

5 Surefire Ways to Knock Out Depression's Sudden Onslaught

Ever been in a funk? You know, a sudden onslaught of sadness, discouragement or depression, otherwise known as “the blues”? I’ll admit, every so often, these feelings attempt to rest on me. And if my defenses are down, I can allow it all to hang around for too long.

A first step to beat the blues is to identify the unique situations that trigger them in your life. Knowing these will help you know what to avoid or how to cope if they’re unavoidable. To get you thinking, I’ll divulge my list of what sometimes leads me to feeling down and out.

First: Future events. Because I’m typically very “event”-driven, I psych myself up before occasions like vacations, conferences, speaking engagements and holidays. I tend to mentally obsess about these happenings for months before their time; and then, when they’re suddenly over, I’m left feeling aimless and empty.

Second: social media overload. If I’m not careful, I can mindlessly flick through my social media feeds and begin to compare my behind-the-scenes to someone else’s highlight reel. Too much of this gets me out of whack, lamenting what I don’t have in comparison to what someone else has.

Finally: Perhaps nothing brings the blues more than boredom. I battle with the need to feel productive and constantly progressing. If I’m in a season without a new project or a filled calendar, a sense of purposelessness attempts to creep in. Of course, I preach that tasks don’t define us. But often, I’m preaching to myself.

Maybe you relate to one or all of these. Or maybe you don’t; maybe your triggers are different. But we all have something.

And if we're to function successfully in life (much less in the call of God upon our lives), we have to know what to do to escape these funks when they begin to impose upon us.

Here are five sure-fire ways that help me.

1. Get out of your own mind and talk to someone.

I'm naturally an introvert, which means I'm energized by spending time with myself. Still, if I'm not careful, I can spend too much time in my own mind, which is not good when the mind is consumed with something like pity or disappointment.

God designed for us to be in relationship. So it's no surprise that something positive happens in our brains when we communicate with another person. Accordingly, I learned that when I begin to feel blah or blue, I need to seek out a friend to chat with. Our talk doesn't have to be about anything in particular, but just the presence of another person is often enough to energize me out of my funk.

2. Interrupt your thoughts with truth.

Often depression or sadness is perpetuated because we continue to be focused on what's causing it. The way to end this cycle is to interrupt these thoughts with something radically different. This is why I created the Shut Up, Devil! app. When you struggle with wrong thinking, the way out is to confront the issue with the truth of God's Word by running it through your mind and your mouth.

For a short-term funk, the positive effect of truth applied to your thoughts may be immediate. Other times, you must persist with this discipline until your negative thoughts are consumed by positive ones based upon Scripture.

3. Set your sights on a new goal.

Counselors report that when someone feels blue from purposeless or boredom, often the simple solution is to do

something new. It could be anything from a setting a new goal, learning a new hobby, creating a new routine or volunteering for a cause. And if you struggle with the discipline to do something new by yourself, invite a friend to join you.

4. Spend time in intentional reflection.

The disappointments of life can be front-and-center so often that we need to intentionally remind ourselves of our blessings. The easy way to accomplish this is to set aside daily time to journal about the blessings in your day. List out whatever people or situations are encouraging and worthy of praise. And then as Paul instructed, “think on these things” (Phil. 4:8c).

You might even take some time to dream about what God might do. Place a note card on your nightstand or set a reminder on your phone to awake in the morning and reflect a few minutes on the question: “I wonder how God will surprise me today?”

5. Begin a healthy lifestyle.

Finally, sometimes we’re just tired and lethargic because our bodies lack the proper nutrition, rest or activity that they require to fire on all cylinders. Have you reviewed your intake lately? If it’s filled with sugary drinks or treats and lacks the proper vitamins and protein, then it’s no wonder why you’re dragging. The same holds true if you’re sleep-deprived.

You might be surprised at what a boost a simple tweak to your diet, sleep or exercise can provide you. And if nothing else, the sense of accomplishment from a new health regimen will do wonders to lift your spirits.

Know that we all vacillate between highs and lows. Nobody lives on a mountaintop forever. So although you can’t always control the thoughts and emotions that pop up throughout the day, you can put them in check whenever they do so that they don’t control your life. Even David, who dealt with his share

of distress (as he revealed in the Psalms) had to learn to encourage himself out of these moments (1 Sam. 30:6). To be sure, nobody is going to battle for you. If you want to beat the blues, you must be determined to do so. {eoa}

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