

# Overcoming Depression, Anxiety & Stress

By Phil Golding

Do you relate to these statements?

- Why do I get depressed, stressed out and anxious?
- I have tried to get rid of my depression but nothing seems to work.
- I know my anxiety doesn't make sense, but I can't seem to control it.
- I am told that I have to accept myself, to love myself more, but I don't understand how.
- I don't want to rely on pills for the rest of my life.
- I don't know what is really going to make a difference for me. I don't know where to turn.



There was a time when I certainly related to these statements, and I still do, but I have been fortunate enough to find the right answers and in the process, turn my life around. I am looking forward to helping you do the same. I do know how you feel and what it is like. I do know how you can overcome your dilemma and find happiness and fulfillment. The answers to your dilemma are real, practical and once understood, make perfect sense.

You have the ability to turn your life around. What is needed is the right understanding and the right approach. What is needed is to understand the nature of emotional suffering on a deep enough level so that you can cut to the core of the problem. When you get to the core of why you suffer, any emotional pain can be understood and overcome. From there, your healing and personal development is inevitable.

I personally had a difficult childhood for various reasons, which led to chronic depression in my teenage and early adult years. A sensitive nature also compounded the problem. This depression further complicated my life by restricting my ability to make wise decisions on my own behalf, or I avoided making decisions altogether. I was stuck, and afraid to take a risk in life. This resulted in difficulties in my relationships and a career that did not reflect my true potential. At the age of 24 my chronic depression drove me to seek help, and I attended self-help groups regularly for the next twelve years, as well as some counselling. As I learned to put these principles for personal change to work, my life began to improve accordingly. I didn't reach out for as much help as I could have, but I kept steadily growing nonetheless.



Even though I soon learned to function well, whenever I took on a new challenge, my chronic depression would be triggered once again. Finally, after eight years of personal growth work that helped me in many other areas of my life, I decided to spend some dedicated time focusing on my depression and nothing else. Using all that I had learned, I surprised even myself by finally breaking the back of my depression in just few weeks. An essential factor for me was a deep enough level of self-acceptance, which is the basis of Step 1 in the 5-Step Process for Healing,

Wisdom and Empowerment (see page 17).

To say that self-acceptance is a key to healing emotional pain perhaps seems simplistic. What I came to realize was how deep and unconscious my self-rejection was. In my work as a professional counsellor and personal development instructor, I have found, without exception, this same problem with my clients and students.

Our own mind is like our home for life. If we don't accept ourselves as we are and treat ourselves with loving kindness, there is nowhere else to go. Other people can love us, but they can't climb inside our mind. Their love is inevitably thwarted by our walls of self-rejection. Deep down, we often have a vague idea that this is the case, but we can't see it clearly enough. It is too hard to look at. We feel powerless and confused in the face of the

complexities of our human nature.

Often we are preoccupied with the way others are treating us and assume that this is the source of our problem. We little realize that our own self-rejection renders us powerless to deal with our life issues in a constructive and effective manner.

I have experienced moments of depression at times since then but I now know what to do about it. It can no longer take a hold of me. You could now say that I am immune to this chronic disorder. Of course I could have overcome my depression a lot sooner if I knew at 24 what I know now, but this was not the case. Besides, my experience has been my greatest teacher where becoming a counselor / psychotherapist is concerned. It has helped me learn that every problem can be turned into an opportunity.

A side-benefit to my personal growth work was that as I continued to work on myself, my natural interest in psychology began to blossom. Before I knew psychotherapy was to be my career, I was already well versed in the subject. My own higher consciousness knew this was my calling well before my mind was aware of it.

## **THE RIGHT APPROACH TO HEALING**

Where serious emotional difficulties such as depression and anxiety are concerned, there needs to be a long-term commitment to healing. Such a commitment should be taken seriously if we expect to get results. Serious emotional imbalances rarely respond to "quick-fix" treatments. There may be some quick results, but the relief is often temporary because the treatment did not reach the required depth. If we have an expectation that the "cure" should be quick, we may assume the treatment is not working if this doesn't happen. Because of this our doubts and anxiety may interfere with our commitment to healing. We may jump from one therapist, self-help group or philosophy to the next without giving any of them the required time and commitment needed to work. Worse still, we may just lose hope and give up.



Instead of looking for the illusive quick fix, real positive results are more likely to be achieved if we approach emotional recovery as a change of lifestyle. This new lifestyle must be one of ongoing self-care rather than self-neglect or self-rejection. Life will always have its difficulties, even in normal circumstances. It is unrealistic to think otherwise. Being self-responsible enough to learn the skills of ongoing mind-maintenance is essential for a well balanced and successful life.

Your commitment and persistence with a particular therapy or philosophy is as important as the therapy itself. After all, it is your mind and body. Your attitudes are with you always until you change them.

Where our emotional wellbeing is concerned, we human beings have an unhealthy tendency to not reach out for help because we feel ashamed at not being able to cope. We think we have failed in some way if we can't do it alone. When we finally do reach out, we often expect the therapist to do all the work, to perform some sort of magic.

The "expert" can't be with you 24 hours a day. Counselling is most effective when Counsellor and client come together as a team. This means working together to move you, the client, through your emotional blocks and to a state of functioning that better matches your potential. The most important aspect of any therapy is to empower you with the skills and ability to take charge of your life in a positive, life-enhancing way.

Just having someone to talk to who is detached but caring, accepting, and objective is therapy in itself. However, emotional recovery also needs a pro-active approach if a genuine shift is going to take place. An active strategy to tackle our negative thought-patterns and clear our stuck emotions is important, therefore. Such a strategy enables us to gain awareness of negative thought-patterns and then learn how to replace them with ones that work for us. Such a strategy is often called a "process". I use what is called a "5-Step Process", which underpins all my counselling and personal development work

In this article I am offering some important insights into emotional healing. Just reading an article is rarely enough to change our lives. The complexity of our confusion is usually too profound to give way that easy. My aim is to at least give you some hope and direction. I want you to know that there is a way and that way is available to you.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SELF-ACCEPTANCE.

The opposite of self-acceptance is self-rejection, and self-rejection, more than anything else, blocks us in our efforts to overcome emotional problems and the negative mental patterns that keep the emotional problems on a repetitive loop.

There is a strong tendency in our society to feel ashamed when we cannot psychologically function according to the “norms” of our society. Everybody suffers emotional crises from time to time, but when this crisis becomes prolonged for one reason or another, there is a perception that we are unworthy because of it. We get caught up in worrying about what other people think of us, or what we think other people are thinking of us. Underneath our fear of being rejected by others is our own self-rejection. Self-rejection severely hampers our ability to take appropriate care of ourselves. In a way, we are punishing ourselves with self-neglect and worse. We must accept our right to be human, along with our genuine need to reach out for help when it is required.

An adult with a healthy self-esteem can shield his or herself from emotional suffering, or at least quickly recover, regardless of the negativity of the situation. Those with a healthy self-esteem carry a strong belief in their own self-worth. They are not dependent on others to give them permission to feel worthy. They do not need pats on the back before they can feel good about themselves. They already know they are worthy, even when they make human mistakes, which human beings inevitably do. Those with a healthy self-esteem are psychologically protected by their own self-acceptance.

If it wasn't for self-rejection, acute emotional vulnerability in adulthood would not be there in the first place. Without this prior self-rejection, the condemnation from another would have little impact. We would simply know that the person doing the condemning is perhaps having a bad day and is obviously confused. We would know that no matter what mistakes we may happen to make, we do not deserve to be mistreated. We would know that we do not deserve to be condemned as unworthy.

We can't always have control over the behaviour of another. We can, however, take charge of what we accept into our own mind and heart. We can shield ourselves with our own self-acceptance. Self-acceptance contains the power of love, which is far more powerful than most people realize.

## YOUR WORTHINESS IS BEYOND QUESTION!

An essential understanding where overcoming depression and other emotional problems is concerned is that our essential worthiness as a human being does not depend on circumstances or conditions. It does not depend on anyone else's opinion of us or the way they treat us, and this includes our own family. It does not matter how many mistakes we make or whether we perform to a certain standard or not. Our worthiness should be seen as something that is beyond question.

*I exist, I am alive. I am a part of life, therefore I am worthy.*



This is how we need to look at our worthiness. Nothing else and no one else owns our worthiness. We are born with it and there is nothing we have to do in order to have it. An essential part of self-acceptance is consciously recognising and accepting the truth of our fundamental worthiness as a human being, even as the rest of our mind is still catching up to this reality. This is a hard one to understand at first, because our level of confusion on the matter runs so deep. Someone with a healthy self-esteem, who is able to maintain a consistent level of happiness and fulfilment, already knows this, if only intuitively. The rest of us must consciously awaken to this fundamental reality.

What happens though is we get confused about the nature of our worthiness, particularly when we are children, being so dependent on our carers and the world around us. As a result, we end up thinking that we have to do something or have something or be something before we are allowed to feel good about ourselves. As children, we don't realise we are taking on this confusion. In reality though, thinking that our worthiness has conditions is the root cause of our suffering. It is the root cause of our thinking that we are powerless to change how we feel, because we have unwittingly placed the authority over our self-worth into the hands of others, or “society” in general.

***It is essential to understand that our circumstances and conditions do not have to change before we find can find peace and happiness. Peace and happiness has more to do with how we relate to ourselves.***

This is a vitally important piece of information. It means that we have the power to create our own internal environment regardless of what is going on in our lives. This in turn, gives us more ability to act constructively on our own behalf to positively change the circumstances and conditions of our lives.

In other words, ***the most powerful way to change your life is to first change the way you treat yourself.***

Depression is a state of confusion about the true nature of our worthiness, that is below our awareness, that causes painful emotions to be kept on a repetitive loop. We have in effect, unconsciously hemmed ourselves in with our own self-rejection.

Anxiety is not trusting our own ability to manage our lives on a day to day basis. As a result, our minds fall into a futile attempt to control the future with worry, which it can't do, which can then lead to panic. Because of our self-rejection, we don't realize our own potential. Stress is the milder form of these issues.

If our minds have become confused about our fundamental worthiness, then we have some reprogramming to do. It is the programming in our minds that is the problem. Our emotional pain is the symptom of this confusion. How do we change the programming in our own minds? To answer this question, we first need to have a bit of understanding about our potential as human beings.

## **AWAKENING OUR “CONSCIOUS-AWARENESS.”**

In my 25 years of dealing with my own life problems and helping others with theirs, it has become clear to me that there is a dimension to our human nature which I, and many other researches in this field, call consciousness. To put it simply; consciousness enables a human being to observe him or herself from a higher perspective than our habitual lower mind, or human mind, as I like to call it, where all the problems develop.

Unfortunately, due to our lack of self-awareness, much of the potential of consciousness tends to lie dormant, buried underneath our conditioning, our confused and habitual thought patterns that are stored in our lower mind. Much of the time, we are not consciously managing our lives, we are instead unconsciously following our past conditioning, which is all too often *not* the best way to respond to the circumstances in our life now.

In order to access this potential of consciousness, we must wake it up out of its dormant state. There are real negative consequences to living without our consciousness being awake and actively fulfilling the roll of the aware manager of our lives. Without an awake and aware consciousness in charge, our mind is like a house full of children who are frequently left alone to look after themselves without proper supervision. The children may get by in one way or another, but their knowledge is limited, and they are at the mercy of their uncontrolled fearful emotions. These unsupervised children often get in a muddle and make unwise decisions that adversely affect their lives. This is what it is like having our unconscious conditioning running our lives.

Consciousness is where we access our highest potential. To try to define the two sides of our human nature, you could say that we have a human survival mind and a higher consciousness that is the potential to learn, adapt and grow.

### **Human Survival Mind**

This level of the mind is where we find our fight-or-flight instincts and also our unconscious childhood conditioning. It is designed to support our conscious-awareness with constructive belief systems, habits and routines so that our conscious-self can be free to tackle the unexpected and move ahead with creating, building and expanding. The human survival mind is simply a recording mechanism of primal survival instincts and social conditioning. It can't effectively think for itself. This level of the mind is dominant in childhood, which is why children learn so quickly, but are so vulnerable, dependent and easily confused. Unfortunately, this confusion can then control the ways in which we habitually think as an adult.

This limited level of mind could be said to respond and operate from FEAR. It is referred to as our survival mind due to always being in the position of struggling to survive against the elements of the world. When our human survival mind is controlling our lives, we allow our decisions to be based on what we fear. We are still approaching



# CARING FOR YOURSELF - CHECKLIST



- ✓ Am I accepting my right to be human and seeing my confusion and mistakes as an opportunity to know myself better and to take care of myself more?
- ✓ Do I provide plenty of space in my life to take care of my vulnerable emotional human self?
- ✓ Am I taking responsibility to care for my own needs?
- ✓ Do I really have compassion for my human self?

- ✓ Do I impose unrealistic standards or expectations on myself or others that cause me to experience stress and conflict?
- ✓ In what ways can I reorganize my life so I have the time and space to heal my emotions and confusions and strengthen my consciousness-awareness?
- ✓ Am I willing to make this commitment to care for myself as an ongoing and essential part of my life-style for the sake of my happiness and wellbeing?
- ✓ Can I see that adjusting my life-style in this way will help me achieve what I want rather than be a waste of time?
- ✓ I am judging and blaming others for not fulfilling my needs instead of standing on my own two feet?
- ✓ Am I aware of my genuine needs? Do I truly listen to what my emotions are telling me? Am I indulging my neediness (fears, insecurities, addictions) rather than facing them and overcoming them?
- ✓ Do I have a healthy support network? Am I willing to make the effort to establish one? Am I expecting one person to meet all my needs?
- ✓ Am I actively learning what it takes to constructively communicate with others?
- ✓ Am I actively learning what it takes to conduct a healthy relationship?
- ✓ Do I have joy, play, recreation in my life?
- ✓ Do I appreciate the beautiful, simple things around me like nature, for example?
- ✓ Do I take time to appreciate those around me?
- ✓ Am I aware that my humanness is my total responsibility to compassionately take care of? Am I truly committed to do whatever it takes and learn how to care for myself and my future?
- ✓ Can I see that accepting the full responsibility to care for my own mind is my foundation for a successful life?



the world through the mindset of a powerless, dependent child. As a result, we tend to build protective walls around ourselves and see the world in a negative light, which may often be far from reality. Because we regard our fear-based thoughts as “true”, we don’t question them and therefore live in the restricted boundaries of these limited perceptions. For example: We may have a fear of being criticized and in order to protect ourselves from feeling this fear, we isolate ourselves and become a “prisoner” to this fear. We survive, but we certainly don’t live in the full sense of the word.

This level of the mind, left to its own devices, is like a child left to fend for itself without a loving and wise parent to take care of it.

Not surprisingly, when this limited habitual thinking takes control of us, our life tends to be full of sadness, conflict and disappointment. Frequent poor health and fatigue is often a further consequence. Our ability to learn, adapt and grow is hampered.

### **Higher Consciousness**

This potential within us responds and operates from LOVE. When we can connect to our higher consciousness, qualities such as compassion, wisdom, courage, insight, joy, serenity, and genuine intimacy can be experienced. This is the wise, loving parent within us who is able to look after the child that is our human survival mind.

From the perspective of this conscious-awareness, we can see the world in a positive but realistic light. As a result of our calm and poise, we feel attractive to others and comfortable to be around. We are able to feel our fears, process them and push through them rather than allow them to control us. This side of our consciousness allows us to learn from our day to day experiences and evolve. It also facilitates good health and vitality.

We all experience both these sides of our being in varying degrees. This is not right or wrong, it is simply the experience that we are having. However, we can learn how to be more aware of our higher growth consciousness and operate at this higher capacity as a matter of routine, and particularly when we most need to. From here we are in a position to take care of and reprogram or, in other words, “re-parent” our human survival mind.

## **THE CHALLENGE OF SELF-ACCEPTANCE AND SELF-CARE**

One of the major challenges to emotional healing and personal development is getting disappointed and disillusioned when we don’t experience positive feelings despite our positive steps toward healing. All too often we give up because of this. In reality, any positive thing that we do for ourselves is making a positive difference, whether we feel it at first or not. Our negative conditioning can be like a thick wall that needs to be chipped away enough before the light can start shining through.

Where self-acceptance is concerned, if we have strong negative self-worth / self-rejection issues, then we can find it hard to accept that we have a side to ourselves that is so beautiful and powerful. It is there none-the-less. I believe, and it has been my long and repeated experience, that if you consciously make a solid commitment and a consistent effort to accept your human survival self and take care of it, like one would lovingly care for a child as a responsible parent, then you naturally begin to open up to and experience emotional healing and mental clarity. Your conscious-awareness is activated by actively attempting, as best you can, to be your own loving guardian. By making this commitment to yourself your new way of life, you are naturally going to be growing in your ability to live your life through your conscious-awareness.

It is not about getting it right all time. It is more about having a go on a daily basis and learning each day from the experience. Self-acceptance is about accepting our humanness at every step. We have to start somewhere, and in reality, every day, every moment is a new, fresh starting point. Our mistakes are not failures, they are just experiences to learn from. The self-defeating, debilitating problem of self-rejection is removed whenever we become aware it. We become consciously aware of self-rejection because we realize that our emotional pain is the symptom of it, regardless of what our old conditioning may have to say on the matter.

What we are doing is giving ourselves the love and support that we didn’t get in our formative years, or at any other time. This is how we reprogram our survival mind, our human-self, so that it takes its proper place as the constructive supporting foundation for our conscious-awareness, and not something that is continually undermining us, which is the issue with depression and any other emotional suffering.

Trust that with your consistent positive actions, good things are happening. If you are suffering deep depression or anxiety, for example, it may take a number of weeks perhaps before the wall begins to crumble, and then some time after that before a real solid foundation of positive programming is established. The important thing is to never give up, no matter how many times you lose your way. Start again and again and again. Success is inevitable because the answers are real, so long as you don't give up. This is how new positive, life enhancing habits are formed.

The more you try with the right attitude, the more you gain valuable experience. The more you experience, the more learning opportunities you have. The more you learn, the more you have to work with. Despite the depth of your confusion, your persistence must win out. In my experience, ability is not the problem. Persistent effort is the key.

When we work as a team with an experienced counsellor and other forms of emotional support such as a self-awareness group or an experienced mentor, staying motivated to keep caring for ourselves is much easier.

Therefore, to be human is to have this higher growth consciousness available to us, which has the potential to enable us to overcome all difficulties, if we give it a chance. It is my experience that it is within this higher side of our human nature that we find an ultimate meaning in life, and you are free to define that meaning for yourself. Countless individuals who have gone before us have found access to this higher part of themselves and they point the way for us to follow.

Making accepting yourself as you are and actively caring for your vulnerable human self every day your new life-style is the key. Love is the healer. You are the source of that love, even if you don't feel it at first. Love is not a magic fix. Love is a consistent action that gets inevitable results.



Contact Phil at the Inner Harmony Center for information about overcoming depression, anxiety, stress and all other emotional problems through seminars, groups and counselling.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING YOUR CONSCIOUSNESS**

- ☺ **Your physical health depends on it.**
- ☺ **Your mental/emotional health depends on it.**
- ☺ **Your ability to instill confidence, balance and harmony in your children depends on it.**
- ☺ **Your relationship with your partner depends on it.**
- ☺ **All other relationships, whether working or personal, depend on it.**
- ☺ **World peace depends on it.**
- ☺ **Your ability to find, access, and stay in touch with your true potential depends on it.**
- ☺ **Managing your working life in such a way that it facilitates a harmonious balance of work, rest, play and connectedness with your self, family, and friends depends on it.**
- ☺ **Your spiritual connectedness depends on it.**
- ☺ **Your connection to Earth and therefore the welfare of the planet depends on it.**

