

NAVIGATING DEPRESSION: A CLINICAL LOOK

WorkBook #3

By Carl Binger LMHC

INTRODUCTION

What is your name and why is it that you are interested in topic of depression?

What are some stigmas that you know of, or can think of, regarding people who struggle with depression? How can these stigmas potentially prevent these individuals from getting help they need?

What are some questions you have regarding depression? Is there a growing problem or concern that you would like to be addressed by health care professionals or the community as a whole?

IDENTIFYING DEPRESSION

What is Depression?

A clinical condition that is generally focused on one's mental health although many factors can contribute to it.

What are the causes?

- Genetic predisposition
- Vitamin Deficiency
- Change in Season (SAD)
- Traumatic Circumstance
- Physical Injuries
- Postpartum
- Thyroid
- Chemical Imbalance
- Diet ("You are what you eat" or "Your stomach is your second brain")
- Drug or substance induced

What are the Symptoms?

Circle the symptoms that you have been having everyday for the past two weeks:

Mood: anxiety, apathy, general discontent, guilt, hopelessness, loss of interest or pleasure in activities, mood swings, or sadness

Behavioral: agitation, excessive crying, irritability, restlessness, or social isolation

Sleep: early awakening, excess sleepiness, insomnia, or restless sleep

Whole body: excessive hunger, fatigue, or loss of appetite

Cognitive: lack of concentration, slowness in activity, or thoughts of suicide

Weight: weight gain or weight loss

Also common: poor appetite or repeatedly going over thoughts

TREATMENT OPTIONS

PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN



When you go to your doctor you can talk to them about how you are feeling and what life has been like for you regarding depression. The doctor may recommend you see a therapist, but before doing so, they may recommend you get a physical, or get blood work done. A physical could result in the doctor finding a physical cause to your mental illness. Getting blood work could determine a number of things, for example, a medication that may be more fitting for an individual. Blood work could also help to rule out other conditions such as a thyroid condition or a vitamin deficiency.

What has been your experience with depression and seeing your PCP?

COUNSELOR/THERAPIST- TALK THERAPY



A therapist can help you talk through some of your goals for therapy, past trauma, what has or hasn't worked for you, and help hold you accountable to your treatment plan. The length of therapy could range from a couple of weeks, to a couple of months. I typically try to see an individual for 3 to 6 months on a 1 time per week to biweekly basis. As an individual's condition improves, I then encourage 1x per month appointments, until the individual feels ready to leave treatment.

What has been your experience with depression and seeing a Counselor?

MEDICATION



A combination of medication and therapy have been show to reduce depression symptoms significantly. I have been on the same 2 medications for about 12 years and they have been immensely helpful for my mental well being. While medications may not be for everyone, they could be worth trying. Medications could be a short/long term solution for some . If medications are not helpful, these other methods may be more useful.

What has been your experience with depression and being on medication?

ACUPUNCTURE



This may not work for everyone but it is certainly worth trying. I recall several years back going for 4 to 5 acupuncture treatments for sleep. Shortly after the treatments I recall sleeping the best two weeks in my entire life. When you go for acupuncture treatment, tell the acupuncturist what you struggle with and they will adjust the treatment to your needs accordingly.

What has been your experience with depression and trying acupuncture?

SUN LAMP



A sun lamp, also called a SAD lamp, or a light therapy box, is a special light that mimics natural outdoor light. SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) is a type of depression that occurs during the fall and winter when there are fewer hours of sunlight. The light from a sun lamp is believed to have a positive impact on serotonin and melatonin. For light therapy to be effective, your eyes need to perceive a brightness of about 10,000 lux – the brightness of a standard day.

What has been your experience with depression and using a sunlamp?

CHIROPRACTOR



I never thought going to a chiropractor could be helpful toward alleviating depression until I met a man who told me how much getting adjustments eventually eliminated his depression completely.

What has been your experience with depression and seeing a chiropractor?

MY TIME IN THE DARK

I would like to briefly share my experience with depression:

I have been on 2 medications for depression since late 2007.

Depression hit me through 2006 to 2008.

The causes could have ranged from predisposition/genetics, diet, the stress and pressure of academics, and/or chemical imbalances.

Many things happened during that dark time but 6 things stood out:

1. When I had a panic attack
2. When I couldn't sleep- I would wake up every 5 to 10 minutes after sleeping just 20 minutes.
3. When I had a weird dream
4. When I broke down crying in front of my male coworkers- I wasn't ashamed to hold it in anymore, in fact, I couldn't
5. When I didn't want to see the face of children any longer
6. When I wanted to take my life. - this was the final straw before going on medication.

SOLO OR GROUP ACTIVITY

What about you? What was your experience, or someone else you know experience with depression like?

What was the MOST encouraging thing someone suggested you do?

What was the LEAST encouraging thing someone suggested you do?

What are, or were you, most thankful for? What could you have been thankful for?

What are some ways employees, schools, churches, counselors can be more proactive in helping those with depression?

What are some ways a person dealing with depression can be more proactive in seeking help?

WHAT COUNSELING COULD BE

The Therapist offering practical tips:

- Encouraging you to keep track of what you are thankful for
- Journaling
- Exercising
- Adjust your diet
- Reading books and articles on depression or others experiences with it
- Going to get a check up
- Serving others to take attention off self and depression
- Not isolating
- Exploring goals for treatment
- Exploring support network
- Creating safety plan
- Exploring past, present, future enjoyments
- Exploring strengths and weaknesses
- Encouraging you to visit PCP
- Avoiding drug use

With your written consent, the Therapist could be collaborating with family, friend, or doctor to help you more extensively.

The Therapist may complete assessments to gain further insight into your struggle with depression.

The Therapist may offer clinical exercises or homework: Some examples of these later on.

What are Cognitive Behavioral Techniques or CBT?

Essentially CBT is utilizing techniques or methods regarding your thoughts and behaviors to change your feelings for the better.

Some helpful CBT exercise to consider when dealing with negative thoughts, feelings, or circumstance:

- Treating thoughts as guesses and not facts

Try thinking of a negative/dominating thought in your life, or a friend life, and try this exercise in the space below:

- Asking yourself what would you tell a friend if he/she were having similar thoughts and feelings or was in a similar situation as yours.

Try thinking of a negative/dominating thought in your life, or a friend life, and try this exercise in the space below:

- Reflecting on if your dominating negative thoughts are true and helpful. If the answer is no, then try reflecting only on thoughts that are both true and helpful.

Try thinking of a negative/dominating thought in your life, or a friend life, and try this exercise in the space below:

DIET

What does your current diet consist of?

[Think of what you most commonly eat or drink for breakfast, lunch, dinner, or snack]

What are some healthy items that you can add to your diet?

[Examples: fruits and vegetables]

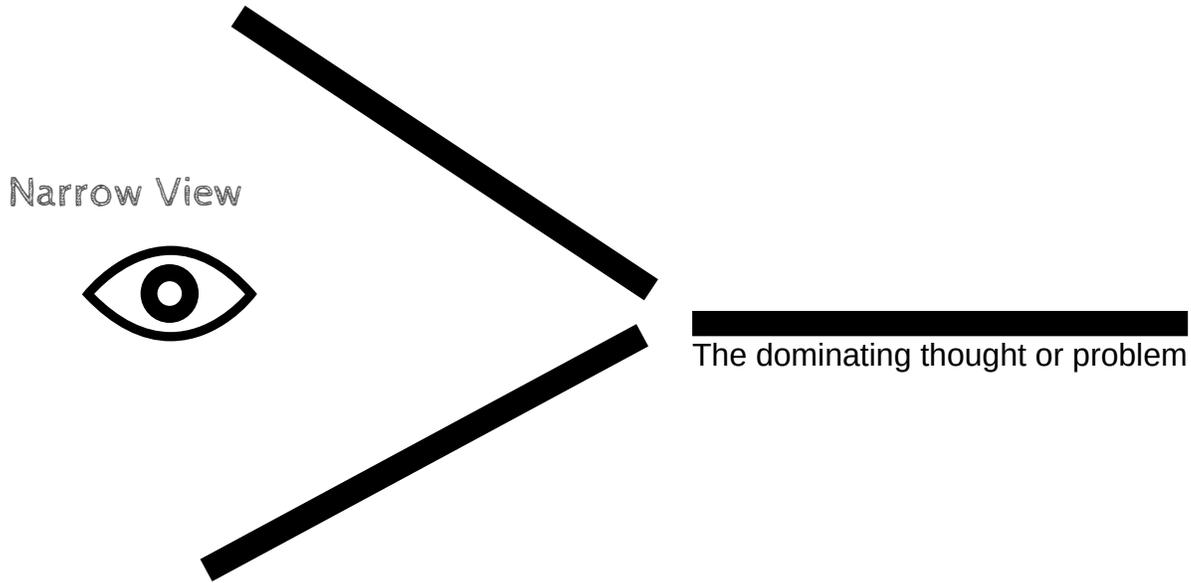
What are some unhealthy items that you can remove from your diet?

[Example: sugars and fastfood}

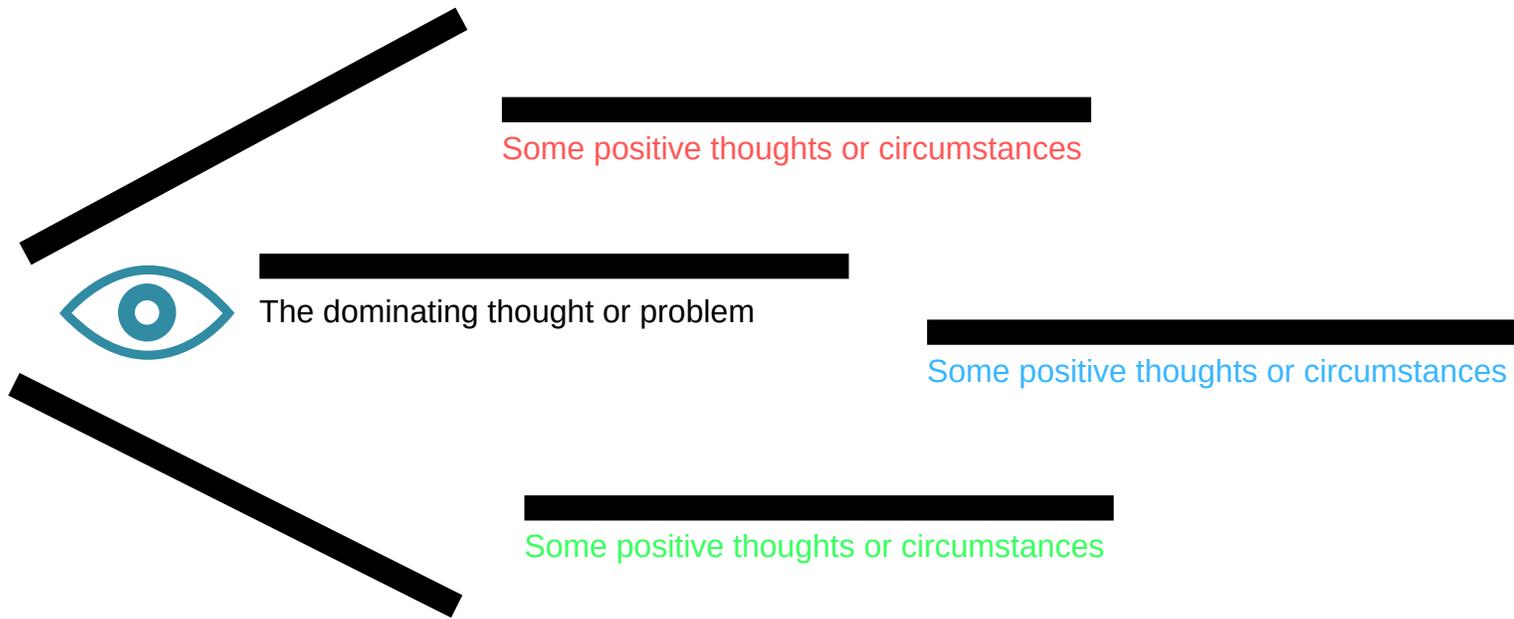
Are you over eating, not eating enough, eating out too much?

VISUAL CBT EXERCISE # 1

Narrow vs wide view when it comes to depression



Wide and Positive View of your depression



SETTING SOME GOALS

On a Scale of 1 to 10, 1 being awful and 10 being fantastic, during an average week how do you feel? At what time of day, or which days of the week, have you felt this the most?

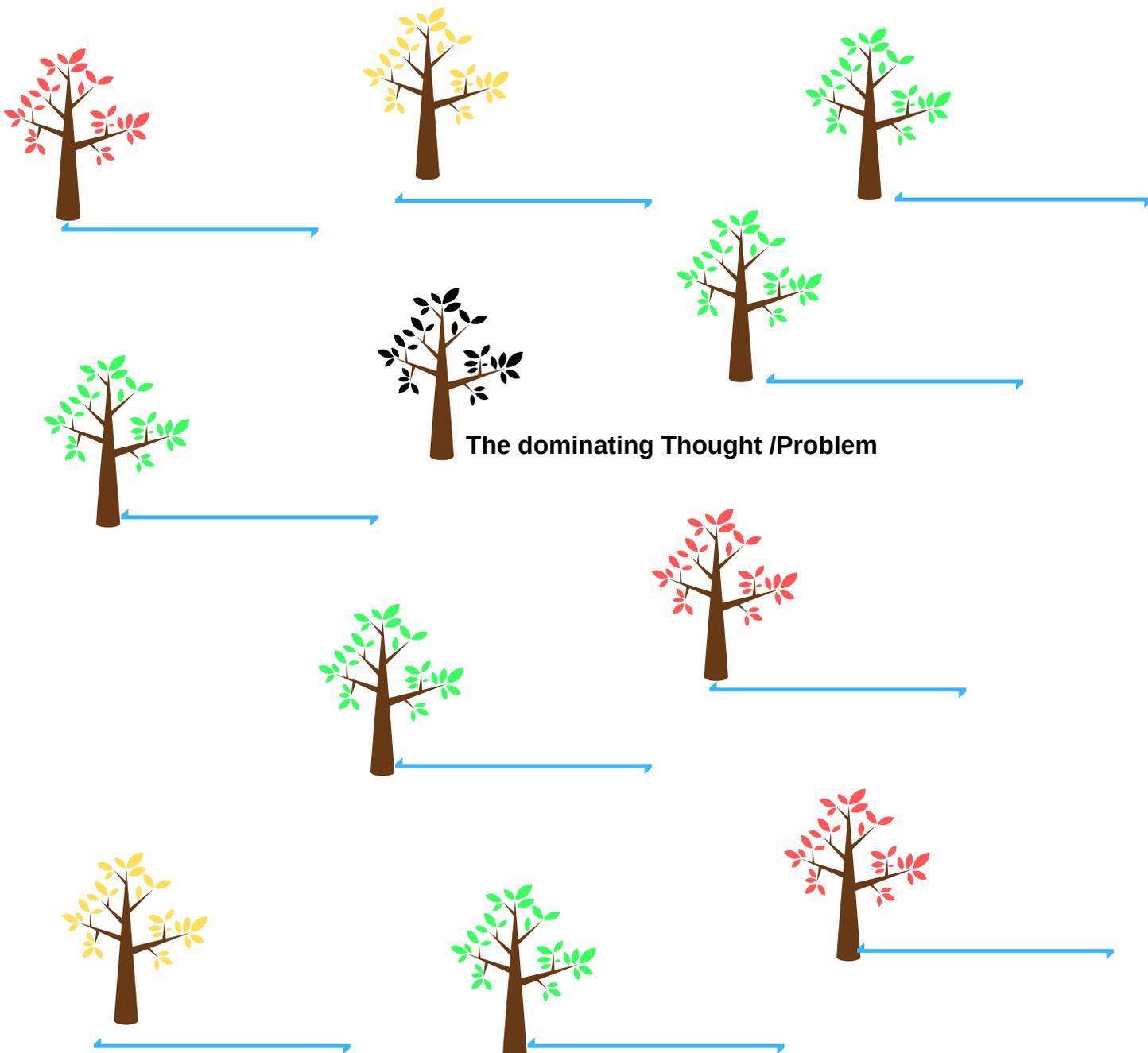
What three things would need to happen in order for you to feel better in the next three to 6 months?

Who is in your support network?

VISUAL CBT EXERCISES # 2

TREE FOR THE FOREST

Your life and your situations are filled with many trees. There may be one or more negative dominating thought(s) that represent a tree(s) in your life and mind. What are some positive thoughts and situations that you can think of that can represent the other trees in the forest of your life and thoughts?



EXERCISING AND SLEEP

What changes can you make in the area of exercising?
Increased exercise can decrease DEPRESSIVE symptoms.

How many hours are you sleeping through the night? What is your sleep routine like? Could it improve in any way?

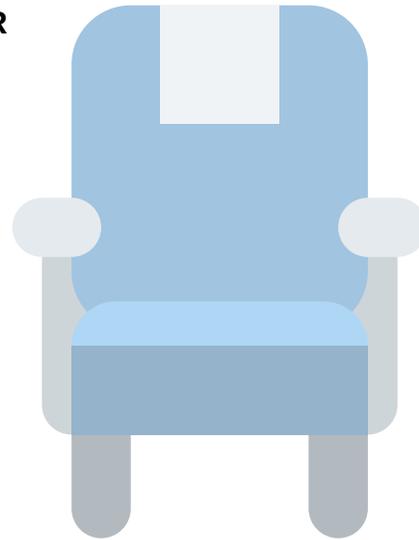
What are some things that you think negatively impact someone's sleep? What are some positive things that can impact sleep?

VISUAL CBT EXERCISES # 3

COURTROOM EXERCISE

So think about your dominating negative thought/problem for a minute. Now, pretend you are in a courtroom and your dominating thought or problem is on the stand as a witness and you are a prosecutor or a defense attorney cross examining the dominating thought or problem. List all the evidence or thoughts against your negative/dominating thoughts on the lines below. Over time see how much evidence you can build against the negative thought and see if it changes your behaviors and feelings regarding this.

THE DOMINATING THOUGHT OR
PROBLEM



Challenge the thoughts here with evidence against the thought :

○ ————— ○

○ ————— ○

○ ————— ○

○ ————— ○

○ ————— ○



ADDITIONAL TIPS



Sleep certainly varies from person to person, but adults should be getting between 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night. If you are oversleeping, or under sleeping, this could be contributing to your depression. Try getting into a sleep routine that consists of the use of very calming things such as: listening to calming music, doing yoga, getting a message, or taking a relaxing bath. Try limiting light, television, and other electronics before bed. Try going to bed at the same time every night and consider taking melatonin to help you sleep. Always ask a doctor before trying any over the counter medications for sleep.



Your support network can be family, friends, spouse, pastor, counselor, coach, etc.



Abstain from illegal and legal drug use

Some drugs can worsen the symptoms of depression. While you are getting help for depression, it is wise to stay away from drugs. You may be tempted to escape depression by using drugs but it will hurt you in the long run creating the vicious cycle. Abstaining from drugs gives you one less thing you have to worry about contributing to depression and gets you one step closer to healing.



Understanding your gifts can help you better utilize them as tool to fight against depression. For example, if you love art, or are an artist, engaging in this activity could potentially ease your mind of the depression.



Keep in mind that depression can be the symptom of many things, for example, it could be a spiritual or physical cause. There could be a chemical imbalance, past trauma, issues with diet, thyroid, vitamin deficiencies, postpartum depression, genetic causes, and circumstantial depression, to name a few causes. There could be one, or multiple reasons why you are depressed right now.



I know when I was going through depression not many things helped me, however, I did find a couple of things useful:

1. Journaling my mood and the times I wasn't depressed and being grateful for this.
2. Each day, making a short or long list of what I was grateful for in general or hour by hour.
3. Helping others who were depressed or in any other type of need. This sometimes helped me focus my thoughts and emotions on someone, or something, else who needed help as opposed to my own inward turmoil.



Start an exercise regiment

Get a friend and hit up the gym on a consistent basis. There is an abundance of research out that shows that walking 20 to 30 minutes per day can help in improving the symptoms of depression.



What can you add or subtract from your diet? A lot of what we eat today is, quite frankly, trash. We consume a ton of sugars and foods that have many chemicals and harmful substances in them. I am sure you have heard the saying "you are what you eat" and "your stomach is your second brain". These statements hold a certain measure of truth to them for sure. I recently went on a diet with my wife and it worked some small wonders for me. Although I have rarely been depressed in the 12 years that I have been on medications, after finishing the 30-day diet, I noticed that over all, I felt, thought, and slept slightly better. On top of this, I lost 12.5 lbs. All this to say, your depression could be caused by your diet, and/or, a combination of something else. It doesn't hurt to look into all these things because again, we want to rule out as much as possible, and get to the root of what is causing your depression.

CONCLUSION

**I truly hope this work book was helpful. Please visit my website for more content:
www.luminancemhc.com**

About Me:

Carl is happily married and has two sons that he loves dearly. He started his own private practice helping individuals who struggle with depression on February 14th 2019. Back in 2006, Carl battled depression for two years before getting help in the form of medications. Since then, Carl has made it his mission to help those who struggle alone, bring awareness to the perils of depression, and break the stigma associated with having depression. Carl has been counseling since 2014 and plans to someday run a full scale practice to help the those who suffer with depression.