



# Powerful Tools to Fight Depression

with Dr. Lisa Firestone

# Lisa Firestone, Ph.D.

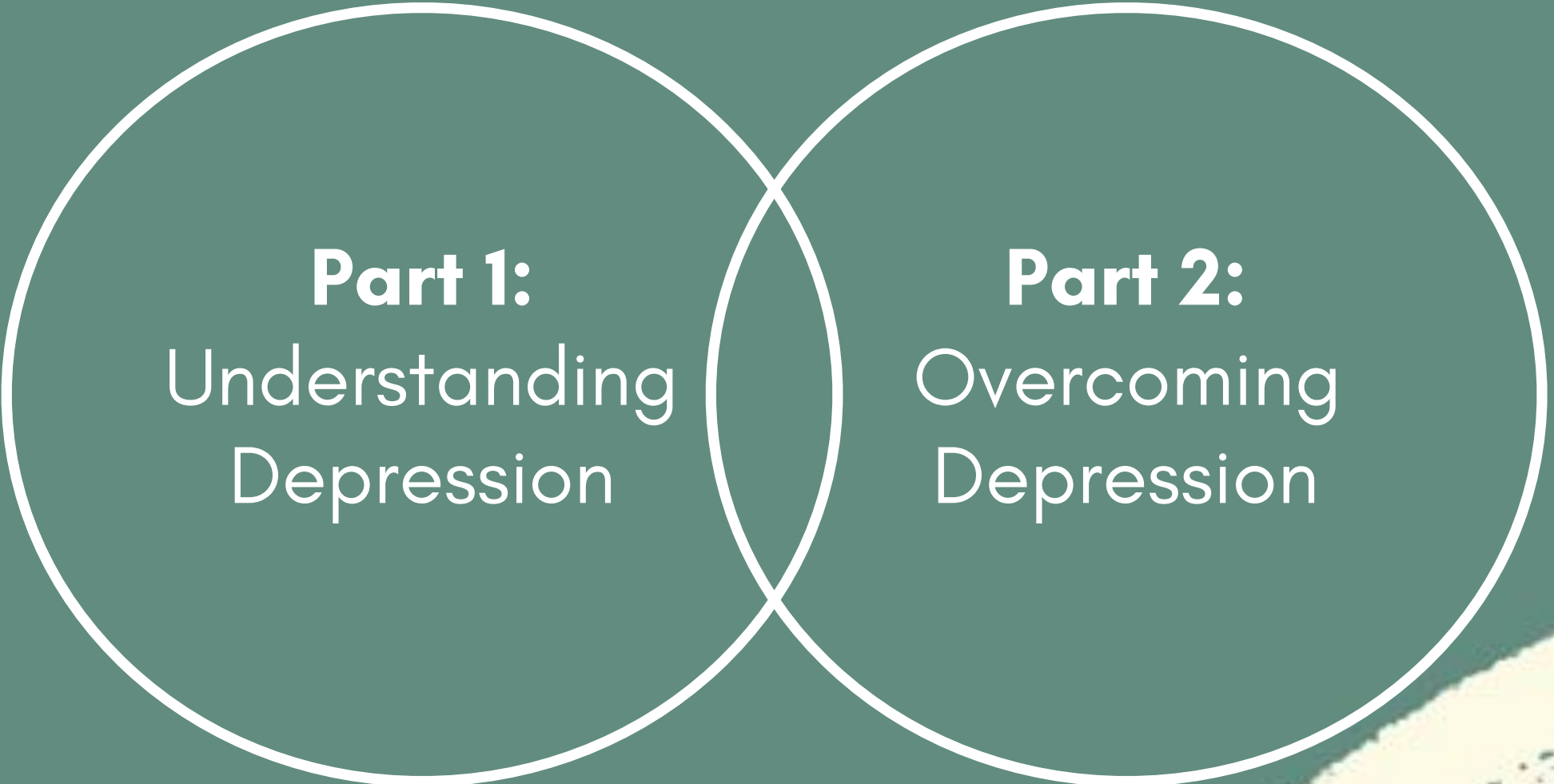
DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND EDUCATION  
**THE GLENDON ASSOCIATION**  
SENIOR EDITOR  
**PSYCHALIVE.ORG**



[www.psychalive.org](http://www.psychalive.org)

[www.glendon.org](http://www.glendon.org)

# In this Webinar:



**Part 1:**  
Understanding  
Depression

**Part 2:**  
Overcoming  
Depression

# POLL

Have you:

- ✓ Struggled with depression?
- ✓ Had a friend or family member who has depression?
- ✓ Worked with people who suffer from depression?





# Part 1

## Understanding Depression





# Facts About DEPRESSION

## Data from 2017, published in 2019

- About 17.3 million adults in the United States have had at least one major depressive episode ( 7.1% of all U.S. adults)
- The prevalence of major depressive episode was higher among adult females (8.7%) compared to males (5.3%).
- The prevalence of adults with a major depressive episode was highest among individuals aged 18–25 (13.1%).



# Facts About DEPRESSION

## Data from 2017, published in 2019

- Rates of major depressive episode in the last year increased 52% among adolescents aged 12 to 17 and 63% 2009-2017 among young adults 18 -25.
- Serious psychological distress in the last month and suicide-related outcomes (suicidal ideation, plans, attempts, and deaths by suicide) in the last year also increased among young adults 18 -25 from 2008 -2017 (with a 71% increase in serious psychological distress)
-



# Facts About **DEPRESSION**

- Low self-esteem predicts depression, but depression does not predict low self-esteem.
- Negative self-concept has been found to be associated with depression in toddlers.





# Facts About **DEPRESSION** DURING COVID-19

- Findings suggest that prevalence of depression symptoms in the United States was more than 3-fold higher during COVID-19 compared with before the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Individuals with lower social resources, lower economic resources, and greater exposure to stressors (eg, job loss) reported a greater burden of depression symptoms.



# Facts About **DEPRESSION** DURING COVID-19


During June 24–30, 2020, U.S. adults reported considerably elevated adverse mental health conditions associated with COVID-19.

Symptoms of anxiety disorder and depressive disorder increased considerably in the United States during April–June of 2020, compared with the same period in 2019.

Overall, 40.9% of respondents reported at least one adverse mental or behavioral health condition, including symptoms of anxiety disorder or depressive disorder (30.9%).

Younger adults, racial/ethnic minorities, essential workers, and unpaid adult caregivers reported having experienced disproportionately worse mental health outcomes, increased substance use, and elevated suicidal ideation.

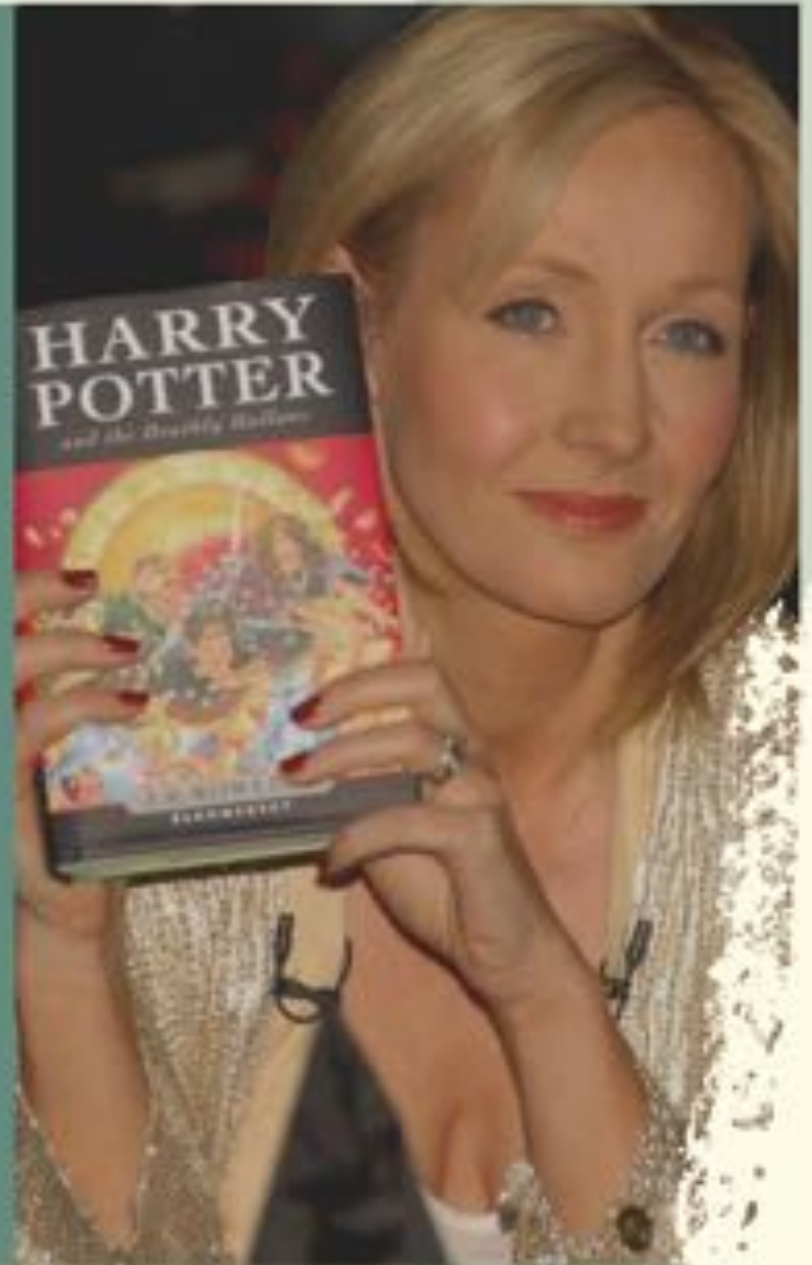
SOURCE: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932a1.htm>

A photograph of a person with long dark hair, wearing a striped shirt and blue jeans, sitting on a wooden floor. They are hunched over with their head buried in their hands, suggesting a state of despair or depression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall. The image is overlaid with a dark teal rectangle containing white text.

**Depression**  
is **not** "just a  
bad mood."

“

*Depression is the most unpleasant thing I have ever experienced. . . It is that absence of being able to envisage that you will ever be cheerful again. The absence of hope. That very deadened feeling, which is so very different from feeling sad. Sad hurts but it's a healthy feeling. It is a necessary thing to feel. Depression is very different... Depression isn't just being a bit sad. It's feeling nothing. It's not wanting to be alive anymore.*



– J.K. Rowling, Author





# Two Kinds of Depression

## Major Depressive Disorder

- Can be a single episode or recurrent
- More severe symptoms

## Dysthymia

- Less severe but persistent and pervasive
- Symptoms are similar but less intense





# Signs and Symptoms of Depression

- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness
- Irritability, restlessness
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable, including sex
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details, and making decisions
- Insomnia, early-morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- Overeating or appetite loss
- Thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts
- Aches or pains, headaches, cramps or digestive problems that do not ease even with treatment



# Depression in Children

Recent research demonstrated that **lack of parental nurturing** is a risk factor for depression recurrence in young children. Fifty-one percent of the 74 children diagnosed with depression in preschool (ages 3-5) were later depressed in school (ages 9-12). Later depression symptoms were associated with **non-supportive parental behavior.** *(Report from APA Monitor)*





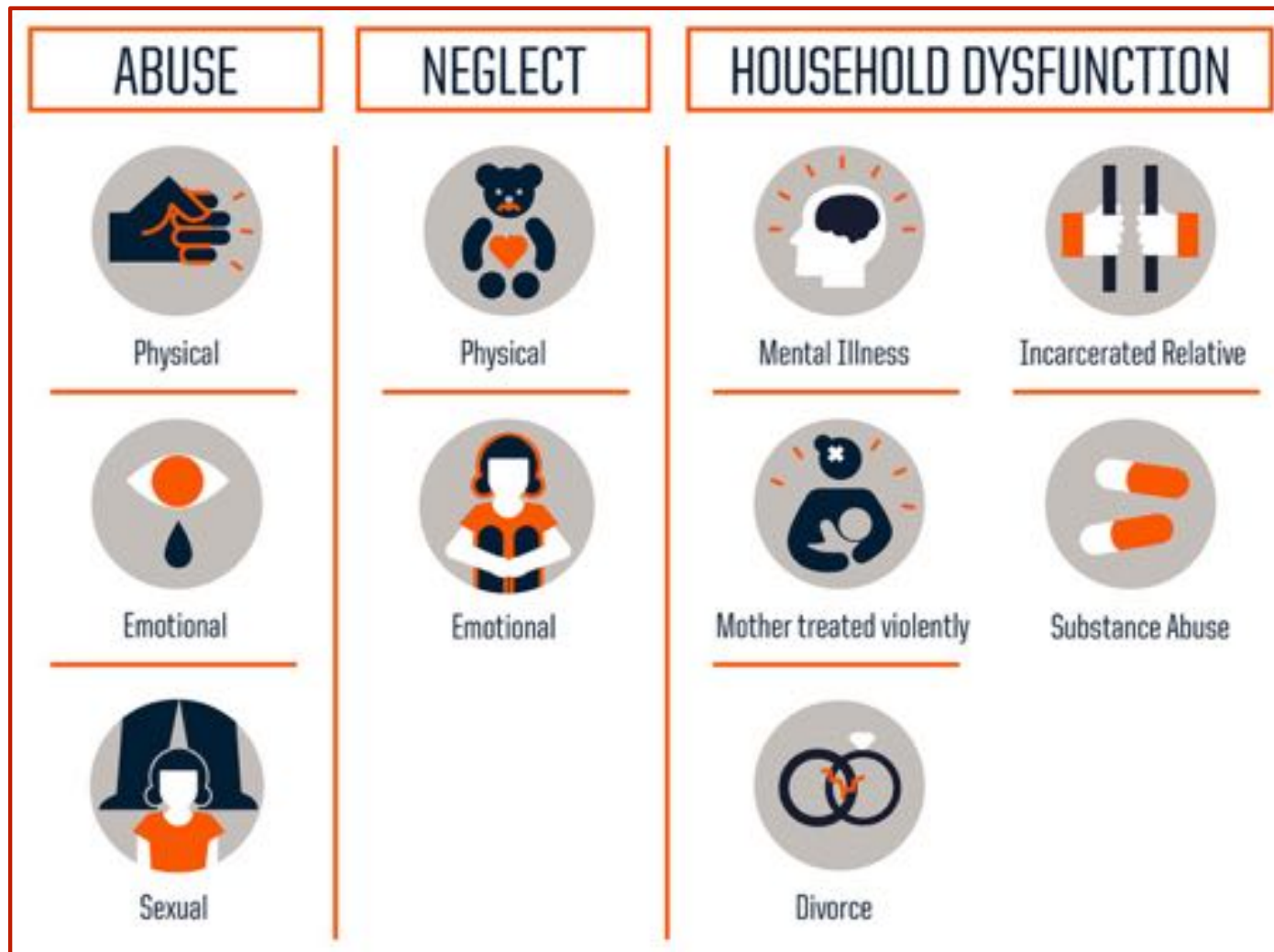
# Parental Rejection

Recollections of **parental rejections** are significantly associated with depression, self-criticism and suicidality.



# Adverse Childhood Experiences

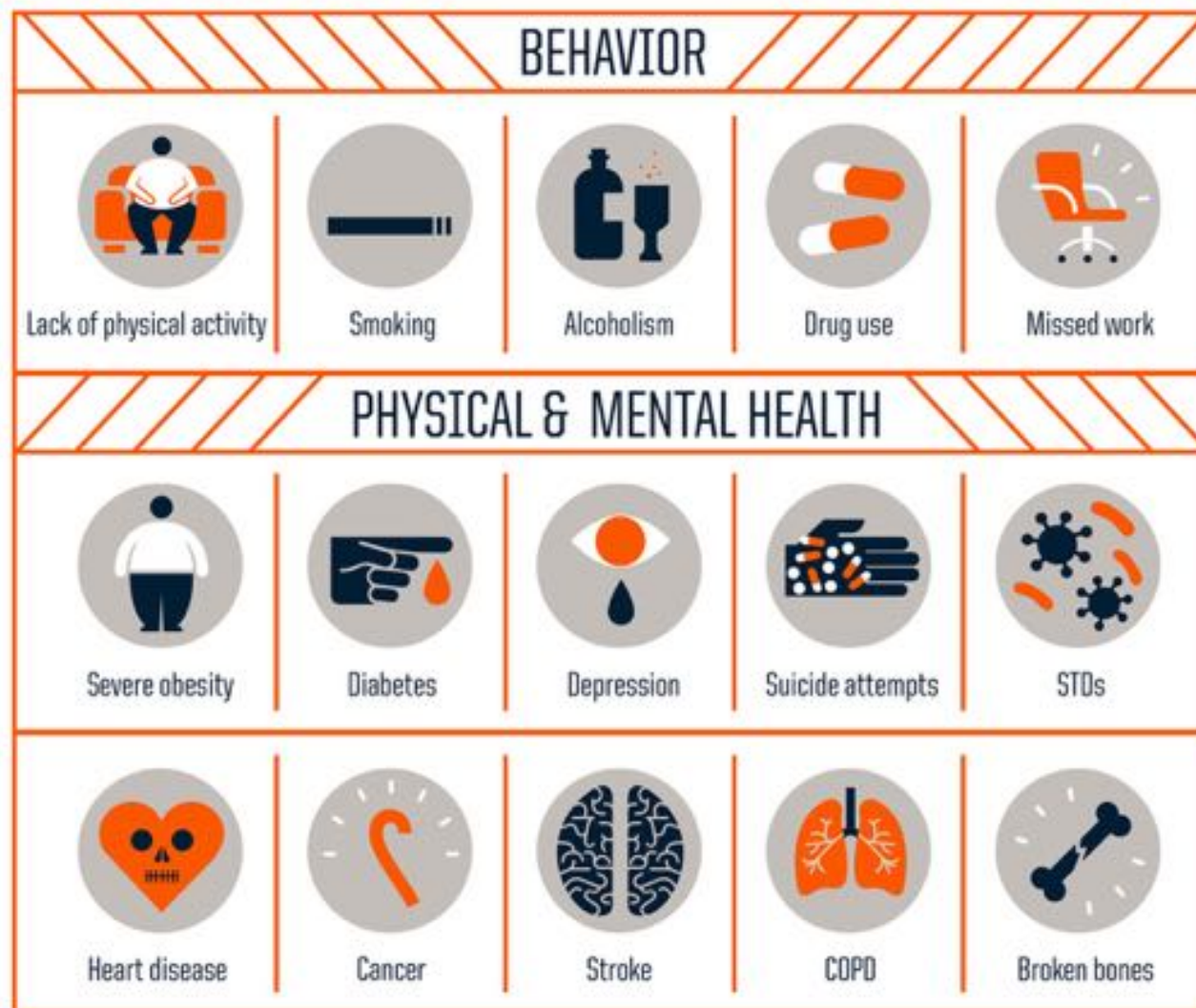
## Three Types of ACEs





# Adverse Childhood Experiences

## Results of ACEs



SOURCE: <https://www.ahr.org/sections/ed/2018/01/23/578280721/what-do-asthma-heart-disease-and-cancer-have-in-common-maybe-childhood-trauma>





Even when there are biological  
or hereditary factors,  
depression can be treated.



# Depression TREATMENT



Only about two-thirds of those suffering with depression seek help.



However...

Depression is one of the most treatable illnesses:



80-90 percent of people find relief.

# Depression TREATMENT



**Psychotherapy:** It's critical for people suffering from depression to seek care from a licensed mental health professional who has training and experience in helping people recover from depression.



**Medication:** Medications can be very helpful for reducing the symptoms of depression in some people. Often, a combination of psychotherapy and medication is the best course of treatment.



**Support System:** The support and involvement of family and friends can play a crucial role in helping someone who is depressed.

# How does psychotherapy help depression?

Pinpoint the life problems that contribute to their depression and help them understand which aspects of those problems they may be able to solve or improve.

Identify negative or distorted thinking patterns that contribute to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness that accompany depression.

Explore other learned thoughts and behaviors that create problems and contribute to depression.

Help people regain a sense of control and pleasure in life.



# The Critical Inner Voice & Depression





“

*When you're depressed, it's as though this committee has taken over your mind, leaving you one depressing thought after the other. Part of the depression is as though you're punishing yourself for something... Your sense of self, your appreciation for yourself, your respect for yourself, disappears completely. It certainly isn't that your mind goes blank. On the contrary, when you're depressed, your mind beats you to death with thoughts. It never stops.*



– Rod Steiger, Actor

REAL SELF

VS

ANTI-SELF



Goal-directed,  
life-affirming,  
“on our side”



Self-critical,  
self-destructive,  
“turned on us”

# What is the CRITICAL INNER VOICE?



The critical inner voice is a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward ourselves and others.

The nagging “voices” that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our self-destructive and maladaptive behavior.



The critical inner voice is not an auditory hallucination; it is experienced as thoughts within your head.

This stream of destructive thoughts forms an anti-self that discourages individuals from acting in their best interest.



## Self-critical

No one will ever love you. He/She will never care about you. You'll just wind up alone."



## Self-protective

You are just fine on your own. You can take care of yourself. You don't need anyone else. Don't trust them.



# How does the critical inner voice affect us?



- The critical inner voice is an internal enemy that can affect every aspect of our lives, including our self-esteem and confidence, our personal and intimate relationships and our performance and accomplishments at school and work.
- These negative thoughts affect us by undermining our positive feelings about ourselves and others and fostering self-criticism, inwardness, distrust, self-denial, addictions and a retreat from goal-directed activities.



# Common Voices in Depression



- *You just don't belong anywhere.*
- *You're a horrible person!*
- *Your life is so boring and empty.*
- *Don't ever get too happy because the ax is bound to fall.*



- *Nobody really likes you. You're unlovable.*
- *You deserve all the bad things that are happening to you.*
- *Don't show anybody how bad you feel.*



- *Who do you think you are anyway? You're nothing!*
- *You don't deserve anything.*

Where does the  
critical inner voice  
that causes  
depression come  
from?



# **Our critical inner voice is formed from our early life experiences. It stems from:**

- Internalized attitudes that were directed toward us by parents or influential caretakers throughout our development
- Internalized negative thoughts that our parents or early caretakers had toward themselves





# Part 2

## Overcoming Depression



# Challenging the Critical Inner Voice



# Identifying Your Critical Inner Voice



✓ Recognize the events that trigger your critical inner voice.



✓ Recognize the specific outside criticisms that support your critical inner voice.



✓ Become aware of times you may be projecting your self attacks onto other people.



✓ Notice changes in your mood.

# Think of Your Inner Critic as an External Enemy

## All exercises from **Conquer Your Critical Inner Voice**

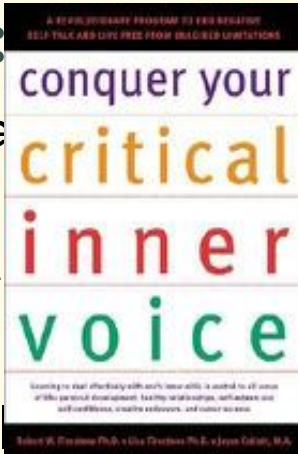
Change "I" statements to "you" statements.

### Example:

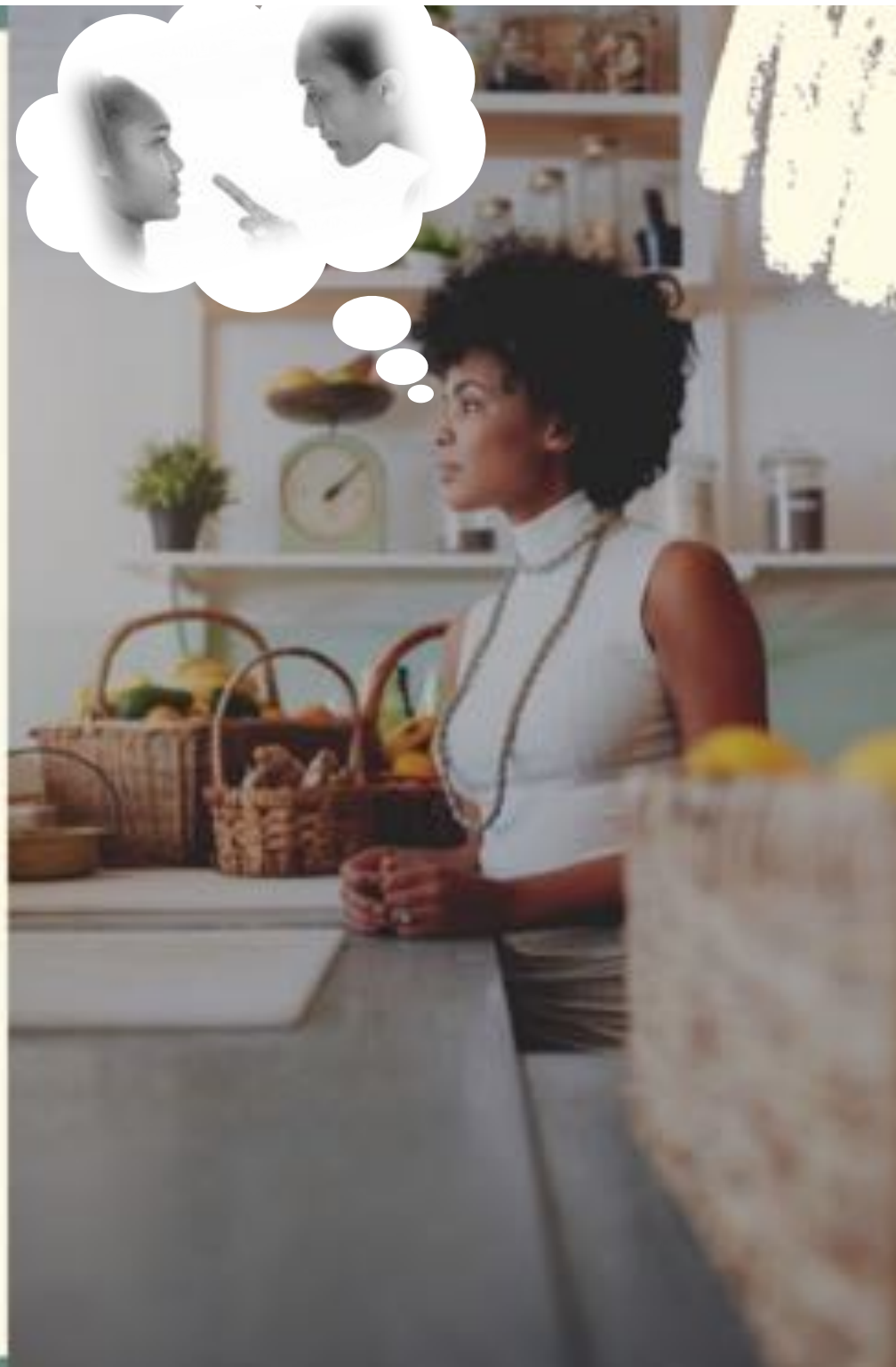
*I'm so useless. No one likes me.*



*You're so useless. No one likes you.*



- This will help you reframe your inner critic from your real point of view.
- Do your self-critical thoughts remind you of a point of view of someone in your past?





# Respond Rationally to Your Inner Critic

Write down a more realistic and compassionate view of yourself. Use the first person to respond.

## **Example:**

*You're so stupid.*



*Sometimes I struggle like anyone else, but I catch on quickly and do a good job.*

- **This helps strengthen your real self.**





# Plan of Pleasurable Activities

Describe the activities  
I plan to engage in

---

---

A weekly report of my critical  
inner voices about my plan

---

---





**Self**

**Anti-Self**





# Voice Therapy

Cognitive/ Affective/  
Behavioral Approach


# Voice Therapy

A Psychotherapeutic  
Approach to Self-Destructive Behavior

---

**Robert W. Firestone Ph.D.**



A photograph of a man with short brown hair and a beard, sleeping peacefully in a bed. He is covered up to his chest with a dark blue, textured blanket. His head is resting on a light-colored pillow. The background shows more of the bed and a hint of a window with light coming through. The overall tone is calm and restful.

# **Address sleep problems**

**Increase quality of sleep.**





# Identify anger

**Anger often underlies depression.**



# Anger and Depression

- Self-blame, rumination, catastrophizing and reduced positive reappraisal were among the most valuable predictors of negative emotions, including anger and depression.

- Studies suggest that anger suppression, but not anger expression, is associated with mood, i.e. depression and anxiety.

- You can recognize and accept your anger in a healthy way that releases the emotion without allowing it to fester or be turned into an attack on yourself.

A photograph of two women jogging outdoors. The woman on the left is older, with short white hair, wearing a blue zip-up jacket and blue pants. The woman on the right is younger, with dark hair tied back, wearing a bright pink zip-up hoodie and pink pants. They are both smiling and appear to be in motion. The background is a blurred green hedge or trees. The image is framed by a yellow and green geometric design on the right and bottom.

**Be  
active**

# Exercise and Depression

## Penny McCullagh, Ph.D.

Beneficial antidepressant both immediately and long term

Although exercise significantly decreased depression across all ages, the older people were, the greater the decrease.


Most powerful antidepressant effect occurred with the combination of exercise and psychotherapy.





A photograph of four people and a dog having a picnic in a park. Two women and two men are sitting on a white blanket on the grass, smiling and talking. A small, fluffy white dog is sitting in front of them. They are holding red plastic cups. The background shows trees and a clear sky. The image is overlaid with a dark green semi-transparent box on the right side containing the text.

**Increase your  
connectedness  
to others**



# Take a break from social media

## Studies from 2018:

- Found social media use increases depression and loneliness.
- People who limited their social media use felt significantly better, reporting reduced depression and loneliness

A hiker is seen from behind, ascending a steep, rocky mountain trail. The hiker is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt, grey shorts, and dark hiking boots with gaiters. They have a large backpack and are using two trekking poles for stability. The trail is composed of loose rocks and patches of green grass. In the background, a jagged, rocky mountain peak rises against a clear blue sky. The overall scene conveys a sense of adventure and physical challenge.

**Do things  
you once  
enjoyed**


**... even if you don't feel like it**



A woman with long brown hair is sitting on a light-colored sofa, holding a black remote control in her right hand. She is wearing a light-colored patterned sweater and blue jeans. The background shows a kitchen with white cabinets. The image is decorated with yellow brushstroke-like shapes in the top left and bottom right corners. A dark green rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing white text.

**Watch a  
funny  
show or  
movie**





**Don't punish  
yourself for  
feeling bad**



**Avoid  
rumination**

# Rumination

A 2013 study of more than 30,000 people showed that harping on negative life events (particularly through rumination and self-blame) can be the prime predictor of some of today's most common mental health problems like anxiety and depression.

Limit the time you allow yourself to think about negative thoughts or worries.



A woman with short blonde hair is sitting cross-legged on a light-colored, textured couch. She is wearing a white long-sleeved sweater and blue jeans. Her hands are resting on her knees in a meditative gesture, and her eyes are closed. The background shows a bedroom setting with a white headboard and pillows. The image is overlaid with a dark teal rectangle on the right side containing the text 'Practice mindfulness'. The overall aesthetic is calm and minimalist, with soft lighting and a warm color palette of yellows, greens, and neutrals.

# **Practice mindfulness**



# Mindfulness & Depression

- Mindfulness practices don't change our feelings or thoughts, but they do change our relationship to our feelings and thoughts.
- Mindfulness skills can benefit people struggling with depression by helping them to be better able to regulate and tolerate emotion.



A man with a beard and mustache, wearing a dark blue sweater, is sitting in a chair during a therapy session. He has his hands clasped together and is looking thoughtfully at a therapist whose back is to the camera. The therapist is wearing a grey blazer and is holding a clipboard and pen. The background is a blurred office setting. The image is overlaid with a dark green rectangle containing the text 'See a therapist'. The overall design includes yellow and light green geometric shapes and a torn paper effect on the right side.

**See a  
therapist**

# Psychotherapy & Depression

- It's critical for people suffering from depression to seek care from a licensed mental health professional who has training and experience in helping people recover from depression.
- Asking for help is a brave act.
- Speaking to a therapist is a healthy, productive endeavor from which every individual would benefit.
- Learning about the source of your pain can alleviate its impact on your life.





**Take  
medication,  
if indicated**





# Newer Medical Treatments

- **Ketamine**
  - “the first exemplar of a rapid-acting antidepressant with efficacy for treatment-resistant symptoms of mood disorders”
  - May be helpful for patients that have exhausted other therapeutic options
- **Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (rTMS)**
- **Psilocybin??**

A person with dark hair, wearing a light grey long-sleeved sweater, is shown from the chest up. They are hugging themselves with both hands over their chest. The background is a soft-focus outdoor scene with dry grass. The image is overlaid with a dark green rectangular box on the right side, which contains the text 'Embrace self-compassion' in white. There are also some yellow and light green geometric shapes and a torn-edge effect in the top left and bottom right corners.

**Embrace self-  
compassion**



# Self-Compassion

*"Being touched by and not avoiding your suffering"*

From Kristin Neff:

*Self-compassion is not based on self-evaluation. It is not a way of judging ourselves positively; it is a way of relating to ourselves kindly.*



## Three Elements:

**1. Self-kindness**  
vs. Self-judgment



**2. Mindfulness**  
vs. Over-identification  
with thoughts



**3. Common humanity**  
vs. Isolation

**Source:** <http://www.self-compassion.org>

A vertical image on the left side of the slide. The right half shows a person in silhouette, sitting in a meditative lotus position on a sandy beach. The background is a warm, golden sunset over the ocean. The left half of the image is a solid teal color.

# Loving-Kindness Meditation

- Self-criticism predicted poor response to psychological and pharmacological treatments.
- Increased self-compassion reduced depressive symptoms and increased positive emotions.

Source: Ben Shahar, Ohad Szsepsenwol, Sigal Zilcha-Mano. (2014) A Wait-List Randomized Controlled Trial of Loving-Kindness Meditation Programme for Self-Criticism. *Clinical Psychology and Psychotherapy*





**C**urious

**O**pen

**A**ccepting

**L**oving

**COAL**



## Ways to **ACTIVELY** Fight Depression



- Challenge your inner critic.
- Address sleep problems.
- Identify anger.
- Be active.
- Increase connectedness.
- Take a social media break.
- Do things you've enjoyed.
- Watch a funny show/movie.
- Don't punish yourself.
- Avoid rumination.
- Practice mindfulness.
- See a therapist.
- Take medication,  
if indicated.
- Embrace self-compassion.

# Online CE Workshop



Sign up at [PsychAlive.org](https://PsychAlive.org) under "On-Demand Webinars"



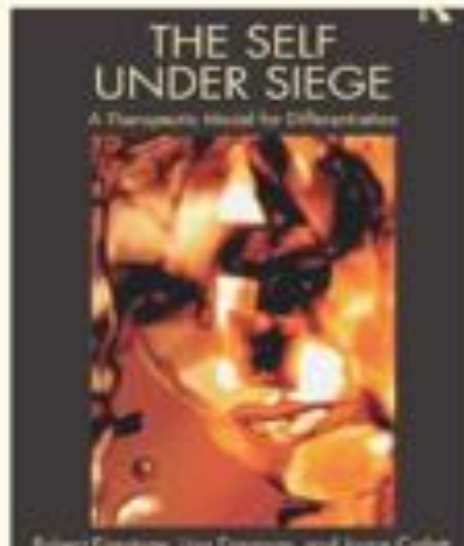
conquer your  
**critical**  
**inner**  
**voice**

Learning to deal effectively with one's critical inner voice is central to all areas of life: personal development, healthy relationships, self-esteem and self-motivation, creative expression, and career success.



**Voice  
Therapy**  
A Psychotherapeutic  
Approach to Self-Destructive Behavior

Robert W. Firestone Ph.D.



Visit [PsychAlive.org](https://PsychAlive.org) for  
resource links.

**BOOKS**





# WEBINARS

Visit  
[PsychAlive.org](https://PsychAlive.org)  
for a full list of  
upcoming and  
archived free  
and CE  
Webinars.



# ECOURSES

Visit eCourse.  
[PsychAlive.org](https://PsychAlive.org)  
for a full list of  
online courses.

A top-down view of a wooden desk. On the left, a silver laptop is open. Below it, a white smartphone lies horizontally. In the bottom left, a hand holds a black pen over a white notepad. In the bottom center, a white coffee cup sits on a matching saucer. A small green plant in a white pot is visible near the top center. The background is a solid teal color with white brushstroke-like borders on the left and right sides.

# Thank you!

CONTACT US:

Email: [glendon@glendon.org](mailto:glendon@glendon.org)

Phone: 800-663-5281

[www.glendon.org](http://www.glendon.org)

[www.psychalive.org](http://www.psychalive.org)