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# **Managing Depression with Mindfulness**

FOR  
**DUMMIES**<sup>®</sup>  
A Wiley Brand

## **Learn to:**

- Heal and recover from depression mindfully
- Understand the relationship between thinking, feeling, mood and depression
- Reduce your depression with effective mindfulness practices
- Implement positive changes and prevent relapse

**Robert Gebka**





***Managing  
Depression with  
Mindfulness***

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**by Robert Gebka**

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## Managing Depression with Mindfulness For Dummies®

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# Introduction

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**T**his book is for you if you are interested in exploring how mindfulness can support you in your efforts to regain, as well as maintain, your sense of wellbeing and happiness.

I wrote the book drawing upon my clinical experience as someone who has professionally supported people with depression both as a mental health worker in a psychiatric hospital as well as in private practice. More importantly, though, I wrote this book drawing forth on my personal journey of having not only suffered from depression but also having healed through it now living a life of meaning and happiness.

When you are in the midst of the storm of depression, it is incredibly difficult to see the possibility of happiness. It is my intention in this book to share ideas and practical techniques that are not only scientifically proven to work but that will help you regain your ability to manage your condition more effectively. This in turn will hopefully help you reconnect with your own sense of happiness and wellbeing. Above all, I trust that this book will offer you a beacon of light no matter where in your journey of healing.

I share the following words of inspiration from a client of mine who joined our 8-Week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction course. She now works with autistic children and uses the mindfulness skills she learned to help others.

*I had suffered with depression on and off for years. Anxiety was a feeling I fought daily. I have taken antidepressants and tried different therapies but nothing really worked for me. I attended a mindfulness seminar with a friend and although felt very uncomfortable at first there was something immediately that excited me, and I experienced a connection never felt before. I attended several classes and joined the 8-Week Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction course. The tools and experience have totally changed my life, and now I love sharing this with others. Learning to notice your thoughts and acknowledging them rather than challenging or attaching is such a powerful tool.*

*When faced with uncomfortable feelings, being able to believe and trust in yourself that by breathing into them you can reduce their intensity is very reassuring. It's also comforting to know that by focusing your mind on your physical body you can calm yourself. Three years on and mindfulness is a massive part of my life, and I'm so grateful for it finding me.*

I invite you to take this journey with me as we explore what mindfulness is and how you can begin to embody it in your life.

## About This Book

This book is for you whether you are suffering from depression yourself, caring for someone who has the condition or are a health professional wanting to know more about how mindfulness can support your clients recover from low mood and chronic unhappiness.

Scientific studies now show that you can use mindfulness to change the way your brain works. Regular mindfulness practice makes you smarter and wiser and so better able to deal with what life throws at you. When you are depressed you can often feel like you have no control and no say in how and what you think and feel. With regular practice you can gain back the control and learn to live your life with more compassion and skill where your mind is your friend rather than your enemy.

Use this book in a way that works for you. You can read it chapter by chapter or dip into in and out of it as you like. It is important to remember that this book is simply an introduction to mindfulness and I hope that you will eventually find the inspiration to seek out a mindfulness teacher or join a mindfulness course to help you explore a daily mindfulness practice. Above all, don't put any pressure on yourself to remember any of the ideas covered in this book but rather do what comes naturally and easy for you.

Following are just some of the topics I explore in this book to help you understand what mindfulness is and how you can use it to support your own sense of wellbeing:

- ✓ The anatomy of depression as well as some of the common symptoms and types of depression

- ✔ How to begin to recover from depression mindfully and explore some of the barriers to recovery and how to work through them these
- ✔ The basic mechanics behind mindfulness as well as how the mind works from a mindfulness perspective
- ✔ Self-compassion and how to develop loving kindness towards yourself
- ✔ The blessing within depression and how you can find meaning amidst difficulty
- ✔ Nine mindful attitudes that will help you live a happy and meaningful life and prevent depression from coming back

## *Foolish Assumptions*

I assume, or rather I trust, that you or someone you know or care for has some experience with depression. I also work on the understanding that you have reached out and are exploring ways to help yourself heal through depression mindfully. In other words, I trust that you feel ready to help yourself recover from depression and regain your sense of wellbeing. I understand that it is possible that you know nothing about mindfulness or that you might have some knowledge of the subject. It is also possible that you have already explored other approaches and want to deepen the way you work with your own mind and life using mindfulness.

I also assume that you are not currently clinically depressed, or that if you are, you have other psychological support in place to supplement your healing and recovery.

**Note:** If you are currently suffering from severe or clinical depression, contact your chosen health professional before trying any of the exercises in this book.

## *Icons Used in This Book*

Like other *For Dummies* books, this one has icons in the margins to guide you through the information and help you zero in on what you want to know. The following paragraphs describe the icons and what they mean.

## 4

## Managing Depression with Mindfulness For Dummies

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This information is useful and worth keeping in mind when working with your experience of low mood and depression.



The text next to this icon is particularly useful information offering quick and effective ideas to support your learning about mindfulness.



I include some examples to help demonstrate and clarify different ideas and models that I present in this book.



This is an opportunity for you to try a practical exercise which will help you develop a greater sense of awareness leading to wellbeing.

## *Beyond the Book*

This book is bursting with content, but you can go online and find even more. Check out the book's online Cheat Sheet at [www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/managingdepressionwithmindfulness](http://www.dummies.com/cheatsheet/managingdepressionwithmindfulness). And you can find a handy bonus article related to managing depression with mindfulness at [www.dummies.com/extras/managingdepressionwithmindfulness](http://www.dummies.com/extras/managingdepressionwithmindfulness).

## *Where to Go from Here*

Although you can certainly get loads of guidance by reading from Chapter 1 through to the end, I designed this book so that you can dip in and out as you like, reading bits that you find most useful at any given time. If you feel you need some quick and easy-to-implement tips on how to enhance your sense of wellbeing, go directly to Chapters 12 and 13. If you feel you need to gain some motivation to help support you directly on your journey to healing mindfully, Chapter 3 might be a good start. To help you locate relevant material easily elsewhere in the book, I use cross-references as well as a comprehensive index, so feel free to explore these tools too.

The biggest benefit of mindfulness comes when it becomes a daily way of life. It might also be useful to remember that you don't need to struggle alone learning it. It is best learned



with the support of a teacher or coach. I hope that this book will support you to eventually reach out and connect with a person or mindfulness-based group for the purpose of learning, growing and healing.

Above all, see this book as an exploration with nothing to lose but everything to gain.



# Part I

# Understanding Depression and Befriending Your Life

getting started  
with

**managing  
depression**



*For Dummies* has great info on lots of different topics. Check out [www.dummies.com](http://www.dummies.com) to find out how you and learn more and do more with *For Dummies*.

## *In this part . . .*

- ✓ Discover how to befriend the black dog of depression and learn to turn off negative thoughts.
- ✓ Explore the major types of depression, as well as some possible causes.

# Chapter 1

---

## Your Journey to Wellbeing

.....

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Getting to know your big black dog of depression
  - ▶ Knowing that you're not alone in your depression
  - ▶ Seeing the link between depression and anxiety
  - ▶ Understanding that recovery from depression has ups and downs
  - ▶ Finding inner peace through the practice of mindfulness
- .....

**I**f you are reading this book, then it is very likely that either you or someone you know is affected by depression. I know from personal experience having lived with the condition myself that it can be very tough and that often it's difficult to get out of bed, to say nothing about reading a whole book. In my own experience, I have been where there was no hope and no guiding light at the end of the tunnel with very dark thoughts about my future constantly on my mind barking like hungry dogs that haven't been fed for days. You might or might not relate to this. I am writing this book both as someone who has first-hand experience living with depression as well as someone who has counseled many people affected with this condition both in private practice as well as within an inpatient psychiatric hospital setting. More importantly, I am writing this book as someone who recovered from the condition.

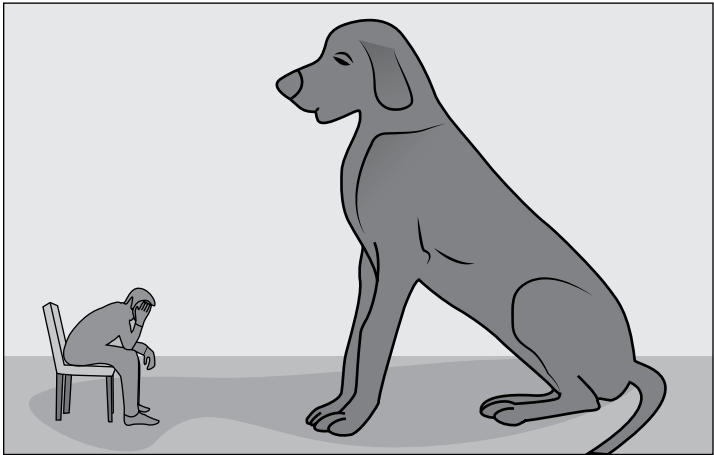
Above all, I am writing this book as a happy person, a truly happy person. I am not bragging about my happiness, not at all, but I like talking about wellbeing and happiness as this is the other side of the deep and wide river, the other shore, so to speak. This is where you too want to get to, don't you? The other side of the river where there is more light, more hope, more freedom to live your life as you want and desire. Recovery from chronic unhappiness has many stages and

it's an up-and-down process, but I know that it is possible. This book offers a practical guide which will empower you to navigate the often confusing landscape of your own mind and give you plenty of tools for working with it in a way that can help you enhance your sense of mental and emotional wellbeing and happiness. I hope you will enjoy this journey with me.

## *Befriending the Black Dog of Depression*

Having depression is in many ways like having a black dog. No offence to black dogs as they are lovely animals. However, you can use this as a metaphor for how difficult life can be when you are depressed.

This black dog of depression isn't just any black dog. It's a big and scary dog (shown in Figure 1-1), and having this dog around is a pain.



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**Figure 1-1:** Depression as a huge black dog.

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This black dog of depression looks extremely sad. Whenever he shows up he can make you feel completely empty of any happiness. He makes you feel slow, tired and not wanting to do anything except sleep. He can make you feel old, useless and hopeless.