

Depression : psychological & practical guide

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1 : Introduction

Depression is often described as a loss of momentum, a weariness of life, a persistent sadness. But those who experience it quickly realize that it is something else entirely: a profound withdrawal in which the world seems to drift away.

Everyday tasks become burdensome, hours drag on, and thoughts fade away. This experience cannot be reduced to a simple bout of temporary despondency; it affects our very relationship with existence.

However, this withdrawal is not a complete void. It often harbors a desire that has been pushed aside.

When a life direction awakens an anxiety that we do not feel ready to face, momentum can freeze.

Depression then functions as a protection: it avoids confrontation with the anxiety aroused by desire. It is not a voluntary choice, but an unconscious way of sheltering oneself.

This protection comes at a price. It traps us in immobility, where every day is the same. Boredom, monotony, and the feeling that nothing is worth trying are not mere symptoms: they are signs that a life cannot be sustained indefinitely through avoidance. If this time becomes unbearable, it is because a deeper movement continues to seek its way out.

Depression, far from being nothingness, indicates that a forgotten desire wants to remind us of itself.

Recognizing this logic has nothing to do with guilt. No one

decides to find themselves in this state. But understanding that depression speaks, that it tries in its own way to preserve a desire it fears, opens up space for a different kind of work.

The goal is not to make sadness disappear as one would extinguish a fire, but to begin to listen to what this forced silence is trying to say. It is in this listening that a new direction in life can be reborn.

2 : The slowed-down body

When depression sets in, it is often the body that shows it first.

Waking up becomes difficult, every movement requires excessive effort, and the muscles seem to have lost their elasticity.

This slowdown is not just a biological symptom: it reflects an inner change. It is as if the vital impulse has lost its starting point.

Many people say: "I don't feel like doing anything anymore." This statement is not a lie. It accurately describes the immediate impression.

But it does not mean that all desire has disappeared. Often, something has been put aside because it aroused too much anxiety.

Depression can be understood as the suffering of having forgotten where that desire was. It's not that there is nothing left; it's that there is something somewhere, covered by the protection of slowing down.

By withdrawing, the body creates a zone of suspension. It tries to protect itself from excessive tension. But this withdrawal comes at a cost: time thickens, days lose their relief.

This numbness, which can be experienced as inevitable, is also a signal. It shows that a forgotten desire continues to knock, even weakly, at the door. It is because it exists that one day the weight of immobility becomes unbearable and movement becomes possible again.

Seeing the slowing down of the body from this angle allows us to change our perspective. It is not a question of forcing ourselves to immediately regain full energy.

It is a question of listening to what this slowing down is trying to tell us: that a direction in life has been set aside and is waiting for us to reopen a passage.

Many people are surprised: “I'm resting, but I'm still exhausted.” This paradox reflects a common phenomenon. Prolonged immobility, which is supposed to restore strength, ultimately weakens us.

The body needs movement to nourish its energy.

When it is deprived of movement, rest no longer brings recovery; it maintains fatigue.

This cycle may seem logical—waiting to feel better before moving—but it gradually drags you down. The longer you wait, the less energy you have.

The body gets used to minimal activity, breathing slows down, and muscles lose tone. The feeling of weariness then seems to confirm that it is better to do nothing.

In reality, it is this lack of action that deepens exhaustion.

This mechanism is not simply a lack of willpower. It expresses a deep conviction that life demands too high a price. As if every effort were a scam: expending more energy than we will receive in return.

But existence does not obey this calculation. It moves forward because something within us insists, even if the outcome is uncertain and losses are inevitable. It is this movement, stronger than simple gain, that makes human life possible.

Recognizing this logic helps us understand why rest is not enough. The return of momentum often comes through a gesture,

even a small one: going outside for a few minutes, walking around the room, accomplishing a simple task.

These modest steps break the inertia and restore the body's memory of movement. They remind us that energy does not always precede action; sometimes it is the result of it.

The slowing down of the body is therefore not simply a breakdown that can be repaired by rest. It highlights the tension between the desire to live and the fear of paying the price.

We know, even if only vaguely, that all existence involves loss: what we undertake may fail, what we love may be taken away.

The temptation to withdraw often arises from this implicit calculation: why expose oneself if, in the end, one risks losing?

Yet human experience cannot be reduced to a balance between gain and loss. What drives us to act does not come from a certainty of profit, but from a deeper impulse, a desire that requires no guarantee.

Even when we sense that we will lose more than we will gain, we may still choose to love, to create, to build. It is this gratuitous movement that gives meaning to our actions and ultimately nourishes the strength of the body.

Depression can thus be seen as a moment when this movement is suspended. The body seeks a form of protection, but life continues to work behind the scenes.

Every time an action, however small, responds to this call, it reopens a passage to this desire that is greater than the calculation of risks. It is on this side that the way out is sketched out, not as a spectacular victory, but as a patient return of vital movement.

3 : The mind closing down

When the body becomes heavy, the mind changes too. It loses its momentum, fixates on a few ideas, and narrows the field of possibilities.

Projects seem futile, relationships distant, the future opaque. It is not just a lack of optimism: it is a closure that transforms the very way we perceive the world.

In this withdrawal, everything seems to confirm that nothing is worth the effort. Happy memories seem foreign, new prospects unreal. The mind seeks proof that immobility is logical, that there is nothing to try.

It becomes an ally of physical withdrawal, as if each added reason served to maintain the vital pause already underway.

This mechanism is not a simple error in reasoning. It reflects the fear of the unknown that all desire carries with it. Because to decide is always to take a risk.

Rather than confronting this anxiety, the mind chooses to shrink. It repeats that everything is closed, that no action would make sense. This conclusion seems rational, but it mainly reflects a protective movement against what, in silence, continues to call out.

In this narrowing, thought often feeds on comparisons. It observes what others are doing, measures the gap, and concludes that one is definitively incapable.

Every perceived success in others becomes proof that one cannot follow suit. This logic further isolates and confirms the idea that effort is futile.

Little by little, an inner dialogue takes shape: “I’m not cut out for this,” “everything I try will fail.” These phrases, repeated silently, eventually seem obvious.

They do not reflect an objective truth but a choice of protection: reducing the field of possibility to avoid the tension that a new beginning would entail.

However, this closure does not extinguish the movement of life. It only delays its emergence. Beneath the surface of negative thoughts, a desire continues to seek a way forward.

Recognizing its presence, even if only faintly, changes one’s inner position. It is not a matter of opposing forced optimism, but of seeing that the rejection of any project is not a definitive given.

It is a stage in the dialogue between the fear of anxiety and the call of desire.

By narrowing itself, thought can give the impression that there is no way out. This conviction seems solid, but it is based on an already reduced horizon.

It does not describe the whole of reality: it describes the narrow space that fear has drawn.

As soon as a gesture, an encounter, or even an unexpected idea cracks this framework, we realize how constructed it was. The emergence of a memory, the echo of a phrase, the sight of a landscape can reopen a breach.

These moments, often tiny, are not miracles; they simply remind us that thought does not have the last word.

Recognizing closure for what it is—a protective strategy—

allows us to stop confusing it with reality. Depression does not determine the truth of existence.

It reflects a stage in the ongoing dialogue between the call of desire and the fear of confronting it. Knowing this does not erase suffering, but it does give the mind a first movement of freedom, ready to encounter whatever comes.

4 : Isolation and connection

When you're depressed, your relationships with others take on a peculiar form. You can be surrounded by people and yet feel like a spectator.

Visits, messages, and gestures of kindness come and go without stirring any inner emotion. It's not hostility; it's a lack of response, a suspension of the ability to feel concerned.

A subtle mechanism supports this impression. In any relationship, when a place is already taken, there is no need to take it.

It's like at the movies: if the character cries, the viewer can remain dry-eyed, because the scene has cried for them. Similarly, when those around them worry, anticipate, and take the lead, the depressed person no longer has to be alarmed. The urgency is already being dealt with elsewhere.

This silent delegation allows them to remain in the background without feeling guilty. The relationship continues, but it unfolds like a show where there is nothing to do.

This first type of bond maintains a gentle empathy that veils a more stark reality: seen from the outside, depression is often boring.

This tedium is not a criticism but a fact. It does not shake anything up; it lulls us to sleep.

As long as exchanges remain at this level, time can stretch out without anything really changing.

Sometimes, however, an encounter reverses the scene. The depressed person may meet someone even more immobile, a presence that reflects their own inertia to the point of making it visible.

This is not a violent provocation but extreme neutrality, as seen in certain therapists who are familiar with these mechanisms. This immobility acts as a brutal mirror: depression is no longer just experienced, it is seen.

It is then, sometimes, that a sudden realization occurs: “stop,” a gesture, a word that breaks the spell and reintroduces the person's own movement.

This logic of occupied space is illuminated by an image from cinema. When a character refrains from crying, it is often the viewer who cries in their place. The emotion circulates, but it changes its point of emergence.

Restraint on one side triggers expression on the other. In depression, a similar mechanism unfolds. Those around the depressed person take on the worry, the care, the vigilance.

The depressed person can then remain motionless, as if life were continuing by proxy.

However, sometimes an encounter reverses the distribution of roles. Faced with someone even more frozen, more silent, the usual economy is reversed.

This presence does not alarm, does not seek to fill the void; it reflects it back. Then the depressed person can no longer remain a spectator. Something inside them rebels. Anger rises: “Enough!” It is not anger against the other person, but a refusal to continue occupying the place of the inert.

This movement can mark a real turning point. The contained energy finds an outlet. The gesture that emerges is not a simple outburst: it is the reappearance of a desire that reclaims its right.

Emotion returns to the forefront, no longer delegated but experienced. In this sudden burst, depression ceases to be merely endured; it becomes the starting point for an act that reintroduces

the person into their own life.

We must also mention a less obvious dynamic: depression can function as a disguised attack. When desire involves another person, the individual may feel threatened. Rather than confronting this movement, they may turn against themselves. The fall then becomes a way of saying to the other person: I am not available, I will not let you touch me. This form of self-harm is a disguised relational strategy.

Sometimes the person identifies with the other person they fear. If the other person seems too fragile, too demanding, or potentially violent in their demands, it is better to become unreachable oneself.

Rather than risking a confrontation that would reawaken the pain, we withdraw and impose on ourselves, through depression, a more radical closure than the other person could ever achieve.

Conversely, when we feel attacked by someone, depression can serve as a response: to show that we are now out of reach, that nothing can touch us anymore.

It is a defense that takes on a dramatic form, but which aims at the same goal as archaic anger: to protect a vulnerable part by sacrificing it to isolation.

Understanding this logic changes the way we listen. It is not a question of accusing, but of recognizing that depression often has a relational purpose.

The challenge then becomes to untangle what is going on between oneself and the other: who occupies the place of urgency, what defense mechanism lies behind the withdrawal, what words could replace the distancing. It is from these revelations that the relationship can regain a form in which desire, painful but alive,

becomes possible again.

What is at stake in these bonds is not limited to the immediate circle. The way of keeping one's distance can be found.

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What is at stake in these bonds is not limited to the immediate circle. The way of keeping one's distance can be found in couples, friendships, families, but also in the way one participates in the world.

We settle into the role of observer, ready to let others make the first move, as if life could be lived vicariously. This delegation feeds the illusion that we are protected from the upheavals of desire, but it increases the disconnect.

In some relationships, empathy becomes frozen in habit. Loved ones worry, but their concern becomes predictable, almost mechanical.

This regularity ends up covering up the silence it was meant to fill.

The depressed person feels less and less concerned; the exchange becomes a ritual with no effect. This is one of the faces of boredom that depression brings: a connection that continues without really meeting.

Behind this discreet theater, the relationship to the other's desire continues to work. Every bit of attention received is a reminder, however faint, that we are expected somewhere.

But rather than confronting this reminder, depression offers another response: showing that one is unreachable. By withdrawing beyond the reach of any call, one believes one is sheltering oneself from the demand, and one transforms this flight into a sign of silent strength.

This dynamic is not simply a social attitude. It involves the very way we feel alive. The more distance we create, the more life seems to belong to others.

Yet beneath this freeze, one question persists: what remains of my own movement? It is from this small but persistent question that a return to the world can begin to take shape.

As this withdrawal continues, an ambiguity grows stronger: we

remain connected, but we no longer participate. Gestures are made out of habit, words out of politeness.

Everything seems to be happening elsewhere. This active absence—being present without being there—is one of the hallmarks of depression.

It allows us to avoid confrontation with the desires of others while maintaining the appearance of connection.

This strategy can take very subtle forms. Messages are answered, invitations are accepted, but without ever letting oneself be affected. Just enough signs are given so that those around us do not become more alarmed.

On the surface, the relationship continues; deep down, it is hollowed out. This discrepancy creates a gray area where everyone believes that something is happening when in fact nothing is really happening.

This is also where the hidden dimension of the attack takes on its full meaning. By withdrawing from the inside, the depressed person opposes the other with a form of silent refusal: you will not have me. They make themselves more elusive than any criticism or demand.

This resistance is not expressed through shouting, but through withdrawal. It asserts a negative force that is difficult to contradict because it merges with emptiness.

Yet even in this withdrawal, something is at work. The tension between what is hidden and what wants to return continues to grow.

It does not yet produce action, but it prepares for the moment when silence will no longer suffice. It is from this contrast that sometimes, later on, the gesture that breaks the immobility arises.

This period of withdrawal can last a long time, like a suspended

space where nothing seems urgent. For those around the person, there is a great temptation to multiply initiatives: visits, messages, projects.

These gestures often stem from genuine concern, but they can also reinforce the paradox. The more solicitude is shown, the more the depressed person feels justified in remaining immobile, since action is already being taken elsewhere.

This situation is not set in stone. It carries within it a tipping point. Sometimes an unexpected encounter, a chance conversation, or even a simple everyday event introduces a dissonance. Something no longer fits with the scenario where everything is predetermined by those around them. This flaw, seemingly minor, can reopen the question: what if I took back a part of the story?

Sometimes this trigger takes the form of a gentle but firm confrontation. A person met by chance, or an attentive professional, can reflect the silence like a mirror, without seeking to fill it.

This face-to-face encounter does not provide an immediate solution, but it highlights the void that has become comfortable. It is often in this barely perceptible flash that the possibility of a gesture towards life begins.

Thus, even in the midst of isolation, connections remain places of awakening. They do not act through an accumulation of words, but through the unique quality of an encounter that gives the person back responsibility for their own movement.

It is in this interval that the relationship regains its power to revive existence.

5 : Obscure desire and life that persists

Beneath the apparent silence of depression, life continues to exert its pressure. Even when everything seems to have stopped, a discreet activity persists: the heart beats, thoughts circulate, images arise in dreams.

None of this can be reduced to simple biological functioning. It is proof that a movement of desire remains, even when it seems to have been erased.

This desire does not have the clarity of a plan. It can manifest itself as a simple worry, a regret, a tiny curiosity. Sometimes it hides behind a harmless gesture: the sudden urge to change rooms, drink a glass of water, revisit a memory.

These tiny movements testify to a force that cannot be entirely covered by sadness.

One might think that this is not much. Yet it is from these imperceptible signs that a recovery is prepared.

They remind us that desire does not disappear, but moves and waits for its moment. Even when everything seems frozen, life remains at work, ready to bring about an unexpected change of direction.

Recognizing this active foundation does not mean immediately seeking a solution. It is first a matter of noting that something persists. This persistence, even if obscure, is already a way of saying that the story is not over. It offers a first foothold for rediscovering the thread of a chosen existence.

This underground desire cannot be measured by the intensity

of a craving or a project. It acts more deeply, like a reserve of movement that nothing can cancel out.

Even when we believe we no longer have any expectations, it continues to manifest itself in subtle ways: a memory that comes back for no reason, a melody that insists, a phrase that imposes itself.

These signals do not seem like decisions, but they indicate that inner life is not extinguished.

Sometimes, what resurfaces touches on the past. A childhood dream, a forgotten taste, a glimpse of color remind us that something once made our hearts beat faster.

These reminders are not nostalgic; they serve as a bridge between what has been set aside and what is still seeking a path.

Desire is not behind us; it is silently recomposing itself.

Sometimes a tiny gesture takes on unexpected power: putting something away, opening a window, walking a few more steps. These ordinary acts reveal an ability to produce something new where everything seemed closed.

It is not the amount of energy that counts, but the shift they initiate. They show that the vital impulse can be reborn through the smallest of gaps.

Understanding depression from this perspective changes our relationship with time. Waiting is no longer an absolute void, but a place of maturation. It is not a matter of remaining passive; it is about recognizing that, even when motionless, life continues its work.

This discreet knowledge restores consistency to the present and prepares for the return of movement.

Little by little, these tiny signs reveal a truth that depression

tries to hide: desire has not disappeared. It has shifted, buried itself, but it continues to work.

This invisible work is often what keeps us going, even when everything seems to have stopped. It explains why a simple spark—an encounter, an idea, an image—can be enough to reopen our perspective.

This persistence of desire reminds us that life does not obey the logic of calculation. It does not seek security but intensity.

We know there will be losses, perhaps more losses than gains, but something in us continues to want. It is this movement that, over time, restores strength to the body and clarity to the mind.

Recognizing this obscure desire does not mean that we must immediately build grand projects. It is first and foremost a way of seeing ourselves differently.

Instead of waiting for the perfect moment to act, we can respond to these subtle signals and let them lead the way. The simple act of recognizing that something is already insisting is an act of life. It is from this recognition that reconstruction can truly begin.

6 : Small movements, tiny beginnings

When desire begins to resurface, it does not announce itself with dramatic upheavals. It creeps in through small gestures: getting up a little earlier, opening a window, walking a few extra minutes.

These actions seem insignificant in the face of the immensity of depression, but they are its true counterpart. They remind us that life is rebuilt from almost invisible initiatives.

These first movements have a value that goes beyond their appearance. They reintroduce a form of choice.

Deciding to change rooms, prepare a meal, write a sentence, is not just accomplishing a task; it is affirming that one can still direct one's time.

This affirmation, even if silent, cracks the logic of powerlessness that fueled depression.

It is crucial not to underestimate these gestures. Their purpose is not to prove performance, but to relearn continuity. Each step supports the next, as if external movement allowed inner desire to catch its breath.

The size of the action doesn't matter: what counts is the experience of moving from idea to action. This is how, step by step, a life can get back on track.

These tiny gestures are not just practical exercises. They transform the way we relate to the world. Every time we leave a room, every time we change pace, we relearn how to be in motion.

This physical movement opens a breach in our inner closure. It does not erase melancholy at a stroke, but it shifts the center of

gravity: time ceases to be solely a burden and becomes once again a succession of lived moments.

It is important to welcome them without calculation. Seeking quick results would recreate the pressure that fueled the shutdown.

The essential thing is not to accumulate achievements but to give concrete form to what silently insists. Even the most modest action is proof that desire persists, capable of incarnating itself.

These small beginnings also change the relationship to failure.

Because they are modest, they do not raise the question of immediate success. They teach us that action does not always need a guarantee.

It is this departure from the all-or-nothing logic that gives them lasting strength: we move forward not because we are sure, but because we want to experience once again the transition from idea to action.

These tiny beginnings pave the way for a deeper transformation. Little by little, they reorganize the way we perceive ourselves. We stop defining ourselves solely by fatigue or loss of desire.

Every action, no matter how small, reminds us that an inner decision is possible. Everyday life is no longer just a backdrop we endure; it becomes a field where we can leave traces of our choices.

This process remains fragile. It is not a matter of drawing up a list of achievements to accomplish. It is a matter of continuing to let the movement reinvent itself, of consenting to the unexpected that arises from these small actions.

Depression, which sought to neutralize any surprise, is thus gradually deprived of its ground.

Through these gestures, the person rediscovers that they can live a human experience based not on the certainty of the outcome but on the desire to create.

This rediscovery cannot be measured solely in visible actions. It is reflected in the way one breathes, stands, and speaks.

Every sign of movement becomes a reminder: life is not reduced to what we thought was lost; it begins again as soon as we respond to its call.

7 : Support and companionship

Reconnecting with the world also requires external support. This support is not a ready-made solution; rather, it serves as a foundation for continuing the momentum that has been started.

This support can come from friends, family members, groups, or new encounters. Their role is not to carry the person forward, but to provide a framework in which they can rediscover their own desires.

The quality of these relationships matters more than their quantity. Sometimes a single genuine exchange is enough to remind someone that there is a shared space where words can flow freely.

It is not a question of being constantly surrounded, but of feeling that somewhere there is a relationship that is not reduced to surveillance or routine compassion.

A discreet but real presence can support a recovery where a thousand solicitations would fail.

These companionships are not limited to people. A familiar place, an artistic practice, or a shared activity can play the same role.

The important thing is that they allow you to feel engaged without having to meet specific expectations. They offer a framework where freedom can be relearned and where life begins to feel possible again.

This support is all the more valuable because it does not seek to replace inner movement. It does not dictate the course of action; it makes a free response possible.

A meeting where you can talk without being interrupted, a moment of shared work where silence is respected, is sometimes enough to restart a dynamic.

The important thing is that the relational space does not turn into surveillance.

Companionship can also take unexpected forms. Long-distance correspondence, a collective practice such as a workshop or a choir, offer a framework that does not require performance but offers regularity.

This regularity, far from being restrictive, gives rhythm to the desire that is being rebuilt.

However, it is necessary to distinguish this support from relationships that wear down through repeated anxiety. Overly insistent solicitude risks reproducing the logic of the place already occupied: the other person acts in their place, and the depressed person can remain a spectator.

The most helpful forms of companionship are those that leave the person responsible for their own actions, while ensuring that they will not be alone in their ordeal.

Through this support, a new balance is built. The entourage is no longer just a safety net but a space for circulation.

Exchanges are not intended to fill the void; they support the reborn momentum. This shift changes the very quality of the bonds. They cease to be alarm systems and become places where life can be invented together.

In this context, the person also regains the ability to receive. It is no longer a question of letting oneself be carried along, but of welcoming what comes as material for one's own desire. A suggestion, a word, an image can serve as a starting point without imposing a direction.

This flexibility avoids dependence and reinforces the feeling of

autonomy.

Little by little, supporters and companions thus become witnesses to a movement that now belongs to the individual. Their role is not to guarantee success, but to recognize and accompany a freedom that is being rebuilt. It is in this mutual recognition that social life regains its strength and desire can continue to grow.

8 : Conclusion

This journey followed the stages of an experience that many people go through without always naming it. Depression is not just a diagnosis; it is part of the human condition.

Everyone, to varying degrees, reaches that point where desire recedes and momentum stalls. Having gone through it does not mean you are permanently immune.

It means having experienced one of the most radical ways in which life questions our relationship to desire.

Recognizing this universal nature changes our perspective. It is no longer a question of seeing ourselves as sick and different, but of understanding that existence naturally involves phases of slowing down, forgetting, and avoidance.

Everyone must one day face this point where the question of meaning becomes urgent. Depression is an extreme example of this, but it speaks to a common reality.

This guide does not provide a recipe for avoiding relapse. It offers another way of looking at what has happened: seeing withdrawal not as a fault or a fate, but as a stage.

What we thought was a permanent void actually reveals the persistence of a desire capable of reinventing itself. From this experience, everyone can find a freer way to live in the moment and pick up the thread of a life that has never stopped searching.

Getting through depression is not about returning to the same old rhythm. What emerges is not a copy of the past, but a different way of living.

The experience has revealed that desire is not a certainty but a force that compels us to create, even when we do not know what we will gain from it. It has also shown that anxiety is not the enemy of life: it accompanies every true direction.

This recognition allows us to approach the next stages differently. When a new period of emptiness or weariness arises, it can be seen not as a threat, but as a signal: something is seeking to redefine itself.

This knowledge does not remove the difficulty, but it gives a deeper confidence in life's ability to reinvent itself.

Seen in this light, depression is no longer just a moment to be feared. It becomes a chapter of existence that, paradoxically, can expand freedom.

It teaches us that we can continue to move forward without guarantees, carried only by the momentum of a desire that can never be completely extinguished.

Thus, depression is neither a pathology nor an isolated accident. It reveals the inevitable tension between our desire and the fear it arouses.

Far from signaling an end, it can mark the moment when a life is about to change direction. What seemed like pure absence becomes the ground for invention.

This book has followed this movement: from the withdrawal of the body and the mind to the first gestures, the rediscovery of connections, the emergence of a freer desire.

It is not a question of proposing a definitive victory, but of indicating that, even in the darkest moments, a path emerges for

those who are willing to seek it.

Picking up the thread of life means accepting this double truth: we have no certainty, and yet we act. We often lose more than we gain, but it is this risk that gives real weight to every decision.

By recognizing depression as a fundamental human experience, we discover that what seemed like a standstill can become a lasting source of freedom.