner feelings, being controlled by a dominating parent, loneliness, stress (workaholic), anxiety attacks (related to work and everyday pressures of living), too much sleep, nervousness, lack of motivation, being tired all the time, sadness, weight gain, digestive problems, a feeling of being trapped, self-consciousness, not trusting myself, dreams of dying but yet managing to come back to life ( a little hard to understand), withdrawal from family, loss of interest in meeting with the opposite sex, etc.

It seemed that I was living in another world until one of my parents gave me a phone number to Depressed Anonymous. The Depressed Anonymous meetings plus reading the DA manual have provided me with the tools to live without being depressed. Also, most important of all, the twelve steps mentioned in the book have made me understand that God (my Higher Power) will give me strength to deal with my depression and get on with my life and be happy with myself.

The book, with its twelve steps, has taught me that I am not alone, and that I am not the only one who is suffering from depression. It has taught me to believe more in my Higher Power and to let it handle my depression.

I read the DA manual, go to counseling and attend the Depressed Anonymous meetings ( the meetings are a must, I need them to survive). The support group's members help each other by listening, talking, expressing their feelings, and give support on how to cope with depression. By

letting my Higher Power help me, I am beginning to feel free from depression. I am not so nervous and tensed up. My Christian inner faith is getting stronger, I am not so stressed out and I am beginning to get confidence within myself. I still have trouble with sleep pattern aaaaand I am getting some motivation back. I have learned how to handle anxiety, by taking deep breaths when I am nervous or troubled; this was suggested by my therapist. I also am learning how to stand up for myself!

It seems as if you are discovering a new way of living and new feelings and emotions. All these new tools have helped me and will continue to do so. They also taught me not to dwell on my past, to live life one day at a time and to look forward the future but not live there. It will take me a long time to deal with depression, but I am glad that these tools are available. Life can be good for a change! Please DON'T GIVE UP!

Anonymous