



RAY EDWARDS

LIVE WITH JOY. LEAD WITH PASSION. PROSPER WITH PURPOSE.

How to Overcome Depression

Hi, this is Michael Hyatt of [MichaelHyatt.com](https://michaelhyatt.com) and author of the New York Times bestseller platform, *Get Noticed in a Noisy World*. The Ray Edwards Show is one of my top favorite podcasts. I never miss an episode.

Have you ever suffered from depression or anxiety? It's a weird question to start a business oriented podcast with, but depression is a major problem in the world today and especially around the holidays, around the time this episode is being released. Lots of people experience this depression thing, it comes on them and especially during the winter months as days get shorter and there's more darkness and less light, people tend to get depressed.

There's a thing called 'Seasonal Effective Disorder', maybe you think that bothers you. Depression is debilitating. If you've ever just felt down and blue and you think that's depressed, clinical depression is something much deeper, darker and more powerful. By the year 2020, the World Health Organization estimates that clinical depression will be the number two cause of lost years of healthy life worldwide. Think about that.

What brought this one and why am I doing an episode about overcoming depression? I was in a small group discussion a few days ago and one of the people in the group brought up the fact that he was feeling depressed. As I listened to the discussion I realized that there were people in the group who had never experienced real depression, clinical, major depression and couldn't really understand what we were talking about. But, as someone, myself, who has battled depression for much of my adult life, I know what it means to be depressed and I know how debilitating it can be.

In this episode I will tell you there is hope and I will share my own battle with depression and give you my recipe for defeating this debilitating and deadly disease.

Tip of the Week

I'm going to keep this week's show very thematically focused on defeating depression and as my tip of the week I'm going to share with you an app I've used to help me in my battle with depression. It's called **mood tracker**. If you look for this on the app store you'll find there are tons of different apps and most aren't the one I'm talking about.

In fact, the one I'm talking about isn't the most popular. It's not the most highly rated, but I tried a bunch and this is the one I recommend. It's very simple and effective. You can find a link to this specific app that I'm talking about on the show notes at RayEdwards.com/145 and look for the link to the mood tracker app.

Once a day you enter a choice of three moods. There's a happy smiley face that's colored yellow like the sun, a neutral face that's gray and you have the blue face, the I'm really down and depressed face. You can see a two week calendar view from the main page to see how you've been doing over the past few weeks mood wise and also, you can go to a full calendar view and see a month at a time.

And finally, one of the best features is where you can export your notes to email so you can bring your notes to your next counseling session, doctor's visit, visiting with a pastor or just talking with a loved one. You can bring this and say this is how I've been doing over the past 30 days, instead of just guessing and saying I think I've been feeling kind of depressed. You can know for sure what your mood has been like, because you can track it easily with this app. Check it out.

Spiritual Foundations

One of the questions that always comes up when the subject of depression is raised is... is it a spiritual thing or a medical thing? If you know anything about me, you may or may not realize that I believe that all sickness, all disease at its root is a spiritual battle. In the world that God designed there is no sickness, no disease, but because evil crept into the world and Satan's presence is a reality that we deal with, chaos is always seeking to tear apart what God has sewn together. Then, there will always be a spiritual root at the heart of every disease and problem that we face.

It doesn't mean that you need to take on any condemnation for it. It's not like you need to think, I'm so sinful that's why I have this depression. That's not necessarily the case. In fact, we know that Christ redeemed us from the curse and we are not subject to any curse that Christ has redeemed us from and He's redeemed us from all curses. It says so in the Bible, so that's true.

So what do we do about this spiritual battle with depression? If depression is a reality, we live in a world that is not perfected yet and we as human beings are not perfected yet, how do we deal with it when depression rears its head? We'll know that for sure we are capable of battling it.

Proverbs 25:28 says *whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down without walls*. That's not meant to criticize and make you feel inadequate if you're depressed, it should give you hope because the Bible's never going to prescribe a course of action or make a recommendation to you that you are incapable of fulfilling with God's help. So to me this verse speaks hope. It says there is a way to have rule over your own spirit and to not be a city broken down, and to have walls around that city so that you're protected from the spirit of depression.

There's another scriptural verse that I love in relation to this topic and it really gets at the heart of what depression is all about. Proverbs 13:12 says *hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life*. What is depression if it is not a sickness of the heart caused by feeling hopeless?

In fact, in my small group discussion, one of the things that the person suffering from depression brought up was that he felt hopeless. He said I just feel like I have no hope. He has all these great things going for him in his life. He has an incredible family, a successful business. He's a believer and follows Christ. He serves in ministry. He has all these great things happening in his life, but he felt hopeless and that's made his heart sick.

There's a way out of this spiritual battle, a way through it to victory and I would just like to make three suggestions to you as ways to strengthen yourself for this battle, because it is most certainly a battle. By the way, I got these from a book called *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord* by Pastor Bill Johnson out of Redding, California. I recommend that book and you'll find it in the resources for this podcast.

Here are the three things I'd like you to consider...

1. Decide to use the opportunity presented by depression to glorify God.

I'm not saying that depression is a blessing, don't get me started on that garbage where people say things like, oh I've got cancer and it's been such a blessing. No! It's not a blessing. Anybody who has ever seen the ravages of cancer or of Parkinson's, Alzheimer's or depression, knows it's not a blessing. But can God bring blessing out of that situation? Yes. Can you demonstrate the glory of God through that fiery trial? Yes. That's what I mean when I say decide to use the opportunity to glorify God.

2. The deeper your depression the more expressive you should make your worship.

I hate to use the word should, because it starts to feel like I'm going to condemn you if you don't do it. As we read the Psalms we realize that worship is a form of releasing the power of God into your own spirit to give you back your hope. Worship isn't just about singing songs and it's not about saying wrote prayers, and it's not about rituals but it's about fully expressing the love that you have for God.

Praising God and worshipping him is not something that He asks us to do because He's an egomaniac and He needs our confirmation. He does it because worshipping God doesn't do something for him it does something for us. We were made to worship and when we do worship we open the gates to receive his grace which fills us with hope and eradicates depression. So trust me on this, the deeper your depression I know you feel the least like worshipping, singing, dancing, clapping and shouting or praising God. You feel the least like it at any time, but that's the point at which it's most important for you to do it.

3. Read the Psalms until you hear your own voice echoing back to you.

When you reach that passage stay with it, meditate on it, read it over and over, read it out loud and pray through it. Ask the Lord to illuminate it to you because that word will come alive for you and in you and bring you out of this area of depression.

Again, these are insights that I picked up from Pastor Johnson's book. These three suggestions can help arm you for the spiritual battle against the spiritual force that is depression.

Feature Presentation

How to overcome depression... I'm here to tell you that it is over-comable. I mention that I have fought the battle of depression myself. I've fought it for most of my adult life and I know how hard and debilitating it can be. I was healed through the power of prayer of depression back in about 2003 and went for years with no problem whatsoever with depression, but a few years later in 2011 I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and I did have to battle depression all over again.

Some say it's part of Parkinson's disease, while others say you become depressed because you have a disease, which is understandable to some extent. What I'm trying to express to you is that you can be victorious over depression. I know. I've had victory over depression. I have victory over depression and I'm here to tell you that you can have the same, and I'm going to give you some specific tools, my own recipe that I believe will help you overcome this thing we call depression.

First, let's talk about what a serious problem depression is. It is a major problem in the world today. It is not just that you're feeling sad or sorry for yourself, it goes way beyond that. Depression is a major problem, and as I said earlier by the year 2020, the World Health Organization estimates that depression will be the number two cause of lost years of healthy life

in the world. Think about that. Of the estimated 17.5 million Americans who are affected by some form of depression, 9.2 million have major or clinical depression.

Two-thirds of people suffering from depression do not seek necessary treatment and I believe it's because of embarrassment. There's a stigma attached to saying you're depressed or anxious. People tend to think that you're weak in some way. I'm here to tell you that it's never a sign of weakness to open yourself up and ask for help, it's a sign of strength. Eighty percent of all people with clinical depression, who have received treatment, significantly improve their lives. There's a source of hope for you.

As business people and entrepreneurs we should know this, the economic cost of depression is estimated at \$30.4 billion dollars a year and the cost in human suffering cannot be estimated. Not that long ago depression took away from us one of the great comedic geniuses of our time, Robin Williams, who took his own life. Some might say, are you sure that depression caused him to take his own life? Let me say this, people who are not depressed don't commit suicide.

As I've said I battled depression myself and I know it's not an easy thing to deal with or talk about or even admit, and I've tried just about every solution available to fight depression. I feel that it's vitally important, if you're suffering from this or know someone who is suffering, that you resist this force called depression. It's more than just a feeling it's an enemy that will devour your life and the lives of those around you if you allow it. There is hope and I'm going to share my own battle plan and recipe for overcoming depression.

First things first. Let's talk about the theology of suffering, because this is something that's talked about a lot. I've heard it even recently in a discussion about depression where someone said I believe God has a purpose in your depression, that you have a lesson to learn. No! I don't think depression, anxiety or any disease or affliction ever comes from the Lord! Now, God can and does use bad things and turns them ultimately to our good, but that is his work in redeeming an imperfect creation from the curse that mankind placed it under to begin with.

It is not God abusing his children in order to teach them something. He doesn't operate that way. It does not come from God! The theology here is very deep. Good things come from God, bad things come from Satan. Children can understand this. It takes adults to make it seem complicated.

Let's go over what I call Ray's 9 step anti-depression recipe and I want to state for the record that I'm not trying to make this seem like an easy fix, that I have a magic button you can press to not be depressed anymore, but I am saying that I have done lots of work in this area, personally. I can tell you that you can overcome depression and these are the tools that have helped me. I'm also telling you that God will give you the wisdom you need to overcome your depression, if you ask him.

For those of you who are not spiritual and you came to this podcast for business stuff and you're wondering where that is, I think getting out of depression is crucial to your business. If this is bugging you then check back in next week and I'll have something a little less spiritual for you. I can't promise that. Moving on...

1. Pray daily and do it as a conversation with God

This is not a matter of praying through some wrote prayer that's been written out for you that you just repeat like a formula. There is a place for crafted prayer in our lives, I believe that. I believe in its power and I love the liturgical nature of churches like the Greek Orthodox and Catholic

Church. I love all the expressions of the body of Christ. If you're a Baptist and you're offended because I love Catholic brothers and sisters as well as Orthodox brothers and sisters, I'm sorry, but there's just one church worldwide, it's Christ's church. We're the ones that have come up with different variations and expressions of it, but there's only one church.

I love those liturgical prayers, but this kind of prayer is the kind that I believe the Apostle Paul was talking about when he said, *pray without ceasing*. It's a conversation, a constant dialogue between you and God. Conversations are two sided, ponder that. There are two sides to a conversation, so you should do at least as much listening as you do talking.

2. Practice the awareness of God's presence

It's interesting, I go to church services sometimes or revival meetings where people say, oh God we just invite you into this place. Really? Like He's not there already. I know that's not what they mean, because I know that God is everywhere and that He can become more present in certain places because of our pull through our faith on Heaven. I get that and understand it, but I want you to become aware of God's presence all the time.

There's a wonderful book written in the 1600s by Brother Lawrence called *Practicing the Presence of God*. It's a classic. You can get it online for free. You can go to the public domain free and download it for your kindle for \$.99. It's a priceless book, so I urge you to get a hold of it and read it if this has any appeal to you at all. Learning to practice the awareness of God's presence is powerful in helping you overcome depression.

I'm here to tell you right now, the Bible says in his presence is fullness of joy and when you are full of joy you cannot be depressed.

3. Journal daily

I have never been a greater journaler. I was never able to do it consistently and write poetic thoughts about how I felt about things every day. I would get these beautiful journals and fantastic pens and I would scribble one page in them and never write in them again. I wasn't able to do it, until I discovered an app called **Day 1**. I found a template for journaling that originally came from Michael Hyatt, who recommended this practice.

He has these questions that he answers in his journal every day, so it's not like writing an essay it's simply answering a few key questions every day in your journal. This is what I do. I've developed my own variation of that template. I store it in text expander as a snippet, so I pop open Day 1, hit the keystroke combination and all my questions pop into my journal entry for that day and I answer them.

Among those questions are...

- What am I grateful for today? I spend a lot of time on that one.
- What did I read in the Bible today? I spend a lot of time on that one.
- What did I learn from it?
- What has God said to me today?

This journaling is a vital part of me practicing the presence of God in my life and being aware of what He's doing in my life. It's critical and crucial in my battle against depression.

4. Read five Psalms chapters and 1 chapter of Proverbs every day

This is something I picked up from Dr. Billy Graham, who pointed out in some book that I read of his that if you do that then you will read the entire book of Psalms and Proverbs once a month for the rest of your life. The Psalms and Proverbs are wisdom literature that are filled with anti-depression medication for your soul. I recommend its practice. I do this in addition to my normal Bible reading or study.

I want to stress that you have to do this with an open heart and you have to do it with an open and fluid approach. If you're just checking off something on a list then it won't help you. If you wrote burning your way through it to get it done, that won't work. You have to receive it in your spirit. One of the things I find most powerful when reading scripture is reading it out loud and putting the inflections in it that you think belong there, interpreting scripture through your personality. There's a power in that that's not present when you're just reading silently to yourself. Try it.

5. Vigorous exercise six days a week

This isn't like a lackadaisical little walk. I'm talking about you have to work. I'm in the gym six days a week working up a sweat. When we leave the gym, and I usually workout with my son, we go at 7:00 in the morning and do a high intensity training workout three days a week and the other days of the week we do aerobics and weight lifting and when we leave the gym we are drenched in sweat.

It's been proven scientifically that it does things to your brain chemically that help you in the battle against depression. It helps you build up those depleted stores of neurotransmitters that fight the battle of depression for you. Here's a tip, a great way to do this is to do your exercise while listening to powerful positive, upbeat worship music. What I'm saying is not to listen to rock or rap music that is destructive in its messaging, and by the way, I love rap and rock at different times in the day and for different purposes. I don't like lyrics that are destructive, misogynistic and perpetuate evil.

Specifically, for the purposes of battling depression and while you're exercising vigorously, listening to powerful, positive upbeat worship music can be extremely and extraordinarily helpful. I would avoid the downer Christian songs and there are plenty. They're mopey, kind of I've written an ode to my problem songs, you don't want those.

6. Daily declarations

Speaking out the promises of the word of God over your life. I have a book that I'm recommending to you in the resources section for this episode, but let me just say, speaking God's word is powerful because He spoke the earth into creation. When Jesus performed his miracles he spoke the miracles into existence. When the disciples and apostles performed miracles they spoke the miracles into existence. Speaking is power in the kingdom of God. When you are speaking, whatever you are saying you are empowering something. You're either empowering the spirit of God or you're empowering the other spirit.

Think about it. If you go around confessing all the time about how terrible your life is, how bad you feel, how sick you are, how unlucky you are, how many problems you have, you're empowering that force in your life. I'm not saying you brought it on yourself, I'm just saying why wouldn't you empower the spirit of God in your life to overcome those things? Some of the declarations that I repeat on a regular basis are all based on scripture and say things like...

My prayers are powerful and effective, everywhere I go I bring the presence of God to everyone I meet. Because of God's love I'm made perfect by Christ and worthy to receive the love of God. These are declarations that I make over my life that are based on scripture and I recommend declaring what scripture says about you enthusiastically and with lots of emotion and power behind it, every day, to help you overcome depression.

7. I eat a Paleo diet, meat and vegetables with no grains and no refined sugars and other refined foods

I'm not perfect at this, but I'm getting better and better all the time and getting pretty close to fully on board with this practice. Occasionally, I admit it, I want a cookie or some ice cream but I'm telling you that eating this way regulates your blood sugar and your neurochemistry. Read the book *Grain Brain* by Dr. Perlmutter. You'll get a revelation when you read this book. So eating a Paleo diet or low carb diet, with no grains and no processed foods, will do wonders to regulate your blood sugar and your neurochemistry, which plays a huge part in depression.

8. Supplementation

Make sure you're getting the nutrients you need to keep you from being depressed, especially Vitamin D and B Complex. Those are two that you can't do without. There's a proven link between a deficiency in Vitamin D and being depressed.

Together with this, you might also consider getting a special light, especially during winter months that's designed to help people overcome 'Seasonal Affective Disorder', people who are depressed during this season with less sunlight, more darkness and shorter days, it's a proven thing. Phillips makes something called **Go Light Blue**, a light therapy device that's about \$150 and it can do wonders for you. It plays into this same element of neurochemistry that Vitamin D does for your life.

9. Tracking your mood daily and being aware of what mood you're in

You might say that sounds like not such a good idea, because then I'm just going to think I'm depressed and that will make me even more depressed. No, awareness itself can be somewhat curative.

We can't control our emotions, but what we can control is our thoughts and so often our emotions are fed by our thoughts. So if you're feeding your emotions by asking yourself the wrong kinds of internal questions and having the wrong internal dialogue or internal representation of what the world around you means, what the events and circumstances in your life mean, you can through the wrong type of awareness and thoughts, dig yourself a deeper hole.

If you're tracking your mood with the mood tracker app and you realize today I'm down, ask yourself this question... what have I been thinking about? Trace your thoughts back to the moment where you first realized you became depressed and you may find, I see how I started myself down this path so I'm going to back the truck up and go down a different path. I'll ask myself different questions.

What's great about what's going on in my life right now?

How can I use this adversity that's been brought against me in a way that's powerful, witness and testimony for the kingdom of God that blesses others around me?

Ask different questions. Think different thoughts that will lead you to a different emotional state.

Those are my nine elements of my anti-depression recipe and I know it doesn't seem as easy as that. If you're deep in the depression, you may be listening to this and saying that's great for you Ray, but it doesn't work for me. Thank you Mr. Positive Thinker. I know how tough the struggle can be. I'm not saying that it's easy, I'm saying that after years of experimentation, much of it failed, I found some things that have worked and I believe they will work for you as well.

Here are some additional resources for battling depression that have been very useful to me and may be useful for you as well.

- Joel Osteen's book called *I Declare*; 31 promises to speak over your life

I know that Joel is kind of polarizing. Some people love him and some do not, but I promise you this book is useful and it's biblical if you're fighting depression.

- Another book I want to recommend is by Steve Beckland called *Declarations*; Unlocking Your Future. It's practicing the same principle. It gives you declarations that are biblical in nature to make that will change the way you perceive the world and circumstances in your life.

There are links to these books on Amazon if you go to RayEdwards.com/145 just click the links and get the books you want.

Bill Johnson wrote the next book called *Strengthen Yourself in the Lord*. It's a powerful book about what Bill calls the back door to the throne room, discovered by King David. He had this marvelous relationship with God that extended beyond the rights that were granted under the covenant that God's people lived under at that time. In fact, King David apparently seemed to be living under the new covenant, even though it hadn't happened yet. Something about his relationship with God created this ability for him to tap into an era that hadn't yet taken place. It's very powerful. One of the greatest sources of strength I've had over the years in my battle for joy.

Another great book in this series of books is called *The Power of Right Believing* by Joseph Prince. Check it out. I think you'll find it helpful.

Finally, there's a link to where you can get the Phillips Go Light Blue therapy device in the show notes.

Let me give you some final thoughts on overcoming depression.

No discussion of this topic would be complete without mentioning anti-depression medications. People generally have a few predictable reactions to the discussion of these medications. Those who have never been depressed with clinical depression and have never benefitted from anti-depressant medication are quick to criticize and quick to say you're just numbing your pain, covering the feelings and being weak.

My friends, there are cases where just like if you have a broken bone and you need a cast and splint to let the bone heal, you need the proper chemical balance restored to your body to allow you to get out of depression. It's a fact. Not always, but often it is the case. I do think in my opinion, anti-depressant medications are as a last resort but they can be useful. I strongly believe you should only go for anti-depressant medication after you've exhausted every other possible answer.

Again, you need to make your own call on this. If you're deep in the throes of depression and you're having thoughts of suicide then you should see a medical professional and do exactly what they tell you to get out of that state as soon as possible. I believe that if you're not in that emergency situation, you should exhaust every other possible answer first. There are plenty of peer reviewed controlled studies that demonstrate that vigorous exercise is just as effective in many cases as anti-depressants, not all but many.

The possible exception to this is that you may have an actual physiological problem in your brain. In my own case, because I have been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease I have empirical evidence that my neurological systems are flawed. There is a plumbing problem up there, specifically the production and delivery of dopamine, which controls physical movement in your body, which is at the root of most Parkinson's symptoms.

It just so happens that dopamine has an important role to play in your mood. So, there may be more of a direct physiological element in my individual case, but even in this case is in dispute among experts. There are some who say it's not a symptom of the disease, people get depressed because they have the disease because they think about it in certain ways and others say there's a physiological switch in the brain and those stores of neuro transmitters and chemicals are depleted and need to be restored.

Who's right? Even the experts can't agree, so I won't come down on one side or the other. I can tell you that there are many things you can do other than taking anti-depressants that will help you and sometimes you may need to take the medication. I have taken them myself, under the close supervision of a medical professional, so if you need to please do not accept shame or condemnation for doing so.

I know for many of my brothers and sisters in Christ there's a feeling that if I have to take medicine I'm telling myself I don't have enough faith in God to heal me and take care of me, which is absolutely a lie. God gave us scientists and medical professionals who have discovered these answers to our physical problems and we should thank God for the blessing of those medicines and treatments that are available. God always does the healing, whether through the laying on of hands by a believer or by the laying on of hands by a doctor, or even the blessing of intellect that allows the creation of medicines that heal.

So just like the medicines I take for Parkinson's disease, do I pray that God heals me of Parkinson's disease? Yes. Am I confident that He will? Yes, at the appropriate time it's done. Until then I take the medicine and every time I take it I consecrate it to God and thank him for the blessing to be able to have this medication that allows me to live a normal life. I believe you can do the same.

What about counseling? If you seek out counseling of any kind and you're a believer in Christ, I strongly recommend working with a Christian counselor and you have to be careful there as well to find one who doesn't have some perverse theology of suffering that they want to pass off on you, unless you want to suffer and believe it's for a reason.

I have, in the past, sought out professional help with my depression, even when I went to see the medical professional, I looked for one who is a believer because I think the baseline theological premises that one begins with, influences the final practical outcome and conclusions that one forms, even in medicine.

What to Do Now

So there you have it, my 9 step recipe to battle depression. You have additional resources and my final thoughts on things like counseling and medications. I urge you, if you suffer from depression, be encouraged, have hope because there is a way out. Go back over this podcast, take notes and take action. Try the 9 steps for yourself and see if it doesn't help you. I would love to hear from you if it does. You can leave your comments at RayEdwards.com/145.

My question that I leave you with this week is... have you ever struggled with feelings of depression? If so, what are you doing about it?

Between now and next time I wish you happy holidays as we have celebrated the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that God continues to bless you and if you suffer from depression He instantly takes it away from you and heals you of that forever and that He does more for you than you can ask or even possibly imagine.

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