

DEPRESSION SURVIVAL GUIDE

www.EndingStigmaTogether.com

DEBBIE BRADY

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About



“Debbie Brady is passionate about helping others thrive in spite of their depression.

She has a Master’s Degree in counseling along with over 20 years of experience in the mental health field.

Debbie has struggled with depression since childhood and hopes that the tips and techniques she has learned over the years can help others to thrive, too.

She currently lives in Orlando, Florida with her husband, John, her four sons, three dogs and one cat.”

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Over the years, I have learned that there are certain activities that I can engage in to better manage my moods and better control my depression when it comes. These were always just in my head, things I knew to do that would help me.

What I recently realized, was that I have accumulated quite a large system of support and activities that aid in my journey of life with depression. Here's what I have discovered: Having a plan laid out and being fully aware of what helps or hurts you, will help you feel empowered to deal with depression when it comes around, and you will know what to do and can share with loved ones what they can do to help support you.

Everything in life is better if we are prepared. When we have a test in school, we study. If we have a presentation at work, we practice. If we get a bad virus, we rest, drink lots of fluids and see the doctor if needed. We know how to be ready. So, why should we treat depression any differently? Why not be aware of what will help us? Why not have a plan, like a study guide, so we are ready to tackle it even if we are physically and emotionally drained? By creating a survival guide for yourself, you will have the ideas, activities, and resources you need to feel stronger and more confident when the difficult days of depression return.

Now, let me be clear, many individuals will only experience one episode of depression. Chances are, in those cases, the depression is more situational and triggered from a major life event. However, if you have had more than a single depressive episode, then I would highly recommend creating your own Depression Survival Guide so when, or if, depression returns, you are ready. There is empowerment in being prepared, in knowing what to do and to understanding what you are battling.

So, I have created this guide to help you create your own Depression Survival Guide so that you can be better prepared when you need it.

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KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS

For many of us, there are certain things that may trigger our moods. It can happen so fast and so unexpectedly if you are now aware of what those things are. So, for this section, we need to look at what those triggers are, so you can be aware of them and be better prepared when confronted with them.

But first, what do I mean when I say a “trigger”? A trigger can be anything or anyone that you engage with that, in turn, changed how you are emotionally feeling at that given moment. Triggers can be subtle or “in your face” obvious. That is why preparing and being fully aware of what they are, is so important.

A few of my top triggers are the weather, reading or watching a sad story, and poor nutrition. Rainy or gray days are super hard for me and always have been. They are better now that I live in Florida and I don't ever have COLD, rainy or gray days. However, I have still learned ways to combat days like this to stay ahead of my moods.

Simple things like turning on all of the lights and staying dry and warm will help me. I also avoid reading about sad situations and maintain a healthy diet, avoiding foods with a lot of processed sugar and other products, plus eating a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables.

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KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS

Take time to write down some situations that you already know can trigger your depression. If you are thinking, "Debbie, I have no flipping idea. I just wake up depressed!" Hey, I totally get that!!!

That's why this guide is a download.

Keep it out for a while. Write things down as they happen and you feel your mood changing. Try to be a little more aware of how you feel every day for 1-2 weeks.

Keep a small notebook in your care or by you at home and write down your mood when you first wake up, around lunchtime, and then again before bed. If you aren't in a good mood or can't say you are feeling good, jot it down and reflect on what is going on around you and what may be triggering your negative feelings.

You can use the form provided to track your moods for three weeks and keep track of any possible triggers that you come across during that time period. Why three weeks? Well, experts say it takes 21 days to create a habit (and 90 days to make a lasting behavior change).

Tracking your moods and the internal or external triggers that affect your mood, will help create a habit for you to become more aware of what affects you and help you become more aware of how to support yourself. Now, I feel it is important to track both the situations that trigger depression and to track the situations that trigger upbeat moods and feelings of happiness.

Also, first take a few minutes to create a list of triggers you are already aware of before tracking your moods. The more you know and understand on what can send you from feeling happy at a level 10 to depressed at a level 10, the more control you will feel over your life. **So, let's get started.**

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KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS

What activities or situations are you already aware of that trigger your depression? Write them here. Once you have some of your known triggers listed, you can be aware of them while tracking your moods over the 3-week time period






- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

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MONTHLY MOOD TRACKER

Add dates and then either record numbers or color the box daily to track.

					
Give each face a number or color					
					

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FIND YOUR TRIBE

You may be blessed and truly have a large, supportive group of friends and family who are there no matter what is going on in your life. If you do, then that is awesome. For many of us - especially those of us who have been dealing with depression off and on for years - our tribe may be smaller. Whatever the size of your support system, the important part is to know who they are and how to contact them. Make your list below and put their contact information next to their names.

I only put down 5 spots, but you may have more. I like to have the top 5 listed that I know will make the time if I really need the support.

NAME	CELLPHONE EMAIL
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1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

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FIND YOUR TRIBE

In this section, list any support groups you may have or be able to reach out to. I have found many great groups online through Facebook. There are also inspiring Instagram and Twitter feeds that can oddly be very inspiring and supportive. Blogs and YouTube channels can also be helpful in lifting your mood if your real, in person, supports are unavailable. In this day and age of technology, it is just a matter of making sure that these are positive and uplifting places to visit. Below, list some of the groups and pages that you find most helpful.

NAME	CELLPHONE	EMAIL	PAGE	WEBSITE
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1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

PLAN YOUR DAY AND WEEK

Every Sunday evening, I sit down and look at my schedule for the week ahead. By knowing what I have coming up, I am better able to keep my emotions in check. Also, I make sure I don't have too many appointments or activities going on, so I am able to recoup and rest.

Another thing I have learned over the years, is that my mind and body need time to decompress and recharge. Making sure you leave time for that is important.

I also take this time to do a "Brain Dump". A brain dump is basically writing down EVERYTHING you need to get done or want to get done, over the upcoming week in addition to the appointments or other items that must be done on a specific day. By taking 30 minutes or less each Sunday, you will be able to organize your thoughts and your week.

Before going to bed each night, relook at your datebook and see what you have planned for the next day. Then, think about what else you need or want to accomplish that next day. In order to not become too overwhelmed, write down the 6 most important things you need to do the following day. These are the items that must be completed and are a priority. As you complete each one, cross it off to have a sense of accomplishment. Knowing what you have to do will help you on days when your mind is struggling.

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PLAN YOUR DAY AND WEEK

My SIX Most Important Things.

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PLAN YOUR DAY AND WEEK

Items to complete if there's time and energy:

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SELF CARE IDEAS

We all need to do better with taking care of ourselves. In this section, you will write various ideas and activities that help you feel better, lift your mood, and help you to remember to take care of yourself. Some of my favorite self-care ideas are getting a pedicure, taking a hot shower and putting on my pajamas early, get a massage, or make a healthy meal or snack.

I also exercise almost daily. For me, exercise is the most important self-care idea. So, if you can't think of any that help you, write a list of ideas to try at home. Remember to include ideas to help your mind, body and soul. Try to have at least 2 ideas for each, so they are available when you need ideas.

MIND

BODY

SOUL

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FOOD AND NUTRITION

What we eat can affect not only our physical health, but also our mental health. It can be hard when we are depressed to stay away from the snack foods. In this section, prepare a list of healthy snacks to always have on hand, such as nuts, dried fruit, cut up veggies and hummus. Whatever healthy snacks you enjoy. You can also create a file of healthy and easy recipes. I like to keep my recipes on Pinterest. For me, eating a plant-based diet helps me most.

You can find my Plant Based Recipe board [HERE](#). Let's be clear; I do not like to cook, so easy is the name of the game for me. I'm also more of a snacker / small meal eater. It helps me regulate my mind and body better than eating 3 full meals a day. So, take some time, write down snacks and food that will help you maintain your good mental health.

Also, make your list of foods to avoid in this section. We are often tempted to eat the wrong foods when we are feeling bad. Keep this list handy too, as a reminder to stay away from them.

FOODS THAT SUPPORT

FOODS TO AVOID

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SIMPLIFY, SIMPLIFY, SIMPLIFY

The less clutter and stuff you have, the better your moods will be. This is something that was not easy for me, but after starting to read articles on it and watching some documentaries on minimalism, I decided to really focus on simplifying. So, take a look around. Start cleaning out using the three-pile process of Keep, Donate, or Trash. Go through each area of your home and check it off when you are finished. Also, use this section to brainstorm some other areas in your life you might be able to simplify.

We no longer have cable. We also sold our house and now live in a condo. It was the best decision for me and my mental health. So, start slowly, but start. You will be amazed at how much lighter you will feel.



RESEARCH AND EXPLORE

We have to be our best advocates and researchers. Psychiatrists and therapists are amazing. However, they serve many people and can't always explore all that is possibly out there. So, ask, search, and read. Of course, before trying anything, you should always consult with your doctor or mental health professional.

Keep a list of ideas, techniques, or other interesting ways you find that could help your depression and maintain good mental health. Keep a list as you come across ideas you want to discuss with your mental health professional, family, or simply want to give a try.

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PERSONAL NOTES

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Connect with Debbie Brady and tell her your story, share with others who have walked a similar road. Inspire others and grow with our tribe. Giving us a place for help that moves at the speed of the internet. Helping yourself and others.

Web: www.EndingStigmaTogether.com

Facebook: www.FB.com/EndingStigmaTogether

Twitter: www.Twitter.com/EndingStigmaNow

Instagram: www.Instagram.com/Ending_Stigma_Together

