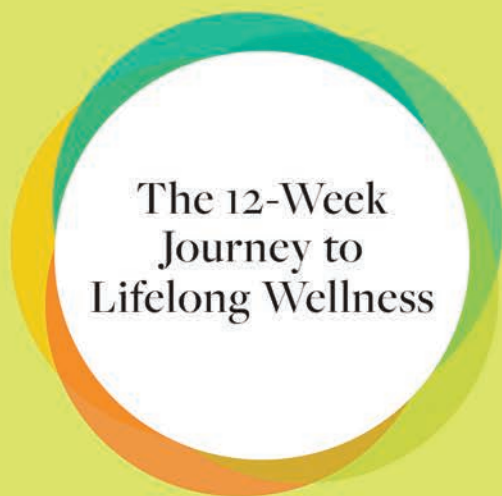


GREGORY L. JANTZ, PhD




The 12-Week  
Journey to  
Lifelong Wellness

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# Healing Depression for Life

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**WORKBOOK**



The 12-Week  
Journey to  
Lifelong Wellness

GREGORY L. JANTZ, PhD  
WITH KEITH WALL

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Healing  
Depression  
for Life  
WORKBOOK

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*Healing Depression for Life Workbook: The 12-Week Journey to Lifelong Wellness*

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# Contents

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**INTRODUCTION** *v*

**GUIDANCE FOR GROUPS** *xi*

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- WEEK 1 Finding a New Path Forward *1*
- WEEK 2 Sound Asleep *13*
- WEEK 3 Your Devices, Your Depression *24*
- WEEK 4 Stressed and Depressed *36*
- WEEK 5 A Hard Look at Hard Issues *46*
- WEEK 6 The Three Deadly Emotions *59*
- WEEK 7 The Antidote for Toxic Emotions *72*
- WEEK 8 Strength through Soul Care *84*
- WEEK 9 Start Moving and Start Improving *95*
- WEEK 10 Good Food = Good Mood *106*
- WEEK 11 Time to Take Out the Trash *117*
- WEEK 12 Reinventing Your Future *129*
- 

**NOTES** *143*

**ABOUT THE AUTHORS** *145*



## INTRODUCTION

# Building Your Success Plan

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The good life is waiting for you. Right now. Right here.

Deep-down contentment and genuine happiness are available to you. Not someday, but soon.

It's fully possible to find healing for your depression. For life.

Even in our furiously fast-paced and worrisome world, you can live a more peaceful, purposeful, and productive life. You can be free from thoughts, feelings, and habits that drag you down rather than lift you up. You can learn to draw the life-numbing poison out of your past pain, present problems, and future fear.

This “good life” doesn't lie at some distant destination or at the end of year after year of seeking. It is yours for the taking—starting now. The only cost of admission is your willingness to change the way you see yourself and the world around you . . . and to consistently incorporate the healthy habits that will bring lasting wholeness. The payoff—a life infused with beauty, joy, and meaning—is well worth the investment.

I am not giving you a pep talk or offering snappy slogans to help you feel better temporarily. The last thing you need is advice that rings hollow or bromides that promise much and deliver little.

If you've been battling depression for any length of time, you have likely heard all kinds of recommendations that didn't bring you much improvement. Worse, you've probably heard plenty of clichés from well-meaning (but unhelpful) people: "Hang in there—this too shall pass" or "Keep looking up" or "Hold on to your faith."

I know that overcoming depression takes patience, dogged determination, the courage to confront painful issues, openness to new ideas, and a commitment to change long-standing patterns of behavior.

Another essential element is needed to heal depression: hope.

In three decades as a mental health expert, I have counseled thousands of people who needed help coping with pain and fear of every kind: depression, guilt, anger, anxiety, addiction, and the emotional scars of physical and psychological abuse. Early in my career, I was often dismayed by the epic scope of battles people waged within themselves and the elusive struggle to achieve true healing. It seemed to me that lasting wellness was a treasure many seek but few ever find.

Then I realized something vitally important. Many of the hurting people I counseled were eager—or desperate—to overcome their troubles but lacked the key ingredient of hope. By the time these people began therapy with me or sought treatment at the clinic I direct, they had lived with their condition for so long and tried so many unfruitful treatment options that optimism had all but vanished. Distress and depression, usually caused by a variety of factors, were compounded by a fundamental lack of hopefulness and confidence that anything would ever change.

This led me to make *hope* a cornerstone of all the therapy, speaking, writing, research, and treatment planning I do. In 1996, we changed the name of our Seattle-area treatment facility after clients said, "This is a place of hope." That's exactly what we wanted it to be, and the name stuck. Our facility is now called The Center: A Place of

Hope. My team and I also adopted Jeremiah 29:11-14 as our clinic's guiding Scripture passage:

“I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,” declares the LORD, “and will bring you back from captivity.”

I encourage you to reflect on these life-changing words and embrace them as your touchstone as you pursue emotional, spiritual, and physical wellness. After all, depressed people often feel that they are in “captivity” of sorts—trapped and immobilized by a force bigger than themselves. But God will indeed bring you back. Depressed people often do not feel enthused about the future, if they can envision one at all. But God will help you renew your dreams and refresh your energy to achieve them.

As foundational as hope is to true healing, there are many other crucial steps to take on the journey. And these steps form the twelve weeks of exercises, assessments, and reflections in the pages ahead. In addition to the need for hope, I realized something else many years ago: most approaches to depression focus on one particular method or technique to address a complex mental health conundrum. That's what has become common for the treatment of depression these days. Care providers tend to use their favorites as singular fixes to a disorder that is never caused by one thing alone. Most frequently, this means taking antidepressant medication, seeing a counselor for talk therapy, starting a specialized diet regimen, or participating in cognitive behavioral therapy.

While each of these individual approaches can be helpful and



sometimes needed, I believe that lasting healing occurs through a whole-person, multifaceted approach. In my experience, depression always arises from multiple factors converging from lots of different directions in a person's life. Treating one thing at a time, with one method at a time, may move you toward healing but will usually fall short of complete healing. This is why my whole-person approach addresses the following:

- achieving ample, restorative sleep
- examining the use of technology and making sure it is not contributing to depression
- minimizing and managing stress
- uncovering hidden addictions
- resolving the three deadly emotions: anger, guilt, and fear
- working through the process of forgiveness for hurts and heartaches
- engaging in soul care and spiritual practices
- participating in consistent physical activity
- fortifying your nutrition and hydration
- detoxing your body of contaminants
- refreshing your dreams and plans for the future

These topics (along with gut health and micronutrients) are discussed in detail in *Healing Depression for Life*, where I present an array of scientific research studies, psychological principles, spiritual insights, real-life stories, and practical applications. With this companion workbook, I am handing the baton to you. It's your turn to dive in and dig deep into the *reasons* and the *remedies* for your depression. Think of me as your guide through this process—your Sherpa as you climb the mountain and move steadily toward the summit. I will point you in the right direction and offer plenty of suggestions,

but the challenge is for you to take one step after another through the exercises ahead.

You might choose to use this workbook by yourself, with a friend, or in a small-group setting. (I provide suggestions for group use on pages xi–xiii). You might be someone who prefers to work through the exercises in one sitting, or you might choose to spread out the activities throughout the week. You might go back and forth between the book and the workbook, or you might complete them at separate times. My encouragement is to do whatever works best for you. I have created this workbook to be flexible and adaptable for your ideal use and benefit. If you invest yourself in these pages, you will find yourself a giant step closer to wholeness and healing after twelve weeks.

No doubt you come to this workbook struggling with depression. I tell you with absolute confidence that you don't have to live this way. You can be free to reach your highest potential. You can leave behind the weight on your shoulders that has been pressing down on you and move unencumbered and unconstrained toward a bright future.

Hundreds of my clients who have put the ideas in this workbook into practice are living proof that a whole new way of being is as near to you as your ability to hope. They have learned, as you can, that life need not be filled with depression, anxiety, regret, and fear. Every moment can be filled with wonder, exhilaration, optimism, and gratitude.

Start now.



# Guidance for Groups

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Healing can and does happen individually . . . but *most* healing happens within community. Depressed individuals often feel isolated, alone, and misunderstood. That's why groups centered on discussing depression and sharing personal experiences can be so powerful. Such groups are greatly needed because depression is recognized as one of the most widespread mental health issues in the world. Research reveals that

- in the last year, 10.3 million adults in the United States have experienced a depressive episode that caused some sort of severe impairment;
- almost half of those with a depression diagnosis have also been diagnosed with an anxiety disorder; and
- approximately 15 percent of US adults will experience depression during their lives.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the prevalence of depression, some people feel there's a stigma attached to this condition, as if they should "just get over it," have more faith, or act happy so they don't bring everyone else down

with them. Worse, many depressed people feel deeply flawed at their core, falsely believing that their emotional struggles make them different from others, or even inferior.

A group centered on the topic of depression should, above all, seek to be loving, gracious, and accepting. Everyone on earth struggles with something, whether physical ailments, emotional problems, relationship disappointments, past traumas, spiritual disillusionment, addictive behaviors, and on and on. We are truly fellow travelers on the journey toward wholeness.

With this in mind, here are several suggestions for using this workbook effectively in a group setting:

- It's best for one person to serve as the facilitator, setting the tone for the gathering, guiding the discussion, and keeping the meeting focused.
- The facilitator should prepare ahead of time by reviewing the week's exercises and deciding which topics and questions would be appropriate and helpful within a group setting.
- Be sensitive to the discussion process. Try to give everyone an opportunity to speak, and when necessary, gently redirect the focus of those who tend to dominate a discussion.
- Be careful not to put anyone on the spot or make anyone feel pressured to share. The questions and assessments in this workbook cover some very personal and sensitive topics. Encourage group members to share their answers and thoughts if they feel comfortable doing so—and give them the freedom to stay quiet if they wish to.
- Use this workbook in conjunction with the *Healing Depression for Life* book, if possible. Ideally, the two go hand in hand, with the book providing thorough explanations of the whole-person approach and the workbook following up with practical exercises. However, each section of the workbook

begins with an “At a Glance” summary of the corresponding book-chapter content, followed by an “Essential Ideas” portion. So even those who have not read the book, or missed particular chapters, can get up to speed quickly and find the discussion helpful.

The sections of the workbook that best lend themselves to group discussion are “Essential Ideas . . . and Your Insights” and “Dig Deeper.” Both of these sections include several questions and space for group members’ responses. Some participants might like to share their journaling response from the “Change Your Story, Change Your Life” section. The bottom line is to use *any* of this material that will be most helpful in engaging your group members in the discussion process.



WEEK 1

# Finding a New Path Forward

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*Why Lasting Healing Can  
Feel like an Unreachable Mirage*

## Chapter 1 at a Glance

Here's an all-too-common response people get when they begin to admit they have a problem with depression: "It's all in your head! Just give it time." Or worse, "Snap out of it already!"

This kind of advice is rarely loving or helpful—though, like the broken clock that is accurate twice a day, it occasionally manages to be sort of right. That is, for people who are experiencing an ordinary case of the blues or temporary emotional upheaval due to grief or trauma, time can be an ally, and natural mental resiliency usually does return in due course.

But for millions of people around the world, those more common scenarios are unfamiliar. These individuals are caught in the grip of something larger and more tenacious than that. They suffer from clinical depression, and no amount of glib advice is going to make it "go away."



The fact is, depression is real. And painful. And frightening.

Too often, depression can even be life threatening when it drains a person of hope to the point of considering self-harm. Beyond the toll it takes on individual lives, depression places enormous strain on families, businesses, schools, and governments. In fact, no corner of society is immune to its disabling effects. That's true across the globe, not just in the United States.

But here's another vastly more important fact: depression is *not* a life sentence. Healing is possible, now and for good. After decades of treating scores of depressed people, I am convinced that genuine, lasting healing does not lie with any one solution. Chapter 1 of *Healing Depression for Life* examines common treatment options like antidepressant medications, talk therapy, and cognitive behavioral therapy and makes the case for the whole-person model we employ at The Center, which is a multifaceted combination of any and all avenues to healing.

## Essential Ideas . . . and Your Insights

1. **Depression is real—and won't go away without intentional action.** For the millions of people around the world battling depression, many of them (or most) have heard comments such as “It's a phase—you'll get over it” or “Dwell on positive thoughts and you'll feel better” or “You've got to have more faith in God. Overcome your doubts, and you'll overcome depression.” The truth is, depression is painful, frightening, and sometimes life threatening. Depressed individuals are caught in the grip of a persistent and pervasive condition, and no amount of glib advice is going to make it “go away.”

**Your response:** Have you felt misunderstood—perhaps

you've received insensitive advice—as you've struggled with depression? What have you heard from others?

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2. **Many depressed people do nothing to address their condition ... but they really should.** Among those battling depression, 37 percent of adults and a staggering 60 percent of young people receive no treatment of any kind.<sup>2</sup> What's more, recent research has revealed that approximately one-third of people who do seek help receive little or no lasting benefit from treatments commonly used today.<sup>3</sup>

**Your response:** Have you sought help for your depression? If so, how? What has been your experience with treatment options you have pursued?

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3. **Depression is caused by multiple factors and should be treated with multiple approaches.** Most care providers recommend a single treatment (antidepressant medication, talk therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, etc.) to address a disorder that is never caused by one thing alone. Depression is nearly always rooted in a variety of factors, sometimes going back years.

**Your response:** What is your perspective about treating depression with medication? Has someone (a health care provider, counselor, or friend) recommended a particular treatment for depression relief? If so, was it helpful?

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## Taking Stock

Which of these approaches have you tried? And how much positive change have you experienced? Answer on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is “not very helpful” and 5 is “extremely helpful.”

1. **Sleep Health:** Regular bedtime routine, at least seven hours of sleep nightly.

1    2    3    4    5

2. **Limiting Use of Electronic Devices:** Taking several one-hour breaks each day, turning devices off at bedtime, setting aside devices for an entire day each week.

1    2    3    4    5

3. **Stress Management:** Honestly assessing your stress level, seeking to reduce stress.

1    2    3    4    5

4. **Addressing Hidden Addictions:** Recognizing your compulsive behaviors and seeking to overcome them.

1    2    3    4    5

5. **Emotional Processing/Cleansing:** Addressing anger, guilt, and fear through counseling, journaling, and so on.

1    2    3    4    5

6. **Forgiveness:** Intentionally addressing hurts and heartaches and releasing those who caused you harm.

1    2    3    4    5

7. **Spiritual Practices:** Prayer, meditation, involvement in a faith community, reading sacred material, etc.

1    2    3    4    5

8. **Physical movement:** At least thirty minutes of continuous exercise per day.

1    2    3    4    5

9. **Fortifying Nutrition:** Reducing processed and sugary foods, consuming fruits and vegetables, using appropriate nutritional supplements and probiotics.

1    2    3    4    5

10. **Detoxing Your Physical Body:** Regularly consuming antioxidant foods and beverages, abstaining from alcohol, etc.

1    2    3    4    5

## Change Your Story, Change Your Life

1. What is the story you tell yourself about depression?  
What is your self-talk about your condition (*I shouldn't feel this way . . . I just need to try harder and get over it . . . I'm a victim of my circumstances . . . Depression was passed down in my DNA . . . My painful childhood caused my*

*depression . . .*)? Write out your story—just let it flow without self-editing or filtering.

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2. Now write out a different narrative that you want to embrace. Where do you want to end up? Describe your ideal life, free from depression.

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## Dig Deeper

1. What words would you use to describe depression (such as *heavy*, *burdensome*, *debilitating*, *confusing*, *enlightening*, *informative*, etc.)? Choose some descriptive words that are meaningful to you and write about their personal importance.

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2. What have you found to be helpful or unhelpful in relieving your depression? Describe your experience.

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3. What has been your most significant challenge related to your depression? This might be a practical issue (work productivity, attending to household tasks), an emotional issue (feeling misunderstood by others, struggling with self-esteem), or a spiritual issue (wondering where God is amid your painful experience).

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4. What insights have you gained because of your depression? Most people, understandably, are eager to move beyond depression. Yet this hardship has something to teach you. So, what have you learned from your experience?

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5. How do your spiritual beliefs intersect with your depression struggles? For example, do you feel the need to “have it all together” with your faith-oriented friends? Do you think you should just have “more faith” to prevail over your problems? Or do you rely on your spirituality as a source of strength? Describe your experience.

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## First Steps, Next Steps

Now it's time to get practical. We've explored many issues that have prompted you to ponder and process. Let's put those thoughts into action. I'll provide several steps forward, and then it's your turn to determine three additional steps you will take this week.

1. Explore treatment options you might like to pursue. The whole-person approach my team and I advocate utilizes a

variety of tools that address emotional, physical, spiritual, and intellectual needs. Research options that begin with one aspect of healing that seems both safe and stretching to you. Write out your intention and plan to accomplish this step.

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2. Talk with others who have struggled with depression about what has helped them. Reach out to friends, family members, or acquaintances with the questions “How have you dealt with depression? What worked for you?” Record your findings.

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3. Recognize your resistance—and write about it. What is holding you back from looking honestly at your depression and seeking help? For example, most depressed people struggle to find energy and motivation to engage in actively seeking help. Others avoid painful emotional issues that contributed to depression. What, for you, is keeping you stuck?

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4. Your turn. What steps do you intend to take this week to move toward wellness?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Closing Reflections

You might be *struggling* with depression or *suffering* from depression. Whether struggling or suffering—or whatever other word you choose to describe your current condition—I want you to be assured of an essential truth: God wants you to experience healing. Depression has likely left you feeling isolated and alone in your pain. But you are not alone. God is with you.

The beloved pastor and author Charles Swindoll said, “No matter how dark the clouds, the sun will eventually pierce the darkness and dispel it; no matter how heavy the rain, the sun will ultimately prevail to hang a rainbow in the sky.”<sup>4</sup>

Living in the Pacific Northwest, where rainstorms are frequent occurrences, I have witnessed many amazing rainbows. Double rainbows of vibrant, multicolored arches paint the sky at the smallest hint of sunshine after a drenching downpour. When I see them, I smile, believing in the promise they deliver. I believe in their confirmation of a loving God who announces the sun after the rain with such exuberant celebration.

Do you know that God wants you to experience the same celebration of healing in your life? He wants the sunshine to break through the dark clouds of your depression. From the dreariness and darkness of your pain, God wants to send forth his rainbow of healing and bring you joy so you can experience once again the fullness and joyfulness he intended for you all along.

## Scripture for Meditation

Life will be brighter than noonday,  
and darkness will become like morning.  
You will be secure, because there is hope;  
you will look about you and take your rest in safety.

JOB 11:17-18

## Wise Words to Awaken Your Spirit

The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.

ELISABETH KÜBLER-ROSS

## Journal Your Journey

This week you are going to be trying out new things, taking steps forward, forging new habits, and letting go of old ones. Will these things make a difference? Will you be able to discern any changes in how you feel and what you think?

This page is here for you to journal about the journey. What

