Ask yourself “what is my emotional pain telling me needs to change in my life?” The answer may be immediate and obvious to you, or it may take some time and some talking with a therapist to uncover. Consider taking a walk and letting this question roll through your mind, writing a letter (that you never send) to someone who cares for you, telling them what you think needs to change, or talking these questions over with someone you trust. This may help the answer emerge.

Your Relationships

Sometimes when people get depressed they tend to isolate. Isolation can bring loneliness and sometimes feelings of hopelessness. Agree with yourself to contact one person this week, by phone, email, or in person to begin building a support network if you have become isolated. Consider attending a meeting or an organization that is attractive to you, a church service, or a lecture. Getting out in the world helps with depression.

Sometimes when people get depressed, they become irritable and may tend to push those who care about them away. Notice if you are doing this and consider doing something soothing for yourself when you feel irritable instead of striking out. Consider letting those at whom your irritability is directed know that you are feeling depressed so that they may understand you better.

Recommended Reading:

*The Feeling Good Handbook* by David Burns M.D.

*No Enemies Within: A Creative Process for Discovering What’s Right About What’s Wrong* by Dawna Markova, Ph.D.

The Georgia Tech Counseling Center is a unit of the Division of Student Affairs. The Center is dedicated to enhancing the academic experience and success of all students by providing a variety of counseling and psychological services to individuals and the campus community. We provide short-term counseling services to address a wide range of personal and career concerns. Our services are available at no charge to currently enrolled students.

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Office Hours
Monday - Friday
8 am - 5 pm

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Your Body

Don’t forget the basics:

- Sleep enough (7-9 hours), too little or too much is not good for you and may sabotage your mood and energy level.
- Eat well (3 meals or more mini-meals), especially focus on boosting protein and decreasing carbohydrates as this is good for levels of serotonin. Additionally, you may consider boosting vitamin B or taking a stress vitamin supplement.
- Exercise is vital to recovery from depression. Find something fun to do and try to do some of it every day. Don’t let all-or-nothing thinking sabotage moving your body around. You don’t have to do a full workout to get credit for exercising.
- Consider being evaluated for antidepressants if your therapist thinks you may benefit.
- Avoid alcohol. It depresses the central nervous system and can really exacerbate depression...think about it, there is a reason we have all heard of “crying drunks.”
- Avoid too much caffeine and sugar, they may temporarily give you a lift, but the drop afterwards can be much worse if you are already depressed.
- Be gentle and respectful with yourself physically; your body needs your help to feel better.

Your Mind

A. **Pay attention** to what you are telling yourself. Self-defeating thinking patterns are a habit that can be unlearned. Below are some examples of what Dr. David Burns, author of The Feeling Good Handbook calls “Twisted Thinking.” See how many of these you catch yourself doing. If you want to learn how to unlearn this habit, read Dr. Burns’ book and talk to your therapist about what you are learning.

B. **All-or-nothing thinking:** You see things in black or white categories. If a situation falls short of perfect, you see it as a total failure.

C. **Overgeneralization:** You see a single negative event, such as a romantic rejection or a career reversal as a never ending pattern of defeat...catch yourself using words like “always” and “never.”

D. **Mental filter:** You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively. You can only see the few points you missed on a test and fail to notice that you got most of the items right.

E. **Discounting the positive:** You reject positive experiences by insisting that they “don’t count.” If you do a good job, you may tell yourself that it wasn’t good enough or that anyone else could have done as well.

F. **Jumping to Conclusions:** You interpret things negatively when there are no facts to support your conclusion. You may practice mind-reading, without checking it out, you may automatically conclude that someone is thinking negatively about you. Or you may practice fortune-telling and spend time predicting doom for yourself.

G. **Magnification:** You exaggerate the importance of your problems and short comings, or you minimize the importance of your desirable qualities. This is also called the binocular trick.

H. **Emotional Reasoning:** You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are. For example, “I feel guilty, therefore I must be a rotten person.”

I. **“Should” statements:** You tell yourself that things should be the way you hoped or expected them to be or that others should or should not be a certain way. This can lead to frustration with others and feeling hopeless about yourself.

J. **Labeling:** Is an extreme form of all or nothing thinking. Instead of saying “I made a mistake” you attach a negative label to yourself “I am a loser.” This is quite irrational because you are not the same as what you do.

K. **Personalization and blame:** This occurs when you hold yourself personally responsible for an event that isn’t entirely under your control. It can lead to feeling guilty, ashamed, or inadequate.

L. **Generally pain:** Can be thought of as adaptive for the human species. If you could not feel physical pain, you wouldn’t know not to walk on a broken leg, or to get your hand off a hot stove. Emotional pain can be adaptive too. Like physical pain, it gives you information that something needs to change.