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Depression Teens Help

*Escape from
Teenage Depression*

Denny Dew

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"The measure of a civilization is how much absence of fear and how much freedom children enjoy." (Denny Dew)

"Every child has a god in him. Our attempts to mould the child will turn the god into a devil." (A. S. Neill)

"You don't have to prove that you are good enough to be loved." (Beyond Fear, Dorothy Rowe)

"Everyone going through such an experience [depression] needs comfort and support, just as we all need comfort and support when someone we love dies, but it demeans us and denies our experience when our ordinary experience is categorized as a mental disorder." (Beyond Fear, Dorothy Rowe)

"We regard the medical model as an extremely inappropriate model for dealing with psychological disturbances. The model that makes more sense is a growth model or a developmental model. In other words we see people as having a potential for growth and development and that can be released under the right psychological climate. We don't see them as sick and needing a diagnosis, a prescription and a cure; and that is a very fundamental difference with a good many implications." (Carl Rogers)

"Depression is a prison where you are both the suffering prisoner and the cruel jailer" (Dorothy Rowe)

"Happiness is a feeling of complete and unconditional self-acceptance that we can nourish and make grow." (Denny Dew)

"No society deserves to be called human when it can't comfort its members in distress." (Denny Dew)

"Whenever I despair, I remember that the way of truth and love has always won." (Gandhi)

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Escape from depression

Giving depressed teens a future

Teens are the future of mankind

This sounds obvious. How can I begin to talk about teenage depression, a serious problem, by stating such a platitude? Simply because it looks like this obvious truth has been almost forgotten.

Let's add something even more obvious: a species that fails to give a future to its teens is an endangered species.

While we care about disappearing species of animals all around the world, we fail to see that the most endangered species in the world is us.

One in eight teens is depressed. The third leading cause of the death of teens is now suicide. Children taking psychotropic drugs are counted in the millions.

How is it that a species is forgetting its survival instinct? How is it that a species is risking its survival? How does this happen when this same species eliminated all its natural predators and is safer than ever before?

To answer these questions we need to remind ourselves that we are a special species. We think, we feel, and we can get scared by our own thoughts and feelings. And fear makes us do horrible things.

The future is built on trust

What do I mean when I say that we are failing to give our teens a future?

I guess that you are thinking about forcing your reluctant teen to study as much as possible, using punishments and rewards to achieve the goal.

What does she have to study? Something that gives her the best chances to find a job, obviously.

Is this enough? No it isn't. She has to learn to fit perfectly into society. She has to learn the rules and conform to them as strictly as possible. Just to be sure, she will be punished for not following the rules when she can't even understand them. It's better to begin early.

She will be criticized and scolded every time she tries to imagine something different from the perfect way of life that ensures that she won't ever make any mistakes.

She will be built as we build a house. A good and tested project and the best raw materials.

It sounds good, doesn't it?

Unfortunately this is how we destroy our teens' future.

We build it if we give them trust.

Modern society fails to give trust

Throughout human history it has always happened that some people sought to manipulate other people for their own interests and purposes.

The manipulators have used force and altered or hidden truths to exploit the manipulated. Their first concern wasn't to trust people. At least trust was partial and conditional.

In modern society manipulation is systemic, pervasive and it's given much importance.

Someone thinks that we achieved a goal, the perfect design of an education intended to create people who seamlessly fit into the production-and-consumption machine.

The production-and-consumption machine gives us a lot of benefits, and to educate people to fit into such a machine there is no need for trust, we have just to follow some standard procedures.

"There is no need of faith in the robot, since there is no life in it either." (Erich Fromm, The Art of Loving)

To think that we can do without trust looks comforting because to trust is risky and scary.

Nevertheless, by denying trust we destroy the future of our children.

Teens need trust and respect

How can we trust a teen with his choices? He knows nothing of life!

But, how can he learn about life if he can't make his choices and his mistakes? Life is all about mistakes. If mankind had been afraid of mistakes we would still be in the Stone Age.

Maybe, but what will people say if we fail to make a good citizen of him?

What if future generations regard with horror what we call 'a good citizen' today? And what if our 'good citizen' conforms so well to society's wishes that he hasn't the imagination and the force needed to solve mankind's problems?

We don't need this sort of well-adjusted 'good citizen', we need people who are really determined to think freely and bravely.

We, humans, aren't just driven by instincts. If we were, the human race would have become extinct long ago.

The strength of humans relies on the infinite possibilities of their minds. How do we respect this unlimited potential? How do we respect this potential in teens? How do we unlock it?

Let's face it. There is no way other than a process of trial and error. We can't learn to ride a bike if we are afraid of falling off. We can't learn to choose if we are afraid of making the wrong choice.

We can't learn to live if our mistakes are punished instead of welcomed as learning events.

We can't learn to overcome fear if we are afraid of fear. We can't learn anything if we are full of fear and don't want to face it.

To respect teens we need to respect the infinite possibilities of their minds and to trust them with learning the art of living by making their own choices and mistakes.

"I can't trust you." This is how we destroy our children's future.

Lack of respect is what causes depression

The infinite possibilities of our mind are what make mankind survive and prosper.

One of the ways the future of mankind is jeopardized is by denying these possibilities.

This is done by telling teens that they are bad and that they have to work hard to become good. Good means obedient and compliant. To become good a teen has to get rid of the infinite possibilities of his mind and please those who want to control and have power over him.

Teens can resort to a solution to this threat to their survival using a strategy that is as old as man is. They can disobey.

"Disobedience, then, in the sense in which we use it here, is an act of the affirmation of reason and will. It is not primarily an attitude directed against something, but for something: for man's capacity to see, to say what he sees, and to refuse to say what he does not see." (On Disobedience, Erich Fromm)

That, now, a disobedient child can be diagnosed with ODD, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, and given some drugs, is a clear sign that our future is in danger.

If teens can't disobey and see trust denied to them, they get so scared that they may resort to the use of a desperate defence. They lock themselves in a mental jail called depression.

Plan for an escape

Escape from that mental jail called depression is possible.

Basically, a depressed teen has to rebuild the trust in himself and the respect that have been destroyed, compelling him to resort to the desperate defence of depression.

He may have a hard time doing this if everyone around him hasn't a clue about what it means to give trust and respect. Many people don't trust and respect themselves, so they can't trust and respect teens.

It happens frequently that, with the best intentions, we actually soak up teens' trust in themselves creating the conditions for the development of depression.

Modern man is a robot and finds it particularly difficult to trust himself or his children. He has put aside his ability to dream and to imagine and doesn't want to think about where we are going as a species. He is basically depressed himself.

This doesn't mean that there is no hope and no help. The world is full of people who rebuilt their trust in themselves despite all the efforts others made to keep them helpless and dependent.

Cries for help

The first chapter of this book is about how we can come to understand that a teen is locking herself up in the mental prison called depression.

I call them cries for help when they are commonly called symptoms.

To treat depression as an illness and to use the medical model for it isolates us from the depressed teen's pain but, at the same time, it's like saying that we don't want to know anything about it and leave doctors and drugs to deal with a problem that the whole of society should be dealing with.

Carl Rogers expresses this point of view clearly:

"We regard the medical model as an extremely inappropriate model for dealing with psychological disturbances. The model that makes more sense is a growth model or a developmental model. In other words we see people as having a potential for growth and development and that can be released under the right psychological climate. We don't see them as sick and needing a diagnosis, a prescription and a cure; and that is a very fundamental difference with a good many implications."

If the cries for help of a depressed teen are answered only by making diagnoses and giving drugs, their depression is only half solved and, with depression, half a solution is no solution at all.

Drugs can be useful in extreme cases, but they won't build trust or give meaning to teens' lives.

What creates the jail

We will explore the power of beliefs.

Beliefs are very powerful. They can even kill. A person found himself locked in a cold storage. He believed that he could not survive the low temperature and died. It was ascertained that the temperature wasn't low enough to kill him. His belief killed him.

We will analyze the beliefs that push a teen into the prison of depression. We will understand how these beliefs create suffering and damage the teen's self-confidence.

How do teens get to believe these beliefs? What are the social forces that fuel these beliefs?

Myths about depression

We can't deal with the problem of depression in teens without joining the debate on some common ideas many people hold about depression.

Depression is said to be:

- a genetic problem
- caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain
- a lifelong illness
- passed down through families

These ideas have to be scrutinized deeply because they look too much like attempts to avoid dealing with the problem.

To say to a distressed person that:

- she has bad genes
- she has a chemical imbalance in her brain
- there is no solution, it's a lifelong illness
- she inherited it

is to refuse to acknowledge:

- her distress
- that something horrible and scary happened to her
- that the whole community should care about her instead of denying, avoiding and ignoring the problem out of fear

A common human response to distress is to distance ourselves from it. It may overwhelm us so we don't want to have anything to do with it.

That this sort of response is common doesn't mean that it's in human nature to ignore other people's distress. This is an excuse.

Human nature is such that we are strong enough to comfort people in distress precisely as we are strong enough to face any adversity. If this wasn't so, we would have been extinct long ago.

The fact that, now, we need specialists to help people in distress is a bad sign. We are manipulated to be as selfish as possible, but this is not serving us well.

How to escape the jail

How do we help a depressed teen to escape the prison of depression?

He locked himself in it because he lost all his self-confidence and trust in himself. He has been building his jail through the years by nourishing negative beliefs about himself.

He needs to regain his self-confidence and to demolish the beliefs of which the walls of his prison are made.

Non-violent environment

Any escape from the jail of depression needs, to be successful, an environment where any sort of psychological violence is absent.

No escape can occur if there is any:

- blame
- criticism
- punishment
- reward
- manipulation
- emotional blackmail
- judgment

These are all forms of psychological violence. They prevent every escape from depression.

It is very good if every person involved in the education of a depressed teen comes to realize that there is no such a thing as psychological or physical violence that does some good.

If this doesn't happen, and everyone in the teen's environment keeps believing in violence, there is still hope.

The escape is still possible if a depressed teen finds someone who:

- believes in her

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- is willing to ask the depressed teen for forgiveness, on behalf of the whole of society, for the violence she has been victim of
- doesn't believe in violence
- is willing to acknowledge the teen's distress and to comfort the distressed teen, avoiding every judgment
- believes in trust as the foundation of our future

The archetype of the Great Mother

We will see how a specific attitude is needed for a successful escape from depression. This attitude has its roots in an archetype.

An archetype is a psychological force that is common to every human culture in the world. Each culture expresses it differently, but, scratching the surface, we find the same phenomenon.

Many therapies

We will talk about many therapies that are useful to help our depressed teen with her escape.

They are:

- Beliefs Restructuring Programmes
- CBT, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
- DBT, Dialectical Behaviour Therapy
- Art therapy
- EFT, Emotional Freedom Techniques
- IPT, Interpersonal Therapy

What we need to know to escape depression

Depression has a few chief aspects that we need to know about in order for us to understand it and to plan our escape from it.

Depression hurts

Depression hurts as only those who experienced it can know. Those who never experienced depression can't imagine how much it hurts. There are no other human experiences you can compare depression to if you want to explain what it is like.

Depression is not like a broken leg. Depression is not like a disability. It's not like unhappiness. It's not like a broken heart. It's not like the death of a loved one. Depression is not like a chronic illness. It's not like the work of your life going up in smoke in a few minutes.

It's much worse. It's more like you stopping being a person and becoming an object, but this means nothing. You can only experience it to understand it. No scene of death and horror is strong enough to give a clue to what a depressed person's pain might be like. It's a completely different kind of pain from those that can be commonly experienced.

This is because there is pain, and there is pain multiplied a thousandfold by the certitude that there is no way you can cope with it.

Depression is a prison

This is why depression is a prison. You feel that there is no way you can get out of it. "Get a life!" doesn't work. Have a walk doesn't work. Get drunk doesn't work. Become a porn addict doesn't work. Make friends doesn't work. Eat chocolate doesn't work. Watch a funny film doesn't work. Have sex doesn't work. Listen to your favourite music doesn't work.

All these things can work if you are unhappy or sad, not if you are depressed.

Depression is a defence

Depression is an extreme defence we adopt when:

- our self-confidence is very low
- a catastrophe happens in our life

The catastrophe that triggers depression is not necessarily an external event like the death of a loved one, a failure or bad grades. It can be something internal and private that you aren't even allowed to talk about because you would only get criticism and judgments as a reply.

The catastrophe, either an external or an internal one, is judged as such subjectively. What is a catastrophe for me may be not so for someone else at all. This is a very important point.

What is most hurtful for a depressed person is banalizing the catastrophe that has happened to her.

It's very hurtful to say that the depressed person shouldn't be such because she has everything and nothing bad happened to her. If we can't understand, it's better to say nothing.

Depression is a skill

Depression is a skill we learn as we learn to read and write. We learn thinking patterns and beliefs about ourselves and reality that weaken our self-confidence and make us suffer. We also learn to resort to depression as a defence when our low self-confidence makes bad events in life look too hard to deal with.

Let me stress again that what makes an event bad is a subjective judgment, not an objective one. This bad event can be external or internal. What makes it too hard to deal with is lack of self-confidence.

Depression is caused by beliefs

You can believe that the Earth is flat and this won't cause any suffering to you. There are beliefs that will do this, however.

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When you see life as scary and hard, you can begin to believe that you will certainly get protection and help from a source. This belief is a form of defence against the unpredictability of life.

Defences are not bad things you shouldn't engage in. They are indispensable when you lack the self-confidence to acknowledge your fears head-on.

Defences prevent you from suffering greater damage.

Eventually a defence based on a false belief has to be relinquished and its associated fear faced because it makes us suffer to believe something that we know to be false.

The belief that we will certainly get help from someone or something is a belief that, while useful as a defence, makes us suffer in the long run because it's false.

The material of which the walls of the prison of depression are made is the belief that you are bad.

A child may develop the belief that he is bad as a defence against threatening events or simply because he is taught that he is bad.

If we believe that we are bad, we suffer. It's unavoidable. This suffering may become depression.

Are we bad or good? Which is true? This is the wrong question. The belief that people are bad hasn't been created to ascertain the truth, but to have power over people. If you strongly believe that you are bad, it will be much easier to control you and enjoy power over you.

Those who make you believe that you are bad are inflicting on you needless violence. They are doing something immoral.

They will rationalize. Rationalizations are another form of defence.

They will say:

- that you will forget when you grow up
- that it's for your own good
- that you aren't really human until you come of age
- that it's true that you are bad

What is true is that:

- they like to be violent
- violence against others gives relief to their own pain
- they like to control, have power, dominate, and if they can't do this to other adults, they will do it to children

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Happily, violence is not the only way to give relief to our pain.

By the way, are children good or bad?

A.S. Neill, the founder of the Summerhill School, believed that children are good and that we make them bad.

He said:

“Every child has a god in him. Our attempts to mould the child will turn the god into a devil. Children come to my school, little devils, hating the world, destructive, unmannerly, lying, thieving, bad tempered. In six months they are happy, healthy children who do no evil. And I am no genius, I am merely a man who refuses to guide the steps of children. I let them form their own values and the values are invariably good and social.”

Two characteristics of depression

Two important characteristics of depression can be deduced from the metaphor of depression as a jail.

In a jail you are alone, in particular if you are in an isolation cell. You feel terribly alone. A sense of being alone despite having a lot of people around you, is what makes depression so hard to bear.

Another feeling that is typical of depression is the sense of disconnection.

We disconnect from ourselves if we blame ourselves for a mistake we made. It's typical of depressed people to blame themselves, even for events they didn't cause in any way.

Many depressed people do even more. They blame themselves for events that they absolutely couldn't provoke even if they wanted to.

If something completely unexpected and inexplicable happens, they can blame themselves because to believe themselves to be the cause of that event is better than to know nothing.

The problem with blame is that it disconnects us from ourselves. If we do this a lot, we may get depressed.

Depression is a message

Depression wants to tell us that:

- Without trusting ourselves, we have no future.
- We can't trust ourselves if we believe that we are bad.
- It's better if we begin to respect ourselves and drop hurtful beliefs even if this means upsetting who wants to control and have power over us.

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- To know ourselves is how we make friends with ourselves and that this is what we need to do.
- To deny our needs, dreams and interests and become what others want us to be hurts terribly and is violence against ourselves.
- To conform to someone else's expectations is far from going to make us happy.

If we learn what depression wants to teach us, it won't return.

Cries for help

Help to escape the jail

When we are depressed, it's as if we are in jail. We are disconnected from ourselves and others. We are lonely, terribly lonely. It hurts so much.

We cry for help. We don't just say: "I have a problem, I need help," because we feel that we won't get help or that we don't deserve it or that we won't be understood.

But our cries for help are there, and, please, don't call them symptoms.

Cries for help, not symptoms

I'm going to explain why I prefer to talk about cries for help instead of symptoms.

I'm going to question the attitude we have towards the symptoms of teenage depression and depression in general.

We have many organs. All of them have to work well for us to be in good health. We are machines, and like machines we need maintenance.

Right?

Wrong.

It may be true that some of organs, such as our livers, need to function like a machine, but it is not the case with our brain.

Our brain is not a machine, simply because we are not machines.

Let's talk again about our liver. If we observe symptoms in our liver, then we have a doctor make a diagnosis, we have him give us treatment, and, all going well, we get well again. With depression, we observe some symptoms, we have a doctor make a diagnosis, and we have him give us treatment, but do we get well again?

Yes and no. Yes, because the symptoms disappear. No, because no medical treatment can give our life meaning. We need a meaning to live, whilst a machine does not.

Let me repeat it: we aren't machines, we need meaning to live.

We don't rebel, when we are considered as machines, because of our deep conditioning to consider ourselves as such. This conditioning is very strong and is one of the biggest signs that our culture, Western culture, is profoundly sick. A society

which is interested only in production, money and power, and not in humanity, is an unhealthy one.

We aren't machines. Let me stress this idea again with an example of a person who made a machine of himself. I learned about him through a documentary, but believe me, he is not alone. A lot of other people are living in this manner.

He works 20 hours per day. He needs huge quantities of caffeine to carry on. He wakes up very early in the morning (a day for him is still only 24 hours) and takes on board enough caffeine to keep me awake for a month.

The saddest thing is that he has a son. He sees him only fortnightly. You would imagine him spending all day with his son. Instead, he works even then. The poor son is going to learn from his father to become a machine as well. He is capable of withstanding this disintegration of his humanity. Many, however, rightly cannot.

“Man doesn't stand forever his nullification. There will be a reaction.” (C.G. Jung)

I agree completely with this quote. I am very much of the opinion that depression is not an illness. Rather it is a scream against this attempt to turn man into a machine. The symptoms of teenage depression are there to remind us that we can't stand a meaningless life forever.

Why depressed teens don't ask for help

There can be many reasons for which depressed teens don't ask for help.

They may feel that:

- their cries for help would not be understood
- it's their fault if they became depressed
- they don't deserve to be happy because they are bad
- nobody around them can really help
- they would receive only criticism and negative judgments

It may be that:

- they are explicitly or implicitly forbidden to talk about their true feelings
- they had to learn to repress their true feelings, so now they are confused about them
- they are embarrassed to talk about what is happening to them
- they don't want to be a problem, an additional one added to the countless others
- they don't want to make their parents worry

The cries

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There are many ways in which depressed teens cry for help. They aren't allowed to simply ask for help. They repressed their wish for help and their cries are expressed in many unconscious ways.

Here they are.

Sleeping habits

- Troubled sleep
- Too much sleep
- Too little sleep
- Falling asleep at school

Eating habits

- Eating too much and nervously
- Denying food or not feeling hungry

Feelings

- Feeling hopeless
- Feeling very guilty
- Feeling strong remorse for something happening or done
- Feeling very sad for no reason and incapable of controlling this feeling
- Feeling irritable
- Being agitated for no apparent reason
- Crying easily
- Feeling worthless, empty or bored

Relationships

- Avoiding contact with friends or with family
- Feeling like you want to be left alone

Energy

- Feeling fatigued even if had enough rest
- Problems concentrating on studies or when reading
- Not being focused on what is happening, lost in thinking
- Feeling sluggish and tired
- Difficulties remembering things
- Having nightmares and bad dreams

Depressive habits

- Using drugs
- Smoking
- Drinking alcohol

Thinking

- Having difficulties in making decisions
- Feeling as though having lost any interest in the future

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- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Thinking about wanting to go to sleep and not waking up

Self-image

- Putting oneself down, or making negative comments about oneself or being excessively critical towards oneself
- Thinking that no one likes you
- Thinking that everyone is against you
- Feeling very worried about making mistakes or looking foolish
- Seeing oneself as no good

Just a word about the depressive habits. Using drugs, smoking and drinking alcohol are cries for help. The fact that society judges these habits negatively is a sign of how much it's unable to help depressed teens.

Society should ask for forgiveness for misunderstanding these habits and punishing them instead of considering them for what they are, cries for help, and respond to them.

You can test the strength of your cries for help [here](#).

What creates the jail

This section is a collection of articles I've written to explain the causes that create the jail of depression.

What an SPD is

I need to explain what an SPD is because I'll use this concept along the following articles.

SPD is an acronym standing for Social Patterned Defects. SPDs are psychological problems that society fails to recognize as such, or even encourages and rewards.

Causes of depression in teens

I'm going to rule out quickly some secondary causes like the effects of hormones and genetic factors. Although it's true that genetic factors do play a role in producing psychosis.

Let's make the example of a psychotic serial killer. She is suffering because she got the wrong genes. But the genes are not enough. She has to have been beaten regularly throughout her childhood to become psychotic.

“The social environment has much more power in passing on fear to children than genetics do.”

Have a look at the studies of [Jim Fallon](#) if you want to deepen your knowledge about this subject.

That the social environment has a main role in producing psychological problems is nothing new. [Sigmund Freud](#) is famous for having made a fortune helping people with psychological problems produced by the sex-phobic education of his time.

This is getting worse by the day, but there is good news; we can change all of this. Since the problem is within the social environment, and the social environment is a human creation, it can be changed. The social environment is not an abstract entity out of our control. Simply it is us. So, we have just to change ourselves to change the society.

However hard it can seem, it's still possible.

Going on examining the possible causes of depression, I want to take into account the influence of bad events.

Examples of bad events occurring in a teenager's life are:

- academic failures

- bullying
- rejection from peers
- the death of a relative

There could be many more examples, but an exhaustive list of bad potential events wouldn't be useful. What makes a bad event a real problem is the attitude. If a bad event is faced positively, it doesn't contribute to a teen's depression.

The bad event is a problem only if the teenager doesn't learn to face bad events positively. They have to see such an attitude shown by someone within their close social environment in order to learn it.

Other factors contributing to depression are also themselves symptoms of the problem. If a teen gets depressed, he can suffer from insomnia, fatigue, eating difficulties, alcohol abuse and drug abuse. These are effects of depression, and they will also worsen the depression itself.

If the teenager is victim of negative judgements because of alcohol or drug abuse, this will also contribute negatively to their depression. These negative judgements will also make it more difficult for the teenager to ask for help, thus worsening the problem.

Alienation as a cause for teenage depression

Most human activities are becoming alienating to the individual. Both production and consumption are diverging away from being truly human acts, and rather are becoming increasingly regulated by habits which have little human significance at all.

Two examples of alienation

On the production side, an example of alienation is the loss of authenticity in relationships formed within working environments. These days, one can buy a book about how to talk to employees, but do we really need to be told how to talk to a fellow human being? Simply, no we don't.

Nevertheless, when a manager talks to an employee, the human relationship is lost. Rather than a conversation and relationship being formed between two human beings, it takes place between two abstractions. This is why there becomes a necessity for a book to assist us in accomplishing such natural acts, as communication between two human beings.

On the consumption side, the act of buying has lost almost all of its human qualities. It's no longer a meaningful, human, or productive experience. Needs are artificially created and induced, and the reasons for purchase are far removed from a genuine and intelligent use of an object.

This type of consumption is a psychological problem because it alienates people from their true humanity, and impacts negatively on their dignity as human beings.

Alienation is an SPD

Let me recall the idea of SPD. An SPD, Social Patterned Defect, is a psychological problem which produces suffering and limits our level of contentment. It's also a problem that society fails to recognize as such, despite it being widespread. Alienation is a psychological problem that lowers our self-esteem, and is thus an example of an SPD.

It contributes to the production of fear, which is the main ingredient of all personality disorders. This fear is the reaction to a less-than-human way of living, which is seen as inevitable. This fear can ultimately transform itself into depression.

Depression in teens can originate from the conflict between a natural craving for a full human existence, and the pressure to conform to the less-than-human way of living imposed on us by society. This conflict is a source of self-doubt and fear.

The problem is in the required conformity

An SPD, such as alienation, will have no impact on us or our children, as long as we are fully aware of it, and successfully identify it as a psychological problem.

If we can begin to see it as a problem that society wants to present to us as a necessity, then society will no longer have the power to make us suffer from its own shortcomings.

When we develop our own ability to diagnose psychological problems, the pressure for conformity loses power and we begin to enjoy the freedom to experiment with a more human way of living.

Since teenagers and children in general, are yet to be influenced by the ills of society, or conditioned to their demands, they can be a great asset in helping to shape a more human society. We have got to give them the attention that they deserve.

Conflict at Home

Conflict between parents and teenagers is one possible cause of depression in teens. The alienation we experience in our working and social environment can also influence our home lives. It is possible that we unconsciously manipulate our children as we are manipulated by society. This can in turn damage our human relationship with them.

True education would help children to fully express their potential in a human way. They need to be liberated to express their humanity, in a personal manner, in order for them to bring humanity to a society in dire need of it.

This process requires us to have courage and put faith into our children. Any human endeavour requires faith in the human power required to accomplish it, and this sort of endeavour requires it in abundance.

Behaviour enforcement

I mentioned above that the act of consumption has lost its human qualities. Is controlling and regulating an individual's purchasing a solution? Should we question any purchase made by our teenagers, in order to make it compliant with our desired model?

I'm afraid it's not so simple. No behaviour enforcement technique has ever succeeded in solving a psychological problem. It has failed to do so because human beings aren't only behaviour. Robots are only behaviour.

Behaviour enforcement could be a solution for them but humans are not only behaviour. They are also feelings, thoughts, choices, creativity, reasoning and dreams.

The very idea that a psychological problem can be solved by enforcing a behaviour, is it itself a psychological problem because it doesn't take in account the full range of human powers and characteristics.

Depression in teens will not be solved by behaviour enforcement.

Reasons for teenage depression

Is depression with teenagers a result of chemical imbalance? If it is, then why are there still cultures where it is an unknown problem? Could it be an unfortunate sequence of bad events that are the root of the depression?

The teenager's family could be going through a series of unpleasant changes. These changes won't lead to depression, if they are dealt with positively however. Depression occurs when a teenager learns to deal with events in a negative fashion.

What teens are told can be the cause depression. If they are told over and over again that they are bad, useless or stupid, then consequently they believe those things, and become highly susceptible to depression.

Again, this will only happen if they don't have the luxury of having someone in their life who can teach them a positive attitude towards dealing with such problems.

If an important relationship breaks up, then this may present a challenge. Again, attitude is everything. Only with a negative attitude, will a teenager suffer depression at the hands of such a relationship break up.

Sometimes these problems run in families. People suffering from depression could have children affected by the same problem. This happens because they, the parents, having suffered from depression, have a predominantly negative outlook towards life, which is then passed on to their children.

It can, however, alternatively happen that a parent, who once suffered from depression, can not only solve their own depression, but also understand and thus alter their

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negative outlook towards life; converting themselves into a life-lover. In this case it is unlikely that they will pass any negativity onto their children.

In addition, illness, academic or sporting failure, and bereavement can provoke depression. Also in this case everything depends on their attitude. If the teenager had a mentor who deals positively with the uncertainties of life, they too will consequently learn to do the same, and will thus be unlikely to develop depression.

Failing exams or making mistakes can make you feel stupid. It lowers your self-esteem and level of pride in yourself. This doesn't happen because we really are of lesser value. It happens because we are artificially and intentionally made to believe that our worth is directly connected to our grades.

Even worse than this, our flawed educational system creates the impression that we have no worth inside ourselves, but rather only if someone else decides that we have. It's an unnecessary and poisonous emotional dependence, which can only contribute to depression with teenagers.

Actually, the idea of giving a defined value, low or high, to a human being is utterly nonsensical. It is worth getting hold of [Carl Rogers](#)'s works if you are interested in the psychological damage that schooling can induce.

“You are a puppet in my hands!”

I want to illustrate here one more SPD. An SPD, Social Patterned Defect, is a psychological problem, which society fails to identify as such. It's also a widely spread one. As with the other ones I have so far described, this too is a factor contributing to depression with teenagers.

Let's start with a metaphor. Imagine a [puppet](#) theatre, where the puppets are controlled by strings.

The show is about to begin, the curtain is raised. There is one puppet, and she has only two strings attached.

One of the strings has a paper sign on it, saying “Punishments”. The other string has another sign on it, saying “Rewards”. There is just one solitary difference between this puppet and all the others.

The puppeteer doesn't know it, but she is a thinking puppet. She has feelings. She needs trust to be happy. This puppet is scared, and depressed.

The punishments and rewards pedagogy is an SPD

If you are controlled by the threat of punishment, and the offer of rewards, then you develop an image of yourself as a puppet in someone else's hands. You end up feeling used instead of loved.

This becomes a psychological problem for the victim of the punishments and rewards, as well as for the educator who employs this sort of pedagogy. It's also an SPD, Social Patterned Defect, because it's very common, and because society fails to recognize it as a problem.

Many teenagers simply absorb the idea of being puppets in someone else's hands, a negative and inhumane concept, and live with it all of their lives. Only a few subconsciously reject this idea and develop a conflict that can consequently manifest into depression.

So, depression with teenagers has among its various causes the negative self-image imposed on them by the manipulation of the punishments and rewards system.

Tolerance of insecurity and teenage depression

Depression can be passed down through families

It's said that if a depressed teenager has a close relative who also has suffered from depression, then this could be a contributing factor. I agree because depression is largely as the result of a negative outlook towards life, which we learn from a close relative.

Depression is, somehow, a skill. It's like to say, 'life scares me, let's become powerless'. The opposite is also possible, however, 'life scares me, let's be brave'. Unfortunately, more and more people fail to develop a positive outlook towards life, and thus get stuck within depression.

One sign of this failure is the common outlook towards death. Death is seen as something that shouldn't even be talked about. Actually, it's because we die that life is beautiful. I think that we fear death because we fear life. We fear death could take us before we really begin to live, and to see life in a positive light.

Anyway, it's obvious that when a teen has a close relative who sees only the dark in life and never the light, then they too can subconsciously think: "What is the point in living if there is only the dark side of life waiting for me?"

To see only the dark in life is a form of neurosis, because it's to see reality in a partial way. In reality there is the dark side and there is the light. There is the good and there is the bad. In fact, the good things outweigh the bad.

Depressed teenagers learn this neurosis from their close relative, and they practice it very well. Too well in fact. To them this learned neurosis is a good thing. The teenager subconsciously thinks: "If that relative of mine is doing that, I guess it must be good. Let me learn it too".

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It's also true that our mind is very flexible. The relative, who suffered from depression, could alternatively choose to investigate deeply the causes of their depression, and could eventually become a teacher of a more positive outlook towards life.

All it takes is for one to begin to think. In a society where thinking is seen as embarrassing or scary, it is also a starting point towards a more human life. Depression being a rejection of our non-human existence, if we begin to respect our humanity, depression is much less likely to happen.

Are major life stresses a cause for depression?

Let's imagine that one or more of the following events happens to a teen:

- a family break-up
- a school failure
- bullying
- experience of prejudice and social isolation because of sexual preferences
- child abuse
- loss of a parent
- an accident
- a broken relationship
- moving to another area

Let's ask ourselves:

- Who did the depressed teenagers have as model to follow?
- How are negative events generally dealt with in the social environment the teen lives in?

In life anything can happen. Rich people become poor, poor people become rich (far from being a happy event for a lot of people), illness, school failure, broken love, loss of job, robbery, more recently, identity theft, separation and divorce, the opposite party of yours winning the elections, your working life destroyed in an instant, annoying colleagues, awful boss, the list is endless.

Did the depressed teenager ever know someone who practised the art of tolerating uncertainty?

One of the attributes of life, not the only one, is insecurity. All the negative events I listed above mean that life is insecure. We shouldn't seek certainty. We should train ourselves to tolerate uncertainty.

If the depressed teenagers have parents who get crazy at every little annoyance they stumble upon in life, no wonder that they don't learn to tolerate insecurity, and that they can't deal with any major life stress. Nobody taught them how to cope.

At the present time, you have parents who get awfully angry or upset or worried if their teen comes back from school with a bad mark. That's how teens learn not to tolerate

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insecurity. When insecurity strikes, it finds them completely unprepared. Hence, depression is possible.

You switch on the TV and you can see a lot, really a lot, of people reacting badly to insecurity. Everything is the pretext for a drama. A negative one showing a low tolerance for insecurity.

I suspect it's even done on purpose. The media show us people who can't tolerate insecurity to make us think that it's a normal intolerance, and we don't need to adapt or to grow.

The media want us unhappy because it's easier to control and dominate unhappy people.

“Tolerance of insecurity is one of the most important traits of a happy person.”

It is incredibly beneficial, for our happiness, for us to learn to tolerate insecurity, and consequently pass this tolerance and happiness on to our teenagers.

The damages of education

School performance

Depression in teenagers can be caused, among other things, by a feeling of worthlessness and inadequacy over school grades. There can also be problems regarding socialising at school.

Both of these two problems could develop as a result of narcissism within the parents and educators in general. Unfortunately, in our society, narcissism is on the rise.

I'll talk more about narcissism in another article.

Why do teens feel bad if they get bad grades?

It could be that their parents want them to do well at school, in order to satisfy their narcissism. Parents will rationalize. They will say that they want their children to be successful at school for their own good. Narcissism can be difficult to spot and to treat because society fails to recognize it as a psychological problem.

Parents could also subconsciously want their children to conform to the model of a “perfect child” that society has created in their heads.

Perhaps parents are frustrated with their own lives, and want their children to succeed where they failed. Perhaps they had a child simply for the purpose of satisfying their needs. Perhaps parents learned a model of the perfect child somewhere and are convinced that their children have to be like that.

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The problem isn't with the model of a perfect child adopted by the parents, but rather the loss of a human relationship between the parents and their children. It's as if parents were talking with their ideal model instead of with their child.

The model of "ideal child" could include expectations of scholastic performances. So, let's touch on the subject of the psychological damages produced by schooling.

Depression in teenagers and how school contributes to it

Let me share with you the words of [John Taylor Gatto](#):

***"[schools are designed to create] a workforce that will not rebel – that will be physically, intellectually, and emotionally dependent upon corporate institutions for their incomes, self-esteem, and stimulation, and that will learn to find social meaning in their lives solely in the production and consumption of material goods ... and we voluntarily pay to forge the chains of our own servitude."
(Dumbing us down, John Taylor Gatto)***

John was a teacher and not just any teacher. He was named New York City Teacher of the Year and New York State Teacher of the Year. He stopped teaching, and when he did, he sent a letter, entitled '[I Quit, I Think](#)', to the Wall Street Journal.

He said that he didn't want to make a living from hurting children any longer. It looks like we pay to make our children feel as slaves.

What has this to do with depression in teenagers?

Let's state that:

- Not all teens will get depressed because school teaches them to be emotionally dependent on someone else.
- Emotional independence should be something much more valuable to teach than dependence.
- Emotional dependence is a problem.

Some teens subconsciously refuse to accept having their humanity belittled in such a way. This can create a conflict that can consequently evolve into depression.

John also tells us that school teaches intellectual dependency. Teachers decide what we must learn. This is to imprint in our children's memories that other people will teach us the meaning of our lives. We aren't allowed to find it by ourselves.

If you can't find the meaning of your life by yourself, you can end up asking yourself why you are on earth and what for. It's demoralizing and depressing.

Depression in teenagers and freedom to learn

Another great psychologist, [Carl Rogers](#), was also a teacher. He stopped teaching because he understood that when he was teaching, either he was damaging kids or

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nothing happened. He is an important figure in western psychology because he invented the person-centred approach now used by many psychologists.

Carl says that the best learning is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning. It isn't imposed. He says that imposed learning denies any trust in the ability of the child to create their own learning path. This is the psychological damage caused by our culture in a bid to create conformity, and from it comes a lot of psychological problems.

Freedom to learn is denied, and that's one of the reasons for depression in teenagers. Carl refuses to use grades as an instrument of punishment, and is of the opinion that we should do away with examinations.

He thinks that examinations just measure the damage made by education and give importance to it. If you are really interested in a subject, and freedom and trust are given to you, you don't need examinations. You evaluate your learning by yourself.

Personally, I don't believe that we have to do what Carl Rogers says simply because he was a famous psychologist. Psychology is not a dictatorship. I say that his opinions are worth a look.

It's curious to note that immediately after two big revolutions, the American and Russian, freedom to learn was given to children. Unhappily it didn't last very long.

One of the causes is the parents' narcissism

What is narcissism and how it affects adolescents?

What is narcissism?

In the words of [Erich Fromm](#):

“The narcissistic orientation is one in which one experiences as real only that which exists within oneself, while the phenomena in the outside world have no reality in themselves, but are experienced only from the viewpoint of their being useful or dangerous to one.” (The Art of Loving, Erich Fromm)

Erich Fromm explains also that the opposite pole to narcissism is objectivity. It's to see people and things as they are and to separate this objective view from the one formed by one's desires and fears.

This could sound too theoretic. Let's make a practical example.

An example of narcissism is portrayed in the film [Dead Poets Society](#). In this film, a boy, Neil Perry, discovers that he has a passion for acting. The problem comes as a result of his father's narcissism.

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Mr. Perry wants his boy to become a doctor, and violently destroys his son's dream. Eventually Neil gets depressed and commits suicide.

Mr. Perry suffers from narcissism because his only reality is the ideal vision he has for his son, as a doctor. He isn't in a relationship with a real human being, but rather an ideal, which he has created in his mind.

Mr. Perry's experiences of Neil are on a bilateral level. In his eyes, he is either acting positively towards his goal, or alternatively endangering this artificial reality that he has created for him. Mr. Perry wants his son to be a doctor, not an actor. When Neil tells his father that he wants to be an actor, he is endangering this ideal.

What is the biggest problem here? That Mr. Perry doesn't want Neil to be an actor? No, the biggest problem with narcissism is that it prevents a truly human relationship. The narcissistic parent doesn't know his children. He doesn't care about his children. He wants to use them for his own purposes, and to achieve his own ideals.

He wants a doctor because to him an actor is a disgrace, and this is all that matters. To him his child doesn't exist if not as a tool to use for his own purposes. This film depicts a case of narcissism, which leads to depression and ends in tragedy.

In our society narcissism is on the rise. It could be of benefit to consider the reasons surrounding this. Narcissism is also an SPD, a Social Patterned Defect.

Narcissism is an SPD because it's a problem many people suffer from, and yet society fails to identify it as a psychological problem. People suffering from narcissism aren't bad, wrong, or annoying. They are suffering. They need treatment and compassion.

Let me make another example because theoretic psychology is something I don't like so much. It is our lives we are talking about, after all.

Jack the angry

Let's imagine a parent suffering from narcissism, Sophie, and an angry teen, Jack. Sophie can't have an angry son. She belongs to a community where anger is judged as a negative personality trait. The community would look down on her for failing to produce a well-behaved, happy son.

Sophie has a noble goal; to raise a son she can proudly show to the community. She will do everything in her power to extinguish the anger of her son as quickly as possible (the community is already maligning). She sends her son to a boot-camp so that he can be taught discipline.

Jack is angry because he is scared. He is scared because he doesn't feel loved. Why is it that he doesn't feel loved? Maybe it's because he feels used instead of loved?

You can't lie about your true feelings to children. If you say that you love them, when actually you are using them for your narcissistic purposes, they will see through the lie.

Maybe the parent isn't aware of this problem, because she has lost her sensibility, but children still have it.

Jack doesn't feel loved, and he sees, subconsciously, that he is being used. Jack could end up depressed like Neil from the example above. Jack, like Neil, is perceived by Sophie as detrimental to her goal of having a well-behaved and happy child.

Please, don't be angry at Sophie, she suffers from narcissism. She needs compassion and support, and not the judgments of others.

Wait a moment! Isn't it that we all want a super child?

Don't we all want a super child who does very well at school, who behaves perfectly, who helps at home, who likes what we like, who dislikes what we dislike, who follows all our rules never questioning them, who loves our country as we do, who defends the social status we earned so hardly?

I'm afraid to say that this sort of attitude can be a sign of narcissism.

If we don't suffer from narcissism, it's more likely that we want to know our children, and that we want to see our children as they really are; individuals with their own dreams, their own likes and dislikes, their own authentic feelings, their own rules, created by questioning the ones that don't make sense any more, their own style, and their own opinion and preferences towards education and learning.

If we manage our narcissism, we can enjoy a truly human relationship with our children, and encourage them to be individuals.

We could even end up learning from our children. They have a lot to teach us.

Last but not least, if we heal our narcissism, we will be happier in ourselves, and this is what all of us secretly desire more than anything else. If we deal with our own narcissism, we will also help to reduce the frequency of depression in adolescence.

Myths about depression

Modern society is profoundly sick, and much psychology submits to social conformity. Doing so, this sort of psychology is false and unhelpful.

The goal of this false psychology is to make us well-adjusted again to society.

“It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society.” (J. Krishnamurti)

If we want to learn to overcome depression, we have to learn about the obstacles that society puts on our path to freedom from depression. Society isn't interested in our well-being. It's interested in our conformity.

In the following, I'll talk about six myths commonly held about depression.

Myth #1: Depression is in our genes

One of the ways society uses to relieve itself of responsibility for being the cause of your depression is to blame your genes.

Is there a gene for depression? According to [Denis Noble](#) there is no way a single gene can be responsible for a single function of our body. To say that there is a gene that causes a specific behaviour or biological function can be good to fill a few columns of junk journalism, but it's not scientific.

The world is full of people who completely changed their lives, belying every prediction based on genes that had been made about their future.

We are more than our genes and have infinite possibilities that genes will never predict or explain.

Read more about this subject here: [The Gene Illusion Continues](#).

Myth #2: Depression is due to a chemical imbalance in your brain

There is a reason why the [Royal College of Psychiatrists](#) no longer links depression to chemical imbalances in the brain.

It's claimed that depression is due to a chemical imbalance in the brain and that drugs fix this imbalance.

This is an example of bad science.

When you are in distress and you can't see how you will ever again be able to give meaning to your life, to tell you that your brain is defective and that there is a chemical imbalance in it is to trivialize your problem.

This is to add insult to injury.

Read more about this: [Serotonin and Depression: A Disconnect between the Advertisements and the Scientific Literature.](#)

Consider also that, in an increasingly authoritarian society, it's easy to label as mentally ill those who don't want to conform, and get rid of them.

An interesting article about how to enforce social conformity by diagnosing the non-conformist as ill is this: [Why Anti-Authoritarians are Diagnosed as Mentally Ill.](#)

Myth #3: Depression is a lifelong illness you can only learn to manage

The world is full of people who go through a period of intense distress and become wiser and happier after having overcome it.

To say that your distress is a lifelong illness makes it worse and shows no respect for you and for what is happening to you.

Again, to get rid of depressed people by telling them that they have got a lifelong illness is easier than to help them to make sense of their distress.

Moreover, depressed people's distress questions the validity of the idea that we should conform to society.

People who are scared by non-conformity are scared by depressed people as well and want to get rid of them as quickly as possible.

Myth #4: Depression is passed through families

It is said that depression is passed through families as the colour of hair is.

This would mean that depression is in our genes. That's nonsense.

Depression is passed through families because it's a skill. It's something you learn. You learn from your educators and from your environment that you are bad and unacceptable. You learn it too well and you get depressed.

Myth #5: Antidepressants cure depression

Let's begin by mentioning the [National Institute for Clinical Excellence.](#)

They advise that antidepressants should not be prescribed for mild to moderate depression. They should be used only as a last resort in cases of severe depression.

Drugs won't give meaning to your life and won't help you to build trust in yourself.

They will be offered to you as the only thing you can do with your depression by people who don't care at all about the meaning of your life or about your trust in yourself.

You can find here a collection of articles about anti-depressants: [Pros and cons of antidepressants](#).

Myth #6: Depression is an illness

Unhappily, the medical model is widespread when dealing with depression. To use the medical model with depression means that we see it as an illness with symptoms, physical causes and pharmacological remedies.

Let's see what [Carl Rogers](#) thought about this:

"We regard the medical model as an extremely inappropriate model for dealing with psychological disturbances. The model that makes more sense is a growth model or a developmental model. In other words we see people as having a potential for growth and development and that can be released under the right psychological climate. We don't see them as sick and needing a diagnosis, a prescription and a cure; and that is a very fundamental difference with a good many implications."

Depression is when we are stuck in our psychological growth and need help to overcome the obstacles to this growth.

Depression is regarded as an illness by those who don't want you to grow wiser and happier, or who can't actually help you because they themselves are stuck in their growth.

If you are depressed, you are in dire need of comfort and support, but you can't get them if you are told that you have got an illness. And many times the comfort and support you are offered are fake and you know it.

Read more about understanding why psychological distress as an illness is scientifically wrong: [Psychiatric diagnosis not scientific but subjective](#).

Learn also about how psychiatric diagnoses can be harmful: [Will the APA Listen to the Voices of Those Harmed by Psychiatric Diagnosis?](#)

How to escape the jail

What any plan to escape the jail of depression should include

Faith in ourselves

A good therapy for depression in teenage has to be fully human. Its main goal is to rebuild the faith in man that our sick Western culture is erasing. We need faith in ourselves even to fall asleep when we go to bed. We aren't animals. Animals don't need faith to fall asleep. Their instincts do the job for them.

Chemists and Pharmacists, are full of sleeping pills. This should make us think. We are losing faith in ourselves even for the simple act of sleeping. The fact that there are sleeping pills isn't a positive advancement in medical science. Rather, it's a worrying sign of the disintegration of mankind.

You can see, largely in Western cultures, mothers worryingly having to force their children to eat. Hunger should lead our children to eat, not force. Only a seriously ill child will be unable to self-regulate their need for food.

A mother nervously forcing her children to eat is denying them the opportunity to gain faith in themselves, and in their ability to self-regulate their food intake. We need faith in ourselves to live, and a denial of such should alarm us.

It is not only our eating habits that require us to have faith. Everything we do requires faith.

Respect of our human powers

We have many powers. Let's list only a couple of them:

- power of choice
- power of asking ourselves 'why' and 'what-for'

The best therapy for depression in teenage is respect. Let's begin by respecting the teenager's power of choice.

Since they are young children, they should be given as many occasions to practice their power of choice as possible. It's like exercising a muscle, the muscle of choice. The more you exercise it, the stronger it gets.

Will they make mistakes? Sure, who doesn't? To be afraid of mistakes is to be afraid of life. They will make even more mistakes if their 'choice muscle' is not strong enough.

Unfortunately there are cultures, or subcultures, where even adults have everything chosen for them. Their 'choice muscle' is weak, and they have difficulties using it when needed.

There are people in our lives who want to make every choice on our behalf. This could seem like a relief, but rather it is quite the opposite. They aren't respecting our power of choice. They don't want our 'choice muscle' to be strengthened. They want us to be weak. They don't respect us, and are thus contributing to depression in teenage.

What about the power of asking 'why' and 'what-for'?

How many parents are embarrassed and uncomfortable when their children begin to ask countless 'why's and 'what-for's? Could it be because we, the adults, have forgotten how to exercise the 'muscle of thinking'? Could it be because we gave up using our own 'muscle of thinking'?

This is to disrespect ourselves, as it is to not to respect our own power of thinking. If we don't respect ourselves and our own powers, then we can hardly teach children to respect themselves. In this way we contribute to depression in teenage years without even knowing that we are doing it.

A roundup of therapeutic options

Counselling or talk therapy

During talk therapy, a therapist encourages the depressed teenager to talk about their feelings, habits, thoughts, behaviors, and relationships.

The therapist's fundamental quality is to be non-judgemental. This releases the tension that the teenager can often be made to feel when talking to others. Obviously a depressed teenager doesn't need more tension. Their depression already gives them enough.

A good therapist is able to truly listen to the depressed teenager, having freed themselves from the expectations, prejudices, duties, and models that the teenager is usually made to feel obligated to conform to. Simply, they should be free from anything can compromise the listening.

[Carl Rogers](#) strongly disagreed with the methods of many therapists, who treated their patients as machines needed to be fixed. In his 'Way of being', he talks about Ellen West; a depressed young woman who committed suicide. Carl was of the opinion that the methods of her therapy were actually the main cause of her tragic end.

Carl invented the person-centred approach, which considers a person as a fully human being, and not as a broken machine in need of repair.

Since the conditioning of our society to consider ourselves as machines is so strong, I'm not sure that all therapists are independent enough to authentically relate to a teenager as a true human being.

Drugs

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Now we have many drugs effective in the treatment of depression. They have less and less side effects, with a decreased risk of dependency. Drugs are life-saving when depression in teenagers is at an advanced stage.

Depression in teenage originates from beliefs about oneself, fears, lack of faith in oneself, and a negative outlook towards reality.

If our way of thinking about ourselves and reality is not challenged, our mind will continue to develop depressive feelings, once the drug-based therapy is finished. It's important to investigate how our mind 'creates' depression in the first place.

Drugs can solve the effects of depression, but not the causes. Imagine you are in a boat with holes. Water is coming into the boat. You can have a pump to draw water out, but sooner or later you have to find the holes and repair them.

So, are drugs a solution to depression in teenage? Well, they can be a temporary solution if the depression is advanced, but they shouldn't be considered as a ready-made cure.

What is utterly astonishing is that we need drugs to solve a psychological problem. This in itself should make us think.

The increasing use of psychotropic drugs is a sign that we are running ourselves towards self-destruction. Our society needs a complete rethink.

CBT

Cognitive Behavioral Therapies prove very effective in treating depression. They are based on the idea that depressed people acquire a negative view of the world and of themselves in childhood.

Rejection, criticism, extreme expectations and the depressive attitude of a parent or close relative can contribute towards this negative view.

With CBT the depressed teenager learns a new view of the world and of themselves. This view will be more objective and free from irrational beliefs about reality.

The first incorrect belief we learn to reject through CBT, is the consideration that we are all machines.

Art therapy

Art is used to stimulate the creativity and imagination of teenagers. This can help with depression of teenagers.

Arts like music, dance, drama, clay working, painting and drawing allow teenagers with depression to express their feelings, when usually they might find it difficult.

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The idea is to illustrate to them that feelings are supposed to be fully expressed, and not repressed or kept secret. It is important to show them that they don't have to be ashamed about the way they feel.

When using art to express emotions, teenagers can enjoy, maybe for the first time in their life, these benefits:

- no pressure on their performance
- no judgment on the quality of their artistic creation
- pleasure to create, and to love what they create
- no grades
- freedom to explore unconventional ways of expressing feelings
- no necessity for the existence of moral lessons in their creations
- no teaching of moral lessons through suggestion of particular forms of creation
- freedom to express any sort of feeling, even if usually repressed
- a sense of control: when creating, teenagers are in control, nobody tells them what to create, for which purpose, or with what meaning
- a sense of trust in their ability to create and a sense of freedom from comparisons
- being allowed to fall in love with their creativity

How to talk with a depressed teenager

Let's suspend judgment for a while

One more heavy psychological burden depressed teenagers have to bear is the one of judgment.

Many parents think that it's their duty to judge and correct their children, and to mould their characters.

They teach their children which feeling is the right one to have. Their children are scared by the simple idea of admitting some of their feelings in case their parents think them improper.

Unfortunately, the habit of judging emotions makes it difficult for children to express them without constantly fearing a negative judgment.

If the parents of a depressed teenager are used to judging, correcting and moulding their children, it's very important that they suspend this habit because a depressed teenager needs acceptance much more than judgments.

How not to make the problem worse

Well-intentioned people can make things worse for a depressed teenager.

Let's consider a worried parent. For example, a worried mother. There may be very worried mothers and mildly worried ones. There are also the sunny, ever-smiling, never-worried ones.

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Unfortunately, fear is the main ingredient of depression. Nothing worse for a depressed teenager than to have worried people around. Don't feel offended in the slightest if your depressed teen can't stand your presence if you are a super-worried parent.

Simply, your depressed teen doesn't want more fear added to theirs, already at a high level.

I know that our modern way of life makes us insecure and anxious. We are safer than ever, but this is far from making us more confident. We tend to depend on society's approval, and to be afraid of losing it. This makes us psychologically vulnerable.

What not to say

We should avoid saying to a depressed teenager:

- "Get a move on! React! You have to do something!"
- "Don't dwell on it! Take your mind off it! Go and have fun!"
- "After all, there are a lot of people who are worse off than you."
- "Don't keep pitying yourself. You have to react!"
- "It's all fantasy."
- "You have to grow up, don't play the victim."
- "You do not lack anything to be happy."
- "After all you aren't so sick, you look well."
- "It's only some stress. Some rest, some vitamins, and you will be well again."
- "Things aren't so bad after all, are they?"
- "You have to step out, you have to have fun!"
- "You need only a girlfriend (boyfriend)."
- "Do as I do, when I feel down I have a hot bath and I feel great again."
- "Smile, and the world will smile back."
- "It happens to everyone, sooner or later, being depressed."
- "You don't look depressed."
- "You do it to attract attention."

What to say

We can say to a depressed teenager:

- "I'll stay close to you, and I won't leave you even in the worst moments."
- "It's only a period which will pass and I'll help you get out of it."
- "I can only offer you a shoulder to cry on, but you can count on it."
- "Depression is only an illness, it doesn't mean that you are a weak person or a failure or that you can't face problems, or that you are mad."
- "You have to convince yourself that this is an illness, and that it's nothing to be ashamed of. It can happen to anyone."
- "I understand that you find difficulty in doing everything, but if you lean on me we can make it."
- "If you need to pour out your feelings, I'll be a good listener, and I promise you that what you tell me will stay between you and me."
- "You aren't mad, you are simply depressed, and depression is an illness which can be treated."
- "I can imagine your suffering and anguish, and I'm close to you."

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- “You don’t have to thank me if I’m close to you. It’s my choice, and the best thanks is to see you smile again.”
- “It’s difficult, for people like me who haven’t experienced it, to imagine what you tell me you feel, but I can understand how much you suffer.”
- “You are important to me all the same.”

How to convince a depressed teenager to follow the prescribed treatment

A problem that might appear is convincing depressed teenagers to follow the treatment prescribed by their therapist.

As a parent, I have many times used a well-known tactic. Threaten your children with punishments or promise rewards. I stopped doing this when I realized that it was more damaging than useful.

Punishments and rewards are violence and bribery, and I’m used, now, to assessing whether this tactic is useful or harmful before using it.

With depressed teenagers, this tactic is even more dangerous. Punishing and rewarding, we implicitly transmit the message that our teenager doesn’t deserve to be trusted, but has, instead, to be controlled, punishments and rewards being the means of control.

Depressed teenagers don’t need such a depressive thought. We have to spare them, at least when they are depressed.

If we, the adults, realize that we are suffering depressive thoughts just as our teenagers are, we should follow a treatment intended to change our way of thinking. Maybe even the same prescribed for our teenagers, or something similar.

In this way, the depressed teenagers will see their parents becoming less worried and more confident, and they will therefore be encouraged to follow their own treatment.

The archetype of the Great Mother

The archetype of the Great Mother is a sort of ‘natural force’ every human being has within. It represents qualities that are very important in therapy for depression.

A good therapist uses this ‘natural force’ correctly to be able to:

- be sincerely interested in a depressed teen’s feelings, ideas, dreams, views, likes and dislikes
- listen with true attention
- be non-judgmental
- overcome his own alienation
- authentically trust depressed teens to unfold their potential

What is an archetype?

An archetype is a sort of 'natural force' we all have within. We can nurture it as if it was a plant, or we can neglect it. It doesn't grow if not nurtured and many other forces can hinder its growing.

An archetype is the same for everyone in the world. It doesn't acknowledge cultural differences. It's one of the things that remind us that there is only one mankind.

What is the archetype of the Great Mother?

This archetype represents a mother consoling her scared child. Maybe she doesn't know at all the reason why her child is scared. She consoles him anyway. She doesn't need to know if he did something right or wrong for her to console him.

This archetype is the same worldwide. In every culture there are mothers consoling their children unconditionally.

The Great Mother represents pity, compassion, care, listening, complete absence of judgment. From it, the social attitudes of sharing, collaboration and helping each other derive.

If this archetype is relegated to a position of little importance in a culture, the latter suffers. If this archetype was completely eliminated from the human psyche, we would all be extremely psychotic and would destroy ourselves.

Modern culture and the Great Mother

The Great Mother is at the heart of every sane society. In Western societies, the Great Mother has always had little importance and this is the reason why they are so insane.

Modern culture is about manipulation, which is an attitude opposed to the ones suggested by the Great Mother.

We are manipulated at school, in the workplace, at home, and by advertisements, propaganda, opinion leaders, and politicians.

From a young age we are made accustomed to that form of violence that is the punishments-and-rewards pedagogy. This latter is again a form of manipulation.

Emotional understanding of the archetype of the Great Mother

The archetype of the Great Mother is difficult to grasp and to give it an important position in one's life is even harder.

This is because in modern culture almost everything runs against it.

Two huge obstacles that are in the way of a full emotional understanding of the Great Mother are irrational fear and the fear of losing something we own or the power we have over someone.

Marion Woodman, Angeles Arrien and Alice Walker about the Great Mother

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Marion Woodman is a Jungian analyst. Jung is a relevant figure in Western psychology. He studied archetypes deeply.

Angeles Arrien is a teacher and author. She is interested in all the cultures of the world and their differences and similarities.

Alice Walker is an author. She has written the novel *The Color Purple*, which inspired a film and a musical. She is also a poet and an activist.

In the following video they talk about the archetype of the Great Mother, its importance and how it is neglected by modern culture.

Watch this video and then come back to read here.

[Click here to watch the video about the Great Mother](#)

The story of Mysha and Denise

Now, I want to tell a story. It's about Mysha and Denise. Mysha is our living example of the archetype of the Great Mother. Denise is a depressed teenager.

Denise isn't good at school. She doesn't like any subject, she is lazy with her homework, she finds all those judgments so hurtful, but she has been told that they are for her good.

She likes painting but she has no talent. She has been strongly discouraged from developing her artistic creativity.

"You have no talent, you wouldn't be able to make a living from your painting! Trust us!"

She can't understand maths. Really, to her maths is worse than torture. She gets continuously distracted during lessons.

"You have to make an effort! What will you do in life if you don't learn maths! You are even taking a drug that helps you to pay attention!"

Denise is running fast towards depression. While her mood falls down towards dark places, she tries to cheer herself up drinking and taking some illegal drugs.

She doesn't talk about her feelings, she knows that she's wrong because she isn't good at school.

Do you think she likes design or technology? Not at all. Bad grades are everyday news.

"How can you be so ungrateful! You are the black sheep of the family! You see how hard your brother studies! Your father graduated with first-class honours!"

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Denise has a friend, Mysha. She is a writer. Denise visits her often.

They don't speak so much. Mysha hugs Denise and smiles at her. Mysha holds Denise by the hand. There isn't much need for words. Sometimes Denise breaks down and cries. Mysha asks no questions, she only consoles Denise.

Denise tells Mysha that she likes to paint.

"But I've no talent..."

"So what? Paint if you like and forget about talent!"

After one more bad grade, Denise finds herself walking a bridge. It's too easy, just a jump and all that horrible suffering in her heart would cease.

But in her heart there is Mysha's smile as well. Denise crosses the bridge quickly and goes to visit Mysha again.

Two year pass. Thanks to Mysha, Denise is much better. One day, she musters up all her courage and leaves. She will travel the world.

Many years later she is back. She will open an agency to help unknown painters to live their creativity.

She will be forever grateful to that teenage depression treatment whose name was Mysha.

The Art of Healing

Dear depressed teenager,

Unfortunately I can't change the hurtful and unsupportive environment you live in.

I can't enjoy giving you the unconditional support and the absence of fear you need and deserve.

I can only tell you that you need and deserve unconditional support, kindness and understanding.

I can also tell you about the Art of Healing.

It's something I do myself every day. I do it because I deserve it. You deserve it too.

What is the Art of Healing?

First of all, it's a form of art. We can call it the art of taking care of your psychological well-being. It's an art like singing, dancing, painting, writing and so on.

Why does it work?

It works because it heals. When you repeat your Healing Affirmation, you feel the healing, the warmth. I'll talk about Healing Affirmations in the following.

It will take time to see results, but, little by little, the Art of Healing will heal your psychological wounds.

How does it work?

The Art of Healing heals the hurtful way of thinking about yourself that caused your depression.

It changes the way you think about yourself from a hurtful one into a healing one.

It helps you rebuild faith in yourself.

It rebuilds the self-confidence we need to do almost everything.

The Art of Healing is the art of consoling our fear and to console our fear is a pleasure. Enjoy it. You deserve it, everyone deserves it.

You may consider the Art of Healing as a healing space you make in your own mind. It's a "place" in your mind that is private to you and where you heal yourself.

The Art of Healing is important

For the Art of Healing to work you have to consider it as the most important thing you do in your day.

This doesn't mean that you have to do the Art of Healing all the time.

You have many other things to do. It means that, when you do the Art of Healing, you have to think as well that you are doing the most important thing in your day.

Every time you do the Art of Healing, begin with thinking that you are doing the most important activity in your day.

Just say to yourself: "I am doing the most important thing in my day."

Consider the Art of Healing as important as a rare and precious jewel.

The Art of Healing needs concentration

The Art of Healing needs some concentration.

You can do the Art of Healing when you are waiting, when you are having breakfast, when you are having a walk, when you are having a shower, at any time you don't have to do something that needs concentration.

You can't do the Art of Healing if you are talking with someone, reading or writing. These activities need concentration.

The Art of Healing is an art, every art needs some concentration.

If you want to learn to play piano, you have to concentrate to do it. You can't play piano and watch television at the same time for example.

How do you do the Art of Healing?

The Art of Healing is about repeating a powerful Healing Affirmation.

It's an affirmation that reminds us that we have the power to heal ourselves and that we can trust ourselves with using it.

You will feel the healing when you repeat the affirmation.

How to choose your Healing Affirmation

Choose one of these Healing Affirmations:

- I am OK whatever I do, whatever I feel and whatever I think
- I believe in me, I love and trust myself
- I deserve happiness and freedom
- I live to be free and happy
- I have absolute faith in myself
- Happiness is my natural state of mind
- I love life and I'm happy to be me
- I trust myself whatever I think, feel and do
- I trust myself whatever I think, whatever I feel and whatever I do
- Love is louder than everything else
- I heal myself because I deserve it

All of them are good. If you have difficulties choosing, just use the first one (I am OK whatever I do, whatever I feel and whatever I think).

You can also change it later if you want.

You could invent a Healing Affirmation yourself, but this would be more complicated and there would be some rules to follow. Keep it simple for now and use one of the Healing Affirmations above.

How to repeat your Healing Affirmation

You can repeat your Healing Affirmation mentally or out loud.

If you repeat it out loud, it's more effective, but you may want to do this only if nobody can hear you because people may not understand.

Where to repeat your Healing Affirmation?

It can be a park or your room. It's better if it's a place where nobody will disturb you.

I find that railway stations can be good because you can even repeat your Healing Affirmation out loud and nobody will care or they may even not hear you because of the noise.

Parks are better of course.

You can repeat your Healing Affirmation mentally when you are on the bus, when you are having breakfast, and at any time you aren't doing anything that needs concentration.

In these cases it may be more difficult to remember to do it.

How long to repeat your Healing Affirmation

Choose one or more places where you can repeat your Healing Affirmation with nobody disturbing you.

When you are there, repeat your Healing Affirmation for 30 minutes every day.

Even better repeat your Healing Affirmation for 10 minutes three times a day. It's more effective than 30 minutes once a day.

These are just examples. Trust yourself with finding your own pace.

The more you do the Art of Healing, the faster you learn it. This is true for any art.

Remember that I am with you

Every time you repeat your Healing Affirmation, remember that I am with you because I know how much you suffer. I suffered a lot too.

All the people who care about their own suffering and about others' suffering are with you as well.

They are a lot of people! :-)

They found their way out from their own suffering and they are rooting for you!

I am the first who roots for you! :-)

The Art of Healing takes long

Imagine that you broke a leg and that you had to stay in bed for a year. When you can walk again, you need many months to rehabilitate.

The same thing happens with depression. You lived a psychological earthquake and you need time to rebuild, so to speak.

You will see results in a few months and the more you do the Art of Healing, the faster you will see results.

Be stubborn

You need to be stubborn because initially "the voice of your depression" is still strong.

That "voice" will tell you that you can't make it, that you don't deserve it and it will try to discourage you all the time.

Initially, it's good if you can repeat your Healing Affirmation a lot. As much as possible.

Every time "the voice of your depression" tells you that you shouldn't repeat your Healing Affirmation, disobey it and repeat the Healing Affirmation anyway.

The Art of Healing is compatible with any other form of help

Consider that you can do the Art of Healing and any other therapy at the same time.

If you are doing talk therapy or art therapy or taking medications, you can still do the Art of Healing.

It will accelerate your recovery.

Remember that you deserve all the help in the world.

In case of crisis

Let me tell you about the "emergency plan" in case of crisis or panic.

First of all, the most important thing to remember is that it's not a championship.

If, in case of crisis or panic, you can't manage to do what I'm going to tell you, relax, it's OK, it happens.

Crisis and panic can be faster than you and prevent you from even remembering your own name, let alone my instructions. ;-)

I know, I have been there.

In such a case, it's one of those cases when we can practise being kind with ourselves.

Just say to yourself: "It's OK, it adds to experience."

Well, let's come to the instructions.

When you feel the crisis or the panic attack come, find a quiet place.

You need to find a place where you can be alone because, you know, people understand nothing about depression and may make things worse.

When you are alone, sit comfortably.

It's better not to lie down, it makes things more complicated.

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Sit comfortably with your back upright. On a chair or on the floor.

How upright? Very upright, a bit upright? Am I too upright? How to sit? Am I sitting correctly?

All these questions will certainly come out.

Ignore them all.

Just change position if it's uncomfortable and avoid lying down.

Repeat your Healing Affirmation out loud if possible. It's more effective.

There is no need to ask yourself if you are repeating it too quickly or too slowly or whatever, just repeat the Healing Affirmation, it will do its job.

If you can't repeat the Healing Affirmation out loud, move your lips as if pretending that you are talking, but without actually producing sound.

This is still more effective than repeating the Healing Affirmation mentally, which in case of crisis or panic is not going to be very effective.

It's good if you can remember to smile as if to say "I'm smarter than you, crisis!" (or "I'm smarter than you, panic!").

If you forget to smile, relax, it's not a problem.

Repeat the Healing Affirmation continuously. Ignore any other thought, feeling, whatever happens in your mind.

It's good if you know in advance where to go in case of crisis or panic. For example, imagine you are at home.

The place where to go may be your room, and this is simple. Or it may be another place.

It may be outside.

If it's outside, you have to consider that that place may not be comfortable when it's raining or cold.

The best is a place that is likely to be OK at any time.

Some examples: railway stations, schools, chapels and churches, shopping centres, monasteries, daycare centres, parks.

The best are those where you can repeat the affirmation out loud or, anyway, loudly.

Like railway stations (they are so noisy that nobody will notice you), covered benches in parks, the underground and bus stations.

It's important to know in advance the place where to go so that it is easier to find it when you are having a crisis.

I know that in case of crisis or panic everything is difficult.

It's a bit like finding the fire exit to use in case of fire. If you find it in advance, it's easier to find it when there actually is a fire.

It's good if you do the Art of Healing at that place in advance a few times, say at least 5-10, to see if it's actually comfortable and to "remember" the place as a place for the Art of Healing.

Bibliography

Rowe, Dorothy. [Beyond Fear](#).

Dorothy is a well-known expert in depression. I think that she understands about depression much more than many other psychologists.

Her Beyond Fear is about depression, schizophrenia, mania, obsessions and compulsions. In it, Dorothy dispels many myths about these psychological problems.

Rowe, Dorothy. [Depression: The Way Out of Your Prison](#).

This shorter book is about depression only.

Rogers, Carl. [Way of being](#).

Carl's person-centred therapy is a pillar in Western psychology. He has given a human aspect to an inhuman psychology.

He explains the damages that our educational system causes on our children.

Rogers, Carl. [Freedom to learn](#).

This looks to me expensive and huge, but if you want to learn deeply about the damages of education, Carl is who to learn from.

Gatto, John Taylor. [Dumbing Us Down](#).

I talked about him above when explaining the damage of the [emotional dependence](#) caused by schools.

John was a first-class teacher before he stopped teaching because he didn't want to hurt children to make a living anymore.

Kohn, Alfie. [Punished by Rewards](#).

Our sick culture is dominated by the obsession of control.

In this book, Alfie talks about one aspect of the culture of control. He talks about rewards. He uses plenty of studies to show how rewards actually are negative, dangerous and bring to the opposite result in the long run.

Rewards are bribery and they humiliate and hurt as any sort of bribery does.

Huxley, Aldous. [Brave New World](#).

Aldous foresaw the disintegration of human dignity that is taking place right now. He foresaw that our profoundly sick society would have used drugs to solve the problem. Actually drugs add insult to injury if a sincere respect of human dignity is missing.

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More bibliography in the following appendix, Psychology for Teenagers.

Appendix A: Psychology for Teenagers

(Click on the book's title to get your own copy with free delivery worldwide.)

What is psychology about

Psychology is about knowing ourselves. To know ourselves is the first step towards feeling at ease with ourselves. This because what you don't know scares you, while what you know doesn't.

This knowledge about yourself will make you free. Until you don't know yourself, you risk to find someone who tells you that they know you better than yourself. They will want you to obey them because they know you and what you should and shouldn't do.

You could come to obey them exactly because you don't know yourself very well and are unsure. Those who say that they know you actually don't. They want only to have power on you and their interest in power is selfish. Their interest in your happiness is false, hypocrite or based on misconceptions of happiness.

What psychology is not about

Psychology, and psychology for teenagers is no exception, is not about:

- judging oneself
- correcting oneself
- lying to oneself
- improving oneself

Knowledge is acquired by learning, and learning is an art

I said that psychology is about knowing yourself. With some sort of psychological studying you acquire knowledge about yourself. Knowledge is acquired by learning. You are learning about yourself.

Learning is an art. Like singing or painting. Any art has four fundamental requirements. They are: interest, concentration, time, practice.

Interest

Any art requires a spontaneous, genuine and free interest in it. Let's take the art of playing piano. To have a child learn this art if they aren't genuinely, spontaneously and freely interested in it, is an insult to all famous pianists of all times and to art itself.

Concentration

To learn anything requires concentration. It's hard to play piano if you are watching TV at the same time. It's important that this concentration hasn't a compulsory quality.

Time

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Any sort of knowledge requires its time for its acquisition. Freedom and genuine motivation work marvels with this.

Practice

Any art requires practice. Sometimes years of it, sometimes months.

The art of learning psychology for teenagers makes no exception. It has these same four requirements as any other art.

How to read a psychological book

Before introducing my favoured books of psychology, I want to give some suggestions about how to read them.

First of all, don't search for behaviour advice in a psychological book. It can happen that the author of the book you are reading makes an example or tells a story and you deduce a suggestion about what you should do and what not. It's automatic in a culture obsessed with control. I have done this sort of mistake many times.

The best psychologists are like a midwife. They help you with giving birth to your own truth about yourself.

They don't tell you anything about:

- who you are
- how your mind works
- what you should do

They are a bit like the philosophers of the ancient Greece who helped their disciples to extract their very own truth from their mind.

Now, let me begin this journey through psychology for teenagers with my favoured psychologist, Erich Fromm.

Erich Fromm

On disobedience

Disobedience is essential for the survival of mankind. When the destructive forces of authoritarian power depress the spontaneous and constructive unfolding of human powers, disobedience is needed to give breath again to an authentically human existence. Authoritarian power destroys the faith in ourselves we need for everything we do in life.

If you think that authoritarian power is a thing of the past, think again. Modern man is enslaved by the invisible power of conformity.

Man for himself

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Fromm explains his vision of “productive” man. He tells us why and how we should direct our efforts to make man fall in love with his constructive powers and fully express them. He warns us against the destructive notion of “productivity” based on selfishness and greediness.

He describes four types of destructive orientations which are very common in our society.

The receptive

It's the dumb consumer who swallows down products driven by hypnotic advertisements. To them everything is to be received and nothing given. They lack of initiative and of truly original thinking. They swallow ideas as well. They don't have any trust in any their own effort.

The exploitative

They get what they want by force or deceit. They don't produce ideas, they steal them. As the receptive, they depend on the others. They destroy instead of create.

The hoarding

The hoarding destroys by being obsessed with possessing things and people. Their main characteristic is to live in a constant fear of losing what they possess. They relate with people and things only in terms of possession.

The marketing oriented person

They consider themselves as things to sell at the best price on the market. Their main concern is not to give meaning to their life, but to keep salable. They suffer from a high degree of insecurity because the market deciding their price is volatile as any other market.

Fear of freedom

Why people fear freedom? Because we are creatures of infinite possibilities, but our education utterly fails to breathe into us the biggest possible faith in our human powers. Unfortunately our education is in the hands of irrational powers which are against the unfolding of our creativity.

Fromm describes here three ways our longing for freedom degenerates into destructive attitudes for lack of faith in our potential to make the most of freedom.

The Authoritarian

This kind of attitude sees a person scared by freedom degenerate into a desire for order. They will submit to an authority which will give them the illusion of order as if this could ever eliminate the intrinsic unpredictability of life. They indulge in sadistic and masochistic behaviours.

The Destructive

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Like the authoritarian, the destructive seek solace from the anxiety freedom gives them not in faith in their powers, but in control. The difference is that they destroy what they can't control.

The Automaton

The automaton too escapes freedom. They do it by strictly conforming to society. They don't want to have independent thoughts, they would make them anxious. They want to feel, behave and think like the mass.

All these three attitudes lower our dignity as human beings, which needs freedom and faith in ourselves to be fully respected.

The Sane Society

My copy of this book is covered in underlinings. In this book, Fromm makes the best investigation of the insanity of modern society I know about. His ideas have been strongly rejected by those who have a selfish interest in keeping the status quo. This has happened because these ideas are completely true.

I want to extract just three of them from this book.

Alienation

Do you remember the legend of the King Midas who transformed into gold everything he touched? Modern culture transforms into economic values and abstract objects everything it touches. People, relationships and things are now seen as having more or less economic value, and as abstract objects to manipulate in big quantities.

In particular, we ourselves are now considered as abstract objects to manipulate instead of real human beings. We are dealt with using one-size-fits-all rules in the same way as objects are treated in factories.

Alienation means also that we are manipulated so that our work fits to the work of others to produce some final product or service, but we aren't allowed to understand these other activities which contribute to make our own work useful and meaningful. One more problem is that we have almost no say in how our work or the work of others should be performed.

Is life worth living?

The sickness of modern culture produces this question about life being worth living or not as it was an enterprise which should show a profit. People commit suicide because they think their life isn't worth living as if their life was supposed to show a profit as an enterprise does. Our sick culture wants to give an economic value to everything, and it's doing the same with our own life.

Actually, to ask yourself if your life is worth living or not is nonsensical.

Craving for acceptance

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Modern man seems to be very concerned with being accepted. Since he has been transformed into an economic and abstract thing, little is left of his humanity. He seeks identity in some sort of conformity.

You can hear a lot of people around you saying that they are workers, entrepreneurs, managers, believers in something, consumers, members of a community, and so on. Everyone seems unable to live without a label on their forehead. Someone still says: "I am I, I'm more than a label!" But they are seen with suspicion.

This craving for acceptance is stronger now than in the past, and it's source of great anxiety and worrying because any our deviation from the norms of the group we want to be accepted by puts this acceptance at risk.

Personally, if I'm not accepted by a group I am supposed to be accepted by, I celebrate. It means that something is left of my humanity.

A.S. Neill

I couldn't end my journey in psychology for teenagers without talking about one of my best loved heroes, A.S. Neill.

He is the founder of Summerhill School, the school which teaches happiness.

Summerhill

In this book A.S. Neill describe his experiment in abolishing fear in education. His experiment is the demonstration that freedom and absence of fear work, and that an education based on respect of man and of his potential is possible.

Summerhill shows that the idea that man is bad and that only fear can prevent him from doing bad things is completely unfounded.

The opposite is true. It's exactly the fear used to educate that makes some children bad.

Conclusion

There could be more to say about psychology for teenagers. The most important thing to say is: "Trust your intuition!" Do it before the insincerity of adult world captures you!

Appendix B: Articles that I've written for others

Undoing the harm of education: my way out of depression

Once upon a time there was a scared child. That was many years ago. Now there is a writer making his contribution to solve the sad problem of depression in teenagers.

My mother was hysterical. Her outbursts were very scary. Quite often it happened that she broke dishes or mugs.

I remember I feared that she might explode at any moment. I was very careful not to say or do something that could provoke such explosions. But I was a child, I couldn't help but make trouble now and then.

Actually I was very quiet. I could stay on my potty for hours if my mother forgot me. She was happy that I made little trouble. I did so because I was scared. I think that my fear training began when I was in the womb.

I have to say that I've been lucky not to have my aunt as a mother. My mother's sister was even more hysterical. She threw dishes and cupboards. Her children had to kneel down on dry chickpeas as a punishment. At least my parents didn't torture me in such a way.

But they beat me quite often. I, in turn, used to beat my dog. He escaped eventually. Good for him.

I think that the worst was that they pretended to say to me that they loved me and that they were teaching me all that violence for my own good.

My father was depressed. In many cases depression becomes anger.

For many years we had a door with a hollow. My father made it by punching the door.

Why did he do this? You have to know that my sister used to lock herself in her room when my parents were chasing her to punish her. My father punched the door to convince her to open it.

Another time my sister was again locked in her room. My mother convinced her to open the door saying that she wouldn't beat her. When my sister opened the door, my mother beat her harshly. I don't think I have to explain how much this betrayal was traumatic for my sister and for me.

Was I shy during my childhood? I was scared. Everyone I met reminded me of my mother's outbursts and of my father's violence. I was always expecting similar

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outbursts from them. I know that it isn't rational and that not everybody was like my parents. But it's hard to be rational if you are scared. And it's hard to be rational for a child when adults find it so hard themselves.

Actually, people have scared me for a long time even as an adult. It got better when I began to do therapy.

When I was a teen, what saved me was my interest in computers. They were much more reliable and predictable than my parents. No outbursts there. Computers just do what you tell them to do.

With computers I was in my world, where I could create at leisure. While at home and at school I was in a dictatorship; with my computers I had freedom. Freedom heals.

I say 'computers' because I was well-known in all the data centres of my town. I enjoyed programming computers as big as a wardrobe, or so small that they became too hot so that after a few minutes working you couldn't touch them any longer. You had to switch them off and wait for them to cool down.

I won't talk about my relationships with girls. They were just as scary as anyone else.

I remember that I had a suspicion. I thought that it was possible to think with your head and to question everything. But when I tried to do this, I saw that everybody around me was scared by this idea. We are in a dictatorship disguised as freedom.

After I graduated, I had my first episode of depression.

For a few days in a row I couldn't sleep at all. To eat was a pain. I was restless. I couldn't sit on a chair – I had to get up immediately. It's because I hoped to find a position in which my pain was lowered, but there were none.

I had great luck. I found a very good therapist who treated me as a human being, not as a broken brain. He was sincerely interested in me. He was truly listening.

Once, I had a doubt. I was really struggling to make a decision. He said to me: "Trust your head!" It was life-changing. I didn't believe that I could trust my head.

He also told me that, because of my childhood, I might have become schizophrenic. Knowing how schizophrenics are treated, I have escaped a great danger.

My first episode of depression lasted six months. My therapist never told me that drugs were a cure for depression or that depression was a lifelong illness. He wasn't interested in selling drugs. He was really interested in me. Unfortunately six months of talking therapy weren't enough, but I couldn't continue because I had to move to another town.

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I went on with my life pretending that all was fine. I had just the stress that everyone else has. If everybody has it, what's wrong?

Later on, I had a second episode of depression. This one was worse and lasted for much longer.

I've taken antidepressants but, at the same time, I've done therapy. I have changed therapists three times. It's difficult to find a therapist who is serene, alive and inspires confidence. Many only apply abstract and impersonal theories.

The good one that I eventually found was very serene and sincerely interested.

At that time I was already suspecting that psychological problems don't need to be for life and that you don't have to depend on drugs or psychologists forever.

She confirmed this suspicion of mine. She said that there shouldn't be a need for psychologists, actually. She said that, while education is about making you dependent and submissive, good psychology is about making you independent.

She also changed my life telling me: "Trust your feelings!" I was so busy correcting and judging my feelings that I didn't believe that I could trust them.

My search for good psychology had just started. I was determined to find the solution.

I have had one more encounter. A very empowering one. I met a Buddhist monk. Once, he read a page from a sacred book and at the end he said: "Be free to find what is true for you."

I was shocked! We can find truth by ourselves? No monopoly of the truth? This has been very encouraging. Truth didn't need to be a means to oppress people, but rather a path of self-discovery.

Later on, I began to read a lot of books about psychology. Every one of them had a bit of truth in it. No one of them was to be taken as absolute truth. Many were plain wrong. There is a large part of psychology that is just as sick as modern society is.

I discovered that all this studying of psychology can be dangerous if you aren't careful. It can happen that you fall in love with a psychological school of thought, and you use the 'psychological truths' you learned as weapons against yourself and others.

I've done hypnotherapy with the assistance of a psychologist. A very beautiful hypnotherapy based on the archetype of the [Great Mother](#).

My life has changed. My view of the world has been transformed. I don't believe in neuroplasticity because I've read a book about it. I've seen it happen.

It has been a very rewarding path. I've discovered that every 'truth' our society is based on is false and insane. These 'truths' are kept alive by continuous repetition as in Brave New World by Aldous Huxley. What a pity that he didn't see any solution to social insanity. There are, there are.

Despite social conditioning being so strong, we can still think and trust our feelings and our thoughts. A human society is still possible. Society doesn't need to be cruel and hostile, to use the words of Noam Chomsky.

I'm still studying psychology. My favorite psychologist is Erich Fromm.

Now I practise self-love because how could I not love that dear scared child that I was?

I am unconditionally on the side of depressed teens who are the true victims of the many forms of Western societies' psychological violence, which are given attractive names like 'discipline', 'valuable teachings', 'competition', 'excellence', 'success', 'merit', 'individualism', 'goodness', 'perfection', 'obedience', 'grades'.

I've learned to see behind words, so I don't believe any one of them.

I wish insane Western cultures to find their way towards a more human way of life. It's possible. It can be done.

Depressed teens: what if it's us who make them depressed?

It's all circling around the problem. Depression in teenagers is a chemical imbalance. Depression in teenagers is a problem of hormones. It's the neurotransmitters. It's serotonin. It's Facebook. It's too much TV. It's that black cat passing under that ladder.

Let's spell it out clearly. It's high time we take the matter seriously, take the bull by the horns.

The bull is modern society with its depressing influence. But, wait a moment, who are we to challenge society? How can we question society when our survival depends on it? How can we cut the umbilical cord that binds us to it and that supplies us with such nourishing food?

The answer is simple: society is us. We have the possibility, the right and the pleasure of challenging ourselves.

We like depressed children, don't we?

So, let's begin. There is so much to challenge...

It might sound absurd, but we like depressed children. Let's begin with a simple case.

Dirty children

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You have a £3,000 sofa at home and have hatched out a long series of punishments and rewards to defend your sofa from your painfully dirty children (“When will they ever become clean?”).

The problem is that a child that doesn't get dirty isn't a child, is a creature from another world. It's children's nature to get dirty. If we force them to be what they aren't, we are depressing them because depression results from being forced to be what we aren't.

Here there is one more problem. We are telling children that they are less important than our beloved sofa. It's like to say that humans are less important than things. This is how it begins. Depression I mean.

Your children are more important than things. You are more important than things.

Get rid of that sofa, transform your home into a playground and play with your children.

Curious children

We find curious children annoying, don't we? All those questions! And what if children want to follow the path of their curiosity instead of being continuously taken back to the 'right' path?

After all, all this taking children back to the 'right' path is teaching them the value of discipline, isn't it?

What if it's depressing instead? What if this so-called discipline, presented as good, is one more way to inculcate in children's minds that they don't deserve to trust their curiosity? What if it's all about making clear to them that all that they are allowed to do is to serve someone else's purposes? How depressing!

Obedient children

We like obedient children. Those who obey, never asking why. First, we like them because they please us by obeying our orders. Second, we like them because they don't ask why.

If they ask why, we dish our pre-cooked thoughts out very quickly to them. Any pause would be embarrassing because it would contain an implicit question: “But dad, did you think about it by yourself or are you dishing out someone else's thought?”

Who has the time to think by themselves nowadays?

And the problem is: what if all this reheated thought is insulting to our power of thinking new thoughts?

What if our children would appreciate being taught to use their minds to think fresh thoughts? What if parents too would appreciate this but dare not reveal this inner desire of theirs for fear of disapproval?

Children? Good to earn approval

We very much like humble children who are willing to be used to get some approval from society. We educate them (or we use them?) so that we can get approval for their 'successful' education.

Modern people are in dire need of approval because they are empty. If they don't get the approval they need so badly, what will they do? Follow their dreams? What? Dreams?

What if being used to earn approval is depressing?

Children wanting to be successful

We like children who are obediently willing to be put on the 'right' path to success. We get scared if they don't want this and disobey. Failure scares us. It does so because we give society the power of deciding if we are a success or a failure.

Stop doing this. Take back this power and give success your very personal definition. Don't give a damn about what society defines as success. It's a sick society.

What is depressing here, more than being forced on a path that is not ours, is this unhealthy emotional dependence on society, allowing it to direct your life.

Respect and its disintegration in western society

Depressed teenagers suffer from lack of respect. We too. All of our authentically human desire has been wiped out by social and economic priorities which we perceive as inescapable laws.

Modern people have to be willing to be manipulated and like it in addition. As a reward for this willingness to be manipulated, they are given money, power and a lot of stuff. This looks too much like bribery.

We are in dire need of refusing social manipulation, and if this results in this social structure crumbling away, never mind, a new and better one will follow.

"You must not lose faith in humanity. Humanity is an ocean; if a few drops of the ocean are dirty, the ocean does not become dirty." (Mahatma Gandhi)

Six ways you can help your depressed teenager

Dear parent with a depressed teenager,

Don't worry about your teen's depression. It's easy to treat. Your teen will be happy again.

Depressed teens have within them the resources to heal themselves. These resources have only to be woken up.

I'm going to suggest you six ways in which you can help your depressed teenager while they heal.

First: Don't pressure

Modern society gets us used to seeking instant gratification of whatever we want. This makes us unable to work for things that require time. We can still seek something that takes time to obtain, but we get nervous or we don't see the point in it.

Your teen's depression is a good opportunity to learn to enjoy both instant gratifications and long term ones.

Depression is the result of an intense yet carefully repressed feeling of fear that, eventually, manifests itself in the characteristic symptoms of this illness. Dorothy Rowe explains how this happens in her [Beyond Fear](#). I recommend reading this book.

This fear has to be drained away little by little. This requires time. In particular, this requires that your teen is given all the time needed. No deadline, no expectation, no pressure should disturb the natural process of healing.

Second: Suspend judgments

If your parenting style relies heavily on judgments, your teen's depression is the occasion to suspend them completely.

A judgment is very stressing because it produces fear. When judged, your teen unconsciously thinks: "Will mum and dad still love me if I fail to comply with their judgments?" This produces more fear.

Fear is what depression is made of. Depressed teens need to drain it away, they don't need more of it.

Third: Don't pressure socialisation

Don't pressure your depressed teenager to socialise. They need rest and absence of fear. Socializing can be stressful because it may be associated with pressure to perform.

Let them decide: they know better than us. Maybe they have friends with whom they don't feel pressured to perform.

Fourth: Suspend the punishments-and-rewards pedagogy

If you use punishments and rewards to control your teen, it's important to put them away for a while if your teen suffers from depression.

They are another source of fear. They may be effective in controlling your teen's behaviour, but problems arise if we give them their true names.

Punishments are actually violence and rewards are actually bribery. Together, they are manipulation.

They create fear because they produce an unconscious question: "Do mum and dad really love me if they manipulate me?"

You will never hear teens explicitly articulate this question because they can't live with the idea that you don't love them; unfortunately the suspicion is there and produces fear.

If they are depressed, their fear is big and they don't need more of it. Restrain your punishments-and-rewards pedagogy for a while; you can resume it later, when your teen recovers from depression.

In particular, don't use punishments or rewards to persuade your depressed teenager to follow a prescribed therapy. This would be a mixed message which would do more harm than good.

Fifth: Suspend expectations

Expectations are one of the most important and immediate sources of psychological suffering.

They come in many forms.

Teens can be expected to:

- behave
- be good at school
- be successful
- perform socially
- keep their rooms tidy

and more.

Expectations are hurtful for adults too. For some they are almost a matter of life and death. If they expect success and achievement and life fails to deliver them, it's a tragedy.

But life is not supposed to live up to our expectations.

When your teens are depressed, it's time to put aside your expectations of them. Expectations are hurtful, they produce fear.

Your depressed teen is thinking: "Why can't my parents love me if I fail to meet their expectations?" This is stressful and makes things worse.

Sixth: Do something for your nervousness

These days it seems that, if you aren't nervous, you are from another planet.

If nervousness is a problem for you, it's good to take care of it.

If you don't take care of your nervousness, it's like you say to your teen:

"Do you see? I take care of everything but myself. I don't deserve to take care of myself and neither do you."

This is a depressing message to send to your already depressed teen.

If you take care of yourself and of your nervousness, you send instead a message like:

"Do you see? I take care of myself, I deserve it and you deserve it too."

This is a positive message that your depressed teen will welcome.

Depression in teenagers: how to turn it into a gift

Depression in teenagers is real suffering as much any other psychological problem. It's a cry for help and a message waiting to be listened to. It's a gift given to a sick society which fails to appreciate it.

I've been depressed and I know that it hurts from first-hand experience. I have also been determined to transform it into a gift.

Depression is a gift

Depression is a gift because it tells us that we are living an inhuman life. We are manipulated to serve someone else's purposes but something in us screams against it.

The good news is that we can listen to depression and learn. We can take advantage of its message and learn to give our personal meaning to our lives instead of obeying the nihilist forces that want to use us for their own purposes.

Nihilist forces opposed to human psychological growth are unfortunately one of the main characteristics of the profoundly sick Western societies. They have a long tradition, now they are just getting worse.

The good news is that they have no power over us if we don't give it to them.

Why people find depression scary

What prevents people from taking advantage of the precious message depression holds for us?

Let's have a look at the attitude people have towards depression.

Depression seems to be a dirty word to people. This is because they have an even bigger problem and depression reminds them of it. It tells them about the elephant in the room that they don't want to see.

Depression reminds people that they are depressed as well and that they are wasting their lives by accepting being manipulated to serve the purposes of the nihilist forces I mentioned above.

To realize this is harsh, but it's liberating as well.

Modern man is depressed

As I said, people don't want to know about depression because they are depressed as well and they don't want to see it. It's too disturbing.

They are manipulated to be depressed from a young age. Depression means that you accept becoming powerless and surrender your human powers to someone else. Absence of depression means that you trust yourself with using your human powers and become the leader of your life. It also means that everyone around you helps you to give birth to your human powers simply because in a sane society everyone helps everyone else.

Modern people are manipulated to become docile consumers who don't even know why they consume. They have to accept being conditioned by advertising to consume compulsively and to forget that they have the human power of making sense of their purchases.

Those who work to make goods have to be humiliated by seeing that the result of their efforts will be treated with very little respect and forgotten quickly to be replaced by other stuff in a frenzy of nonsense shopping.

Modern people are bored while at the same time they are asked to fake excitement.

If we are bored, we have a problem. We are failing to make sense of our lives and to give them our personal meanings. This happens easily in a society in which others want to decide about the meaning of our life. This is depressing.

We can make sense of our lives if we are given, or give ourselves, an authentic freedom to express ourselves and to fall in love with our genuine and spontaneous interests.

In modern society freedom is fake and conformity, which is the opposite of freedom, is enforced instead by the use of psychological violence.

Disobedience is key

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Depressed teenagers are the ones who suspect that this conformity presented as something good is actually psychological violence. They have to trust this suspicion and rebel against conformity.

This is difficult to do because conformity is forced on them with so much psychological violence, now with the use of psychotropic drugs as well.

The last achievement of the science of violence is to give hyperactive children, who are simply genuine children, some drugs to dumb them down.

Can depressed teenagers hope? Yes, they can because despite the violence presented as good by the forces of nihilism, non-violence is still possible. It requires disobedience and courage, which are still available to us if we decide to use them.

Depression in teens: are there natural alternative treatments?

Depression in teenagers is a serious problem growing in importance. Alcohol and narcotics consumption and other addictions are more and more used to find a surrogate happiness when a true one is denied or absent.

Let's take drugs, everything will be fine

Modern medicine cranks out antidepressants and other psychotropic drugs more and more easily. Why not take advantage?

If a teenager misbehaves, let's give her a drug. If she doesn't pay attention, another drug. Let's keep her out of school if she doesn't want to take her medication. If she's upset or sad, a bit of something in her meal will do. She throws a tantrum? Medications will save us.

Do these medicaments work? Yes they do. They suppress tantrums, distractions, misbehaviour and life in teenagers.

Well, psychotropic drugs smell so artificial. Let's go natural.

Hypericum

Hypericum is a herb known for thousands of years. It is effective as an antidepressant and it seems to have less side effects. It's even cheaper than many artificial antidepressants.

This may sound like good news to our depressed teenagers.

What antidepressants do

Antidepressants stimulate the production of some substances in our brain that make us feel good. They are called neurotransmitters. A depressed teenager has a brain in which these substances are less present than in a 'normal' brain.

Incidentally, what a 'normal' brain might look like is doubtful. Can we really call 'normal' a brain which is the result of the education given by a profoundly sick society? I seriously doubt it.

That a depressed brain lacks some feel-good substances doesn't mean that this lack of substances is a cause of depression. Antidepressants don't solve the causes of depression, they only repair this lack of well-being substances which is an effect of depression.

Drugs and beliefs

It seems that the quality of the therapeutic relationship that forms between a depressed teenager and her therapist is more important than the drug.

Your therapist might believe, maybe unconsciously, that you don't really deserve happiness and health and that your destiny is to become an obedient, docile and selfless producer and consumer. With his help you will become well-functioning and productive again, but I am not sure that you will have cured your depression.

Modern man is said to be basically depressed. Maybe we can't take modern man as a reference in judging our level of depression.

Your therapist might not give a damn for society and its craziness and sincerely believe that you really deserve happiness and health. He will pass on this belief to you. This is a better therapeutic relationship, one that can really transform you and lift the weight of depression forever.

The actual engine producing depression is the set of beliefs which we have formed about ourselves.

Depression is more similar to a skill we have learned. It's like an unconscious mechanism we have learned that says: "In case of adversity let's become powerless."

Let's go natural or let's go human?

What is there behind this "Let's go natural"? More and more people want to regain authentic contact with Nature.

What does this mean? Aren't we Natural? Why do we feel this urge to contact Nature when we *are* Nature. Aren't we? There is no single cell in my body that isn't natural.

Let's rephrase the question. Why do we perceive ourselves as not being natural?

One more consideration: why are we so attracted by Nature when the most powerful poisons and the most life-taking disasters are natural?

It's well-known that green is the most relaxing colour. Some shades of green are used in hospitals to relax the patients.

But hemlock is green as well, and I wouldn't say it's relaxing unless I want to make a black humour joke.

No man-made things there

I'll make a guess. I'll say that we love green and Nature because there are no man-made things there.

What's the problem with man-made things? There are a lot of useful man-made things. I'm using one of them right now! It's very useful and allows me to talk with the entire world!

Really there are no problems with man-made things. The problem is that they remind us of our inhuman way of life.

Depression in teenagers is actually a message. It urges us to think about a more human society.

Talking openly about mental health? It's a service to society

Make the most of the awful things that happen to you. This is good advice. Unfortunately, it happens that we spend a long time self-commiserating. Why did it happen to us? This is to waste time and to lack respect toward ourselves. I know that a lot of people indulge in self-commiseration, but this isn't a good thing to do if you suffer from depression.

I played this masochistic game of self-commiseration for a while. Later, I stopped playing it and I decided that I wanted to know.

The end of the story is that now I make my small contribution to solve the serious problem of depression in teenagers. They are the true victims of our society's insanity.

My first depression

I had just graduated. My first depression announced itself by making me unable to sleep for a few days in a row.

Was it the intense effort required to graduate that made me depressed? No, what happens to us is never a cause of depression.

I was medicated, but drugs simply work on the symptoms, they don't really get to the roots of the problem.

Depression is real suffering and it's a message. I didn't listen to the message then. I took my drugs and kept going.

My second depression

Later, I had a second episode of depression. But this time I wanted to know. I wanted to understand. And I was feeling brave enough to listen to my depression's message.

Is it any use to describe in great detail your depressed feelings? No, it isn't. When we are depressed, it's hard to see things objectively. Everything is black and bigger than it really is.

It's a psychological phenomenon called narcissism. It's very common. When we are depressed, it's just more intense.

Looking at the negative feelings we have when we are depressed is like watching a bacterium through an electronic microscope. It looks as big as a dirigible, but it's not.

It's better to focus on the way out than to give much importance to the distorted perceptions we have when we are depressed.

Studying psychology

After this second episode of depression, I wanted to know. I began to read as many books as possible about psychology. And also philosophy, self-help and whatever. I wanted to solve the problem, not only the symptoms.

I read more than 100 books, I practised self-hypnosis, meditation, NLP, you-name-it.

Eventually, you have to become your own psychologist, but until you are there, many psychologists can help you. I'm thinking of Erich Fromm, A.S. Neill, C.G. Jung, J. Krishnamurti, and Carl Rogers.

Other psychologists do more harm than good. You have to trust your instinct to choose the right psychologist for you.

Since I'm concerned about depressed teenagers, my thoughts go instantly to those psychologists who give drugs to teenagers who are hyperactive and don't pay attention. It's the ultimate form of violence by a society unable to accept us as we are and busy manipulating us for the selfish purposes of someone else.

What to say to depressed teenagers

First: please, don't let a profoundly sick society manipulate you. Society should humbly beg your pardon for the psychological violence it inflicts on you.

Society should learn from depressed teenagers. I know that it's commonly believed that children have only to learn and can't teach anything to adults. The latter have all the answers. Instead, children have a lot to teach a rotten society. They are still pure. At least before we make them impure, they can teach us.

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Second: refuse society's morals. They are actually immoral because they serve the selfish interests of others.

Third: trust yourself and love what you can do and what you like. Even in a sick society you can express your creativity instead of becoming a cog in the production machine. It's hard, but it can still be done.

Fourth: regain the spontaneity that has been taken away from you. Don't throw away your humanity as you are pressured to do.

Fifth: become the leader of your life. Don't let anybody use you for their selfish purposes.

Conclusion

Depression is a gift if you listen to its message. While a lot of people live their lives as robots, a few suspect that there is something wrong with this. They suffer from the conflict between the pressure to conform and their suspicion that this conformity is far from sane.

If you are depressed, you definitely have to trust your suspicions, not society. Society needs complete rethinking. Thinking is done by humans. Let's do it. Let's trust ourselves to do it.

Artistic expression of feelings can help depressed teens

Depression is a complex phenomenon. Many explanations have been given for it. In this article I will study the relationship between feelings and depression in teenagers.

It's commonly believed that the teenage years are characterised by intense and hard-to-control feelings.

Teenagers are often seen as problem-makers, unless they obey perfectly the expectations of society.

This conflict between society and teenagers' behaviour and feelings is culture-dependent. It can't be considered as a psychological trait common to all the cultures of the world.

That is, it can't be considered as an archetypal psychological trait. This means that a conflictual attitude of teenagers with society doesn't contribute to define human nature which has to be the same all over the world regardless of race, culture, nationality, gender, religion, and so on.

Since there is only one humankind, any psychological statement that fails to cross the boundaries of its culture of origin is wrong.

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It has to be seen if teenagers are problem-makers because of their wrong nature, or because they are so made.

Depression and feelings

Depression in teenagers might be caused by the strong pressure put on them to show the socially desirable feelings and repress the 'bad' ones.

Teenagers might be problem-makers because they desire to see their authentic feelings accepted instead of judged and moulded to fit an 'ideal' model.

One of the main causes of depression is how we think about ourselves. If we have a positive outlook towards ourselves, we are less likely to fall sick from depression.

When concerned about feelings, we have two possible outlooks:

1. We may consider our authentic feelings, whatever they are, as deserving attention and interest.
2. We may consider them as being of no value or even just plain wrong and needing replacement with acceptable and desirable ones.

In the case of 2 we will please others by showing acceptable and desirable feelings. The problem with this arises from the fact that those feelings are false. We are required to lie to ourselves. We can call this problem, if you like, "hypocrisy applied to feelings".

This outlook towards our feelings is a negative belief and may cause depression in teenagers.

How does art help?

That art is a mean to express feelings doesn't require demonstration or explanation. Poetry, painting, dance, drama are all about feelings. Joy, passion, love, sadness, every human feeling has found its artistic expression.

All these artistic expressions of feelings are subjective. They belong to the artist who produced them. No definite representation of a human feeling can be found, and this is as it has to be.

Art helps exactly because, when we create, we are truly ourselves with no need for being hypocritical about our feelings.

Benefits of art therapy for depressed teenagers

Art therapy for depression in teenagers has many benefits over talk therapy. Let's highlight a few of them.

Depressed teens might associate talk therapy with judgments. Artistic expression doesn't suffer from this problem.

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Asking depressed teenagers to express their feelings by writing, drawing, acting or dancing, we eliminate judgment from the relationship between depressed teenagers and their therapists.

This happens because judgments are always delivered by talking. At least I don't know of parents, teachers or educators delivering judgments by drawing or writing.

One more problem that art therapy eliminates is the idea that talk therapy is for serious mental illnesses. This idea comes from how media portrays talk psychotherapy. It's useful if depressed teenagers can see their problem as not being serious. This makes the therapy more likely to succeed.

In some serious cases of depression, there might be issues of abuse at home. Depressed teenagers with a history of abuse might be told not to tell strangers about this abuse. But they aren't told not to draw or write about it.

A trained therapist will guess this problem of abuse from the drawings and writings that a depressed teenager produces.

I'm going to detail three art forms commonly involved in art therapy for depressed teenagers.

Writing therapy

Writing therapy is well known to be useful in treatment for depression in adults.

A therapist using writing therapy to help depressed teenagers could suggest keeping a daily diary in which teenagers will write freely about their feelings and about their reactions to events in daily life.

Depressed teenagers might be asked to write a short story where they are the main character.

Their depression can be investigated by having them write a portrait of their depression, or what their depression would look like if it was an animal.

Many other subjects to write about are possible. The therapist will use his creativity to find a subject that will enable depressed teenagers to express their feelings in the most complete way.

Drawing therapy

If writing recalls talking and its association with judgments, drawing eliminates this problem completely.

During a drawing therapy session, depressed teens may draw events in everyday life, an image of themselves, their sadness, the colour of their depression, a scene portraying their relationship with someone.

Dance therapy

Dance is powerful in telling the story of a feeling. Dance routines can be invented to tell what your anger is like and what happens to it.

Dance therapy can be performed in groups. In this case depressed teenagers dance the story of their feelings and the other teens attempt to understand it.

Turning depression into a gift

I had a suspicion. I guessed that there was something wrong and inhuman in what I was taught but I didn't dare question it. Precisely because it was taught me by the use of violence and fear, I was scared of questioning it.

I kept going on with my life as if there was no problem. I let fear run my life. I made some cosmetic changes to my life which, superficially, you would say were important. Actually, fear kept running my life.

One day something in me rebelled strongly. A conflict got too strong in my mind. It was the conflict between two things:

- the learned obedience to an inhuman society
- the suspicion that a more human way of life is possible and that I was right in wanting it

This conflict could be resolved only by total disobedience to a society based on psychological violence. The problem was that obedience had been forced on me for so long a time.

Now I realise that nonviolence is not only what we need to be psychologically healthy, but it's also more intelligent than violence. I realise also that nonviolence is possible even if we are firmly pressured to think that it's impossible by those who continuously use violence to control us.

They are so cunning that they will convince you that you need their violence and that they are violent to you for your own good.

I'm happy that I chose to disobey society and its violence. Now I make my contribution to solve the alarming problem of depression in teenagers.

Making sense of depression

I've been depressed and I know first-hand that it hurts. It's difficult to see it as a gift when your head is full of pain.

Everybody around you is scared by your depression and they don't want to help you even if they say the opposite. Actually they can't help you because they have an even bigger problem than yours but they don't know it.

They swim in an ocean of fear and psychological violence but they don't see it. They think that they are safe on the dry beach. The human mind is capable of wonderful things and also of infinite possibilities of self-cheating.

The problem with depression is that you feel guilty and defective because you don't function productively, you can't do what everybody does, you can't feel excited when everybody does, you don't enjoy your daily dose of shopping when everybody does.

Only later you realize that you are perfectly right in refusing to obey society's morality which is immoral because is based on psychological violence.

I realized that to make sense of depression I had to reverse the positions. I was one who sees and refuses to say what he doesn't see, while everybody around me refused to see and obeyed social violence.

Social violence: the punishments-and-rewards pedagogy

To describe all the forms of violence that society inflicts on us, hundreds of articles wouldn't suffice. Here I want to talk about one of them, the punishments-and-rewards pedagogy.

This sort of pedagogy is widely spread in the profoundly sick Western cultures.

The idea is that you want to produce a child who behaves, does well at school, pays attention, makes their parents proud by being successful, isn't angry, doesn't bully the other children.

But you think, or you are made to believe, that since your child is a beast capable of no good, you have to manipulate him by punishing him every time he doesn't behave as desired and reward him every time he does.

This violent way of taming might be good for horses even if with horses too there are more nonviolent ways to do it. With children, it's to forget that humans aren't animals, that they are capable of thinking and violence backfires with them.

It's because of the violence used to manipulate children that there are so many criminals and violent people. If we teach violence, we have to expect violence.

Other children will become violent against themselves and develop mental illnesses.

Others will deny that they were the object of violence and live all their life as if nothing happened. They will take care of this violence as if it was something precious to keep

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alive. This is a well-known attitude many victims have towards the violence that has been inflicted on them.

May I suggest that we are obsessed with using violence against children because we have forgotten how to love them?

What to say to depressed teenagers

Dear depressed teenager, I beg you for forgiveness on behalf of our violent (and stupid) society. I beg you to forgive all the violence you have been subjected to.

Maybe I can't do much to stop people from being violent to you, but I can tell you that it's definitely possible to learn not to be violent to ourselves and this helps.

Learn to heal your fear, you deserve it. Devote some time to healing your fear. Subtract time from other activities, make healing your fear the number one priority in your life.

Refuse society's morals. They are actually immoral because they are based on violence and serve the selfish interests of others.

Learn to trust yourself and love what you like and what you can do.

Preserve your spontaneity. Don't absorb the insincerity of the adult world. Don't throw away your humanity as you are asked to do.

Conclusion

Depression is a gift if we are brave enough to listen to its message. It urges us to rethink a society which has gone too far with its psychological violence.

We need to do this in order to find a solution to the nasty problem of depression in teenagers.

Are Drugs a Solution When Greed Is in Charge of Our Health?

It looks like depression in teenage years is happening more and more frequently.

It can only be sad to know that a teenager, who should be approaching life full of plans and dreams, has committed suicide instead.

One of the solutions to this troubling problem is drugs.

How do drugs work?

The use of drugs to treat mental illness is based on a theory of how our brain works.

This theory explains depression in terms of a lower presence of some chemical substances in our brains. These substances are involved in the working of

communication between neurons. This means that neurons communicate less efficiently with each other. This would cause depression.

It could be that this theory explains the effects of depression instead of its causes. Certainly, it doesn't explain why the lower level of these substances produces the thoughts of worthlessness, wickedness and strong guilt that most depressed people experience.

This theory is backed by genetics studies, but not every geneticist believes that genetics can explain the complex thinking and behaviour involved in depression.

Professor Steve Jones of London University points out that we don't understand much about the genetics of skin colour or nose shape. We shouldn't pretend to understand how genetics affect something so complex as human thought and behaviour.

There are also numerous examples of people who have been successful in changing completely their behaviour and way of thinking, and this despite their genes – which have obviously stayed the same. Our minds are a world of infinite possibilities. Teenagers' minds have even more possibilities.

Research is biased by huge economic interests

Our society has a problem. It rewards greed with money and power. This is an old problem. I am of the opinion that this problem is getting too big. When our health is at stake, this problem is even more critical.

Ben Goldacre has made a mission of raising awareness about biased medical research. He is a psychiatrist. He prescribes psychotropic drugs. He, just as any other doctor, studies all the research on a drug to determine its efficacy and side effects.

He discovered that many studies aren't published. As you can guess, the unpublished ones are the negative ones, the ones that would discourage doctors from prescribing a drug.

He takes the example of a drug for which 38 positive studies and 36 negative ones have been done. While it's possible to read all the 38 positive ones, only 6 out of the 36 negative ones are available.

It looks as if the problem is huge. It seems that negative research has, in general, half the chances of getting published.

Most of the studies are done secretly, and if a scientist wants to replicate the findings of a previous study to validate them, it's better if he gets positive results otherwise he will have a hard time finding a journal willing to publish his findings.

Science is based on openness and on the validation of findings by replicating them. With drugs, scientific method seems to be agonizingly stifled by economic interests.

Depressed teenagers deserve better treatment. Since the invention of a society which does not put greed in charge of our health seems far from seeing the light of day, we have to pay double attention to the psychotropic drugs we give to our teens.

Placebo, drugs and beliefs

There is a drug that does quite well at treating depression in teenagers and depression in general.

It's a placebo. Just take a sugar pill and your depression flies out of the window.

If you believe it. It looks as if both drugs and placebos are effective in treating depression if the patient believes that they will be effective.

Beliefs play a big part in the treatment of depression.

If depressed teenagers form the belief that they don't deserve to be healthy and happy, neither drugs nor placebos will work.

For this reason a therapy intended to change how depressed teenagers think about themselves and reality is necessary for drugs or placebos to work.

Beliefs are very powerful. They can even kill. A person found himself locked in a cold storage. He believed he could not survive the low temperature and died. It was ascertained that the temperature wasn't low enough to kill him. His belief killed him.

Happily, in spite of negative beliefs killing people, there are also positive ones that hand happiness back to depressed teenagers.

Depression in teens and the power of beliefs

Depression in teens seems to be one of the epidemics of our time.

To produce a statistic is quite difficult because depression can manifest itself in many ways. Depression can cause many levels of suffering.

Depressed teenagers may suffer intensely, but they can repress their feelings so well that they aren't aware of their suffering and present almost no symptoms.

Other depressed teens may be ashamed of their suffering and tell nobody about it.

Others may be told that their suffering is somehow noble and get no treatment for their depression.

Many teenagers learn to live with their suffering and keep it at a reasonable level. Nobody will ever know that they suffer from depression.

These complications make it difficult to define the statistics correctly. One teenager in eight suffering from depression may be a reasonable figure.

Are our genes responsible?

Some research is being done to investigate the genetic origins of depression.

Our brains are chemical machines. Some substances regulate the proper working of the channels that transmit information in our brains.

I don't like to continue with the description of our brains as machines. This could imply that we are machines as well, and that it's right to deal with humans as we do with machines. Just give them software to run and they will do what they are supposed to do.

The belief that humans are machines to be programmed with the right software is a negative belief. We have to spare our depressed teens this if they are to get well again.

Unfortunately, this is also a belief that modern production organization has injected into the collective image of the human being. We can still think and identify this idea in our minds and reject it.

Genes can't explain depression because they can't explain the complex behavior and thinking which it involves.

Contrary to what many people still believe, genes don't determine human behaviour and thinking. The proof is all those people who dramatically change their behaviour, feelings and view of the world over the course of their life. One of those people is writing these words right now.

Drugs, placebos and belief

Pharmaceutical companies have to carry on research to determine if a drug is effective and what its side effects are.

Many studies have been performed to compare one drug to others to see if it beats them in efficacy. These studies reveal a little known fact. There is a drug that performs quite well compared with others. It's the placebo.

A placebo should not perform well when compared to effective drugs. But depression is a psychological problem, so it should not surprise us if a placebo, which is not supposed to be effective, instead proves useful.

A psychiatrist can just give a depressed teenager a drug, or he can give him a drug plus an implied message that sounds like: "I trust you, you can be happy again!"

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This message is more important than the drug. Research has shown that the therapeutic relationship between depressed teens and their therapists is much more important than the drug itself in treating depression.

This happens because beliefs are very powerful in making depressed teenagers able to produce in their brains the substances that will heal them.

A therapist who genuinely believes in a depressed teenager is more 'effective' than the drug itself, and can make a placebo work for them.

Later on, depressed teenagers have to change their way of thinking so that their brains can continuously produce healing substances on their own. It's an art they can perform throughout their lives, and it's an enjoyable art.

Good treatment includes a change of beliefs

Good treatment for depression should never envisage only using drugs. What depressed teenagers think about themselves, others and the world has to be challenged and restructured.

This requires some time because time is needed to replace old dysfunctional beliefs with new positive ones. Modern culture wants us to seek instant gratification which can't be achieved in this case.

There is the problem of resistance to changing beliefs. Our beliefs are often thought to be part of our identity. If we change our beliefs, we may feel as if we are about to lose something essential.

Depressed teens have to overcome this resistance to changing their thinking. They can do this by trusting their inner desire for happiness and health.

Where are negative beliefs from?

The main cause of depression in teenagers is negative beliefs. Where are they from? Why are they causing so much depression?

Negative beliefs about who we are and what we can do have cultural and historical origins and tend to perpetuate themselves if left unchallenged.

They have been around for a long time. Why is it getting worse now?

Our modern times see one more big negative belief join the old ones.

It's the belief that we are supposed to become well-functioning cogs in the production-and-consumption machine and like it in addition. A very negative belief.

Because of this belief, many of us endure a meaningless life and repress our inner desire for a meaningful one.

Teenagers can develop depression if they take these beliefs very seriously. They have to get rid of all of them in order for them to be happy.

Depression in Adolescence: How Narcissism Can Be One of the Causes

We have a problem that is getting bigger as time goes on. It's the problem of depression in adolescence. In this article I'm going to investigate narcissism as one of the causes of depression in adolescence.

First, I need to attempt a definition of narcissism. Later, I will explain how narcissism can cause depression in adolescence.

Examples of narcissism

Before defining narcissism, I'll give a few examples of this psychological problem. These examples aren't a full definition, but they help to introduce it.

The World Saviour

This kind of narcissistic person thinks the world is waiting for them to make it consistent with a model they have in their mind.

The Profit Seekers

They perceive everything exclusively as an opportunity for profit.

The Pleasure Seeker

Everything around them is a tool they use to obtain pleasure. They want instant gratification.

The Power Obsessed

Things and people are only of relevance to the power obsessed as long as they can be used to enjoy power over them.

The Bad-and-Good Pigeonholer

They are busy pigeonholing, or classifying if you prefer, people as bad or good. In its most serious form, the bad-and-good pigeonholing attitude classifies all humankind as bad or good.

Basic traits of narcissism

From the examples above it's possible to extract a few traits common to all varieties of narcissism.

Narcissistic people are unable to genuinely relate to other people. A dialogue with them is a dialogue of the deaf.

It can't be otherwise because a narcissist's view of the world is more important than relationships with other people or even with themselves.

Between relationships and their view of the world, they choose their view of the world. It's a matter of life and death to them.

They react badly to criticism because they see it as an attack on views which are so important to them.

They are often manipulative because they want people and things to conform to the model they have in their mind.

Definition of narcissism

One more step towards understanding narcissism and its connection with depression in adolescence is to define it.

Narcissism is directing one's attention exclusively, or mostly, to a view of reality produced by one's desires and fears. Narcissists are unable to see reality as it is. They are concerned with only one aspect of reality: whether it's useful or dangerous to their goals.

Narcissism is the root of every mental illness

It's possible to find a narcissistic attitude in every type of mental illness. Let's consider the most extreme form of mental illness, insanity.

Narcissists find it difficult to relate objectively to things, events and people. Insane people have lost any relationship with them. They are unable to react to things and people, or, if they do, their reaction will be decided according to their distorted view of things and people.

Society fails to recognize narcissism

In Western cultures, it's not usual to find people who are able to identify narcissism in themselves or in others.

Those suffering from narcissism will seldom seek help. Those who encounter someone suffering from narcissism react with envy, hate, admiration, imitation or intolerance.

If people were taught to identify narcissism, they would react to narcissists by suggesting they seek help, at least when possible. A narcissist, as with any other neurotic person, can react badly to an offer of help. This may seem absurd, but we have to remind ourselves that a narcissist can't think objectively and rationally.

This collective failure to recognize narcissism as such makes things worse. Narcissists persist in believing that there is nothing wrong with them.

Depression in adolescence and narcissism

So, why would narcissism be a cause of depression in adolescence?

There may be many ways for this to happen. Let's imagine that an adolescent has a parent suffering from a serious form of narcissism, unrecognized and untreated.

Let's call the narcissistic parent Nicholas. Damien is the adolescent's name.

Nicholas is about to have a business dinner with his boss. The latter wants to know Damien.

Let's reveal what there is at stake. Nicholas might get that longed-for promotion from his boss. He has been working hard for such a long time to achieve this goal. In Nicholas's view, this promotion will proclaim his value in the eyes of that social circle he wants so badly to be accepted by.

Nicholas has had to satisfy a few eccentricities his boss has. He knows that this is just the price to pay to succeed.

Nicholas's boss believes that a good manager can be seen from how he educates his children.

This is why Damien has to go to that scary dinner with his father. This is why Nicholas has spent many weekends teaching Damien everything he has to know about how to behave at a business dinner.

Damien feels repulsion for the dinner, the boss and being forced to go. He says nothing because he knows that to refuse is out of question.

It just so happens that Damien's repulsion, plus his nervousness, plus his feeling uncomfortable, make his 'performance' much less than brilliant in the eyes of the boss.

No promotion.

It's a tragedy! Damien gets scolded and punished.

"I worked so hard for you! How can you have so little gratitude! Now I have to start again from scratch! You could have paid more attention! It was so easy! Even an idiot could have done it!" ... and so on.

What is depressing in Nicholas's attitude towards Damien?

Damien feels used by his father. He feels he is a tool in Nicholas's hands. Damien's feelings, desires, likes and dislikes are ignored.

Unfortunately, if your parents treat you as a thing, you are likely to believe them. At the same time, we know perfectly well that we like to be treated as true human beings.

This conflict is a source of depression. Depression in adolescence has among its causes the narcissism many parents suffer from.

Is Nicholas a bad parent?

No, Nicholas isn't a bad parent. At least, you can't expect such a judgment from me. If you read the beginning of this article again, you can see what I think about classifying people as good and bad.

Nicholas needs help. He needs his narcissism to be treated. We don't know what Nicholas's authentic parenting style would be like. We know only the parenting style resulting from his narcissism. Narcissism gone, we will see a different Nicholas and a different parenting style. His true one.

Depression in adolescence is waiting for parents suffering from narcissism to take care of themselves and of their suffering.

Depression in Teens: Does Depression Shrink Their Brains?

New research into depression is of interest for depression in teens too.

A messenger called GATA1

A research team at Yale University has discovered that depressed people have a few genes that happen to show troubled activity.

These genes ought to regulate brain synapses. In depressed people, it so happens that these genes can't do their job properly because of a malfunctioning factor.

This factor is precisely a transcription factor. It's a protein that acts like a messenger. It transmits the orders of the genes to our internal protein factory.

In our case, a messenger called GATA1 fails to transmit properly the orders of five genes which are responsible for regulating brain synapses.

Actually, GATA1 works inversely. If it's too active it will depress the information flow from these five genes to the protein factory. If it's insufficiently active it may cause excessive synaptic activity.

Why would depressed brains be shrinking?

In depressed brains GATA1 seems to be too active. Less synaptic connections are formed, and this results in a loss of brain mass. Depression, in teens, is shrinking their brains.

Is this GATA1 a cause of depression? If you are born with a malfunctioning GATA1, are you destined to be depressed?

There is no scientific finding that links depression to genetics. Professor Steve Jones of London University, a renowned geneticist, points out that we don't understand much

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about the genetics of simpler things like eye colour or ear shape. To talk about the genetics of depression is nonsense.

There has been much research into genetics and mental disorders. You can read the book 'The Gene Illusion' by Jay Joseph. There you can learn about this research and about how much of it was unscientific and self-serving.

Unfortunately, there are still people who want to use science for destructive purposes. The insane idea of eugenics was based on this kind of research, among other things.

So, what is GATA1 about? It's about the effects of depression and how it's possible to alleviate them using drugs. It isn't about fixing causes.

The very usage of drugs to treat depression is depressive

Drugs are life-saving when a depressed teenager shows important symptoms of depression. They should be used only when there is a real risk of suicide.

In any other case, the use of drugs to treat psychological problems is more of a problem than a solution.

Drugs seem to be good at helping you regain your productivity in a very short time.

If you are productive again, our profoundly sick society is satisfied, and you are required to be satisfied too. Or, at least, to fake it.

The real causes of your depression don't matter. The society we have created, and that we accept to obey, doesn't care about our depression as long as it can get rid of its effects by pushing some drugs down our throats.

The mountain and the molehill

Who cares about the molehill when there is a mountain out there to deal with? Only those who don't see the mountain, of course.

They belong to two categories: those who deny seeing the mountain, and those who really don't see it.

The mountain is the depressive nature of our civilization. I mean Western civilization. Mahatma Gandhi used to say that, actually, there isn't such a thing.

Drugs and genetics as alibi

Drugs and genetics studies risk being used as alibis for not facing the real problem of the profound sickness of our Western culture.

What to say to our depressed teenagers? That they have to change society in order for them to be happy?

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No, this isn't needed. As already suggested by Erich Fromm, we have only to disobey society, refusing to take for granted its claimed sanity.

How can it have happened?

How can it have happened that human beings, who have the power of knowing themselves, turn to science, and genetics in particular, to be told who they are?

Human beings discovered their power of knowing themselves thousands of years ago.

I don't know how this has happened. I know that it's difficult for anyone to know themselves if, at the same time, they are coercively moulded to be something different.

Depressed teenagers would like to be allowed to know themselves and to see themselves accepted for who they are. Instead, they have to endure the shock of being forced to become something that they aren't.

Many will simply forget about being themselves and will become one more instance of the self-less cog which is intended to be well-fit in the production-and-consumption machine.

Others will get depressed. They unconsciously say to themselves: "Why should I become a cog? I'm not a cog!"

At the same time they see that nobody around them wants to care about their question. How depressing!

Next time we know of a depressed teenager, let's listen. Being still relatively unconditioned, they see something we don't.

And next time we see teenagers on their way to becoming well-adjusted members of society, let's not rejoice at it. Let's say instead: "Sorry for that!"

If society is sick it's not our fault, and to search for someone to blame is a waste of time.

Depressed teenagers only want to have acknowledged the right to see their true selves respected. Shall we try and do this?

Depressed teens: deep down, they refuse to become docile consumers

Depression in teenagers, and depression in general, can have a multitude of causes among which fear has a main role.

Dorothy Rowe, in her book [Beyond Fear](#), explains brilliantly how fear is transformed into depression.

It's hard to realize the role of fear in producing depression, because in Western cultures repression of feelings is very strong. Fear is denied because it's unwanted, or judged as unjustified.

Needless to say that, for however strong denial can be, unwanted feelings keep eroding our psychological well-being until they explode in one way or another, or just make us unhappy without apparent reason.

A healthy attitude towards feelings would be to allow ourselves to express them completely. I know that this sounds risky. We should accept this risk as we should accept the inevitable presence of risk in life. Training to manage risk should be offered to us from a young age.

Once acknowledged, fear can be transformed into courage instead of depression. This is hard to do because it requires us to defy social conformity which in Western societies is very strong.

Conformity is strong and, at the same time, we pretend to be free. This conundrum produces conflicts and a sense of guilt.

Causes of depression in teenagers: educated to be docile consumers

Human beings can, unfortunately, be psychologically manipulated in many ways. Propaganda is a well known way to manipulate people, and it has a long history. Recently, it has also benefited from some scientific discoveries about the functioning of the human brain.

C.G. Jung has already called attention to the limits of psychological manipulation. Human nature can be manipulated, but not at leisure. It reacts eventually. Depression is one of the many possible reactions to manipulation.

If it's true that most of the people accept to be manipulated and live all their life accordingly, it's also true that more and more people unconsciously foster a rejection of this manipulation that they feel offensive to their true nature.

We are manipulated first by making us emotionally dependent on our teachers who will decide what we have to learn and when. They will also instill in us the idea that our value has to be determined whether low or high, and that it will always be someone else who performs such evaluation.

This manipulation is intended to make us feel bad if we don't conform to the expectations others have on us.

This psychological damage, already highlighted by Carl Rogers, is intentional, and its purpose is to create an army of docile workers and consumers who have also to think

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of themselves as enjoying freedom when they actually don't, and can't think a truly autonomous thought for fear of disapproval.

Manipulation is employed to create the docile consumer who doesn't know any more why they are consuming. To consume is a conditioned response to them.

You can hear people tell that they have to buy something to keep the economy running. This is a meaningless thought, but I'm not saying that these people are dumb, I say that they are manipulated to be dumb.

Consumption has been deliberately transformed into a conditioned response advancing the excuse that man is an animal and must be treated as such and its responses can and must be conditioned.

Many psychological schools collaborate to manipulate people by providing depictions of human nature that are intended to justify manipulation.

Actually, man is much different from an animal, and would like some respect that people driven by their selfishness can't give.

If most of the people resign themselves to this inhuman treatment, many react with depression. Others react with violence.

This reaction can be sedated by drugs which sometimes are life-saving, and most of the times are a clear sign of the decline of humanity in our way of life.

Symptoms of depression in teenagers

Fear is on its way to becoming depression if a teenager shows one or more of these symptoms:

- disorders in regulating food intake
- troubles with sleeping; the depressed teenager could sleep too much or too little
- experiencing feelings that can be traced back to fear like anger, sense of guilt, irritability, agitation
- lack of concentration, hopelessness, worthlessness
- consumption of drugs, alcohol and smoke can be signs of depression, and they should have their causes investigated instead of being judged negatively

Depressed teenagers need immediate help if they are having thoughts of suicide.

Treatments for depression in teenagers

Depression in teenagers is a result of fear, and fear is a result of how we see ourselves and of what we think about ourselves.

The depressed teenager fears becoming a docile consumer renouncing their humanity to become well-adjusted machines in a profoundly sick society.

Very effective treatments for depression in teenagers are based on challenging and transforming the teenager's thinking patterns into ones that are more respectful of their human nature.

During the therapy, depressed teenagers are taught to see themselves as what they actually are: human beings.

As human beings, they are capable of enjoying true freedom to buy or not without obeying the conditioned response society trains them to have.

They can regain the status of human being that society wants to deny them to transform them into dumb consumers.

Art therapy is also very effective with depression in teenagers. Art forms like music, drama, painting and writing are proposed by a trained therapist to help depressed teenagers to express freely their authentic feelings without feeling guilty or wrong in the process.

Art is therapeutic also because it's far from being a conditioned response. It's instead an activity the teenager can be the active subject of. They don't have to obey any expectation, and will not suffer from any sort of emotional dependence.

With artistic expression, depressed teenagers can begin to trust their feelings instead of repressing them. They can do something they can control, instead of always obeying others. They aren't despised if they don't obey.

A space of truly free artistic expression is created for them to remind themselves that they aren't animals to be conditioned.

Depression in teenagers can find solace in individual artistic creation while waiting for our culture to give space and prominence to forms of collective art.

Depression in teens: Is life worth living?

The question "is life worth living?" looks like a philosophical question. What has it to do with depression in teenagers? This is what I'm going to explain in this article.

Depression, and depression in teens makes no exception, has been seen as any other illness for too much time.

Depression is a special illness because it originates from our way of thinking rather than from biological malfunctions.

If you think of yourself as someone who has no say in how society has to work, you will be more depressed than if you think that you are an active member of society and can think and develop a really unique idea about how society should work.

It's your way of thinking that makes you depressed.

The best therapies for depression in teenagers are based on challenging the thinking patterns of the depressed teen.

With these therapies depressed teenagers change their way of seeing themselves, their own life and reality.

Since philosophy is exactly about how we see ourselves, life and reality, no wonder if I'm going to talk about philosophical questions when discussing the causes of depression in teenagers.

The "is life worth living?" question

There is a question which is frequently asked in Western societies. It is the question of worth of life.

Is life worth living? Should the answer be yes if you are rich, famous and powerful, and no if you are poor and powerless? Should the answer be yes if you were successful giving your life an unique meaning, and no if you don't know what to do with your life?

How to answer this question

If you browse the web, you'll find a lot of answers to this question. Some suggest that you weight your body and compute how much you would make if you could sell it. This would be the value of your life.

Some will equate the worth of your life with how many things you own. Others will say that your life is worth nothing because eventually you will die. Many will say that if you know a lot of things, your value is higher and that you should spend a lot of time learning.

I'll come to my personal answer to this question of the worth of life and to the relationship this question has with depression in teens, but first let me show how value is given to things in modern society.

Things and their value in modern society

Have you ever heard someone asking himself if a show was worth the money? Or maybe if it was worth the time?

Let's imagine you visit a country. When you will be back, your friends will ask you if the trip was worth the time and the money. If it wasn't, you will lose face in their eyes.

You pay a lot of attention to every detail of the trip to assess its value and to reassure yourself that it's worth your money and time. You also make a lot of photos to show as evidence.

The pleasure of the discovery of a country you never visited before has little significance here. It's all about attributing the right value to an experience that is actually only yours to be lived, personal and unique.

Modern society gives a quantitative value to everything. We are captured in this spell, and think of our own lives in terms of value which can increase or decrease.

It's all about investing money and time to increase the value of our life, and to declare bankruptcy if the investments didn't give the expected return.

Many answers to the question "is life worth living?"

I said above that modern society thinks of everything as having a value which can be measured and compared. According to society, even life is something that has a value you can measure and compare.

Let's now see how people obey this social craziness of giving a value to life. You can hear them give many answers when asked about the value of life.

There are the accountants. They count how many good and bad things they got and make a balance. It's only a matter of time and we will have also a profit and loss statement and a cash flow report.

There are the moaners. They can't have anything that makes them smile, and feel ready to die. To them life isn't worth living because they can't have what they want.

There are the resigned. They will explain to you that life isn't worth living because the Universe will end in 5 billion years.

There are the saviours. They have a wonderful recipe to cook a life worth living. They will solve depression in teens by teaching them how to increase their life's worth.

What to say to these people?

You could think that when you hear people give their answers to the is-life-worth-living question, you could learn to discriminate the positive from the negative ones.

Done this, you can reassure the negative thinkers that it's not so bad, that life is still worth living, that they don't need to be so depressed.

Maybe you know a depressed teenager who thinks that life isn't worth living for any reason. You could guess that the right thing to say them is that life is always worth living.

Please, stop attributing a value to life

Escape from Teenage Depression

Depression Teens Help <http://depressionteenshelp.com>

What I propose to do instead is to stop attributing a value to life. Life is not a commodity you can buy, and to ask yourself how much your life is worth is offensive to life itself.

We aren't commodities to sell at the market. We shouldn't let a society based on economic values poison our life with its debit and credit considerations.

If I ask myself if my life is worth living, I'm implicitly saying that I can give a worth to my life as I can give a worth to the table I'm writing on.

This is the really depressive thought. We and our life aren't objects you can attribute a value to.

Depression in teenagers is from this considering ourselves as things. Depressed teenagers learn from their social environment to consider themselves as things, and to ask themselves if they are things of worth or not.

The problem isn't that they answer negatively and find themselves and their life of low value. The problem is that they consider themselves things.

If you are a depressed teenager reading here, remind yourself everyday that you aren't a thing. You are a living being and nobody should attribute a value to your right of living.