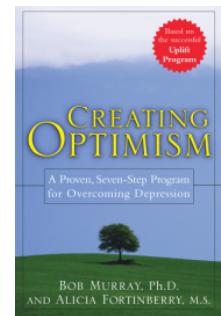


A program with a 94% success rate, proven to be more effective than drugs, psychotherapy or both combined.

CREATING OPTIMISM

A Proven, Seven-Step Program For Overcoming Depression

by Bob Murray, PH.D. and Alicia Fortinberry, M.S.



Bob Murray, Ph.D. and Alicia Fortinberry M.S. have been healing depression for over 20 years with the widely successful and unconventional methods that form the basis of their “Uplift Program.” Sponsored by the University of South Florida, this program has an astounding 94% success rate and has proven far more effective than drugs, or psychotherapy – or both treatments combined.

The revolutionary treatment, aptly called the Fortinberry-Murray Method, is highlighted in their new book, ***CREATING OPTIMISM: A Proven Seven-Step Program For Overcoming Depression*** (McGraw-Hill). Their book reveals:

- How we don't heal from the inside out, but rather from the outside in through our relationships – and provides a method for creating healing relationships.
- Why we are depressed – and how to help someone who suffers from depression.
- How to pursue the eight fundamentals of happiness.
- Why modern society is more difficult to navigate than that of ancient hunter-gatherers.
- How we can cure physical ailments by curing depression.

Dr. Murray and Fortinberry explain why antidepressants don't solve underlying causes of depression and outline a dramatic breakthrough in healing depression that relies on the importance of forming strong, supportive relationships that serve as a buffer against the pressures and emotional isolation of modern life.

“If your relationships are supportive and fulfilling you can be healthy and happy,” says Dr. Murray. *“You can free yourself from depression and become optimistic about your life,”* adds Fortinberry.

Dr. Murray and Fortinberry provide depression sufferers with the keys to building the kind of relationships that stimulate self-esteem, competence, a strong sense of purpose, and shared goals. If relationships meet fundamental human needs for physical safety, emotional security, attention and importance, happiness and optimism follow.

Informed by the latest research in anthropology, neurobiology, psychiatry, and mind-body techniques, readers learn vital new information and practical solutions such as:

- How our forced migration away from the traditional evolutionary (hunter/gatherer) lifestyle is largely to blame for the depression pandemic. We are genetically wired to form close relationships with others of our kind, and **alienation from our evolutionary heritage** results in layers of dysfunction in our lives.
- The truth about depression, what really causes it, why placebos work as well or better than antidepressants and the limits of antidepressants – **they only work for about 30 to 45% of people, at best and are not safe long-term.**
- How the brain is programmed in childhood to form beliefs, behaviors and relationships that promote depression, anxiety and pessimism. And, how the failure of relationships between adults and young children **in the first six years of life**, creates trauma and alters the structure and chemistry in crucial areas of our brains.
- How to create and **negotiate functional boundaries** (versus barriers) that transform every relationship (with spouse, friends, colleagues, boss and children) from so-so or outright abusive to supportive and empowering.
- How to help the brain make new connections so the old dysfunctional habitual patterns atrophy. This ability of the brain to change is called **neuroplasticity**.
- How depression lodges in the body through illness and ongoing trauma. **Up to 80% of all people who visit physicians are suffering from somatization** – emotional states transformed into physical symptoms. Learn movement exercises to help let go of dysfunctional and defensive postures that have been adopted in response to unhappy relationships.

CREATING OPTIMISM features valuable charts, exercises, self-tests, and movement exercises to cure depression. The authors have helped thousands of people in private sessions, workshops and seminars. As a result, depression sufferers are finally able to undo the effects of our abusive society and learned patterns of self-defeating behaviors.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF CREATING OPTIMISM

Bob Murray, Ph.D. is a clinical psychologist. He holds degrees in psychology from New York University and the University of Sydney. His innovative and proven theories and techniques that focus on relationships, depression and evolutionary psychology show up frequently in the media and in professional journals. He consults with multinational companies and government organizations on team building and relationships. He is a member of the International P.E.N., the American Psychological Association and the Association for Humanistic Psychology.

Alicia Fortinberry, M.S. is a psychotherapist, corporate trainer and coach. She received an MS degree from the Columbia University School of Journalism and a BA from Sarah Lawrence College. She has written extensively on health and psychology for major national magazines and newspapers including *Psychology Today*, *Working Woman*, *New Woman* and *National Employment Weekly*. She is also a leading Feldenkrais Practitioner and has developed cutting-edge techniques for using movement to enhance well-being. She has lectured widely on her own healing from “treatment resistant” depression, which she attributes in large part to her loving marriage to Bob.

They have taught at major universities and medical centers including Duke University, Tufts University, John F Kennedy University, the University of South Florida, California Institute of Integral Studies, and Royal North Shore Hospital and the Australian College of Applied Psychology, in Sydney. They are regular consultants for Fortune 500 companies.

Their acclaimed **Uplift Program** has been teaching thousands of people what they know and live by and is the inspiration for their latest book. *Creating Optimism: A Proven, 7-Step Program For Overcoming Depression* shatters the myths and misconceptions about depression and anxiety, helping to clear the way for true healing.

Alicia and Bob divide their time between San Francisco, Tampa and Sydney.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, visit:

www.upliftprogram.com or www.creatingoptimism.com

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1. You pioneered a revolutionary new approach to overcoming depression that has proved to be far more effective than other solutions. What's at the core of this treatment?**

Answer A: New research shows that the real cause of depression is the inability to connect to other people, the world around us and even our bodies. Our proven, seven-step program enables people to form strong, healing relationships with others that meet needs that couldn't be fulfilled in childhood. This supportive relationship environment provides the safety and emotional security that allows the brain to heal from early trauma and current depression. Functional relationships based on real needs also give people the self-esteem and sense of competence that prevent and combat mood disorders such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and PTSD. We also offer powerful and practical tools to create a sense of purpose and spirituality—one of the greatest antidepressants of all.

Answer B: The core of our method lies in a very simple proposition: Humans are preeminently a relationship-forming species. We are genetically geared to thrive when a nexus of supportive relationships surrounds us. Recent research has shown that if our relationships are good our immune system functions better and conversely if they are bad we are prone to a multitude of illnesses from herpes to heart failure. The same is true of our psyche. By showing people how to form really good, supportive, relationships we can free them from mood disorders such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder and PTSD.

- 2. How come you don't solely advocate drugs to treat depression?**

Only 30% of people are really helped by antidepressants, and their effectiveness diminishes over time. Even the pharmaceutical companies don't tell people to rely solely on drugs. The case for antidepressants relies on a mistaken assumption: that it's the failure of the brain to uptake (or absorb) two vital neurochemicals—serotonin and to a lesser extent noradrenalin—that causes depression. But the chemical imbalance is itself only a symptom, not a cause. The real problem is that the brain of a depressed person was prevented from developing properly in childhood because basic relationship needs weren't met. Antidepressants can't cure the resulting structural problem and are at best, a rather inefficient band-aid.

- 3. You challenge conventional wisdom that healing occurs from the inside out. Does this mean we must depend on others to make us happy?**

The short answer is yes! Society pressures us to be self-sufficient while rendering us powerless. We are a relationship-forming species, genetically geared to thrive within a tribe. Unlike many animals who depend more on instinct, human children learn most things from the adults around them. Through these relationships we develop our coping skills, behavioral patterns and beliefs about ourselves and the world. Our brains are not equipped to spontaneously change this "programming." Significant change is stimulated by new input from others, and the most powerful, positive, and healing input is through supportive interactions with others that meet our real needs. To be happy, we must learn how to be truly interdependent rather than co-dependent or isolated.

- 4. Alicia, you suffered from severe depression for many years. How did Bob help you?**

My original family simply had no idea how to express affection, praise, or appropriate boundaries. There was alcoholism, fighting, and a bitter divorce. This trauma and the inevitable low self-esteem led to my depression. Bob never put me down and he

frequently expressed affection and praised me. Still, I had trouble trusting him, and he felt he had to rescue me (his mother had also been depressed). My real healing took place when we told each other honestly what we needed and met each other's needs. I discovered I could rely on Bob to do what he said he would, not put me down, be consistently supportive, tell me the truth and not leave me. Finally, I was safe.

5. What are some of the steps one can take simply to move towards happiness?

Clearly identify your childhood "programming," or inner saboteur, which is causing the problem and take steps to go against those negative internal drives. Create really supportive, healing relationships that help you defeat negative behaviors and beliefs about yourself. Specify what you need other people to do—or stop doing—so that you can improve your sense of self-esteem and competence. Develop a sense of life purpose and work toward it in the company of others. Nurture your connection to your body, nature and your innate spirituality. Just taking a 20 minute walk with awareness in the park every day, preferably with a friend and perhaps your dog, will boost your happiness.

6. You describe a step-by-step process for establishing and maintaining healthy relationships in your book, *Creating Optimism*. What are the most important ingredients there?

Here are our 6 actions for creating healing relationships:

1. Discover your functional relationship needs in all areas of your life.
2. Prioritize needs and define your bottom line.
3. Give your needs to others. Find out their needs of you.
4. Negotiate needs and set consequences.
5. Create the three Rs in relationships: rules, roles, rituals.
6. Expand your network of lasting, strong and supportive friendships.

7. You compare modern society with that of hunter-gatherers. What are some of the false values being engendered by today's culture that we need to avoid?

We are made to feel that we only have value for what we produce, earn, and buy, and for our youth, appearance and status. We are urged to be totally self-sufficient and competitive. We are taught to focus on goals, not process and yet to expect instant gratification and disregard the long-term consequences of our actions. Yet we are not genetically designed to do any of these things, and all of them lead to mental illness and despair. Our make-up is that of hunter-gatherers, who valued cooperation over competition, wisdom over appearance and sustainability over environmental destruction. Work took up 5-10 hours a week and the rest of the time was spent socializing, bringing up children and performing communal rituals.

8. Essentially, what causes long-lasting depression?

Overwhelmingly recent research points the finger at early childhood trauma. What happens is that trauma—abuse, neglect, abandonment, criticism, ostracism, racism, parental fighting, death or divorce—causes the brain to mis-form. Areas that control emotion become smaller and overactive and others dealing with decision-making and memory don't develop the neural connections that they should and thus don't work properly. These developments lead the child to become both anxious and depressed. They are, we believe, the root cause of the failure of the brain to process serotonin properly. Sometimes depression doesn't show up as a mood disorder until the teens or even later, although recent research from Harvard University suggests that childhood depression is increasing by 23% a year.

How to Create Healing Relationships

Creating Optimism

Heal From The Outside In

By creating relationships that make you feel good, productive, loved, rewarded and happy, you create a positive outside influence on your inner being. To be happy – or fight depression – you don't have to rely on your self to grow or change within. You can allow for others to enrich your life and help you prevent or heal depression through a supportive relationship environment.

Discover Your Real Needs

You must figure out what you really need from others. Four areas are crucial and must be fulfilled to some degree: physical safety, emotional security, attention, and importance. You should list and prioritize your needs and then look for people who can meet them. We have found that most people will try to meet your needs if they really want a relationship and if the needs are expressed so that they are achievable, concrete, appropriate and action-oriented.

Have A Mutual Exchange Of Needs

Once you identify your needs, it's time to present them to those who matter to you. Let them know what you need, how you want to be treated, and what you can't tolerate. State your needs clearly and to the point but don't feel obligated to justify them. Requiring others to express concretely what they need and expect of you is essential for secure, non-controlling relationships. Give yourself and them a timetable for exchanging needs – and stick to it.

Negotiate Your Needs – And Consequences

Everyone has the right to say "no" to someone else's need, but needs-based dialogue is vital to clear, honest and authentic communication. You can negotiate relationship needs in a way that fosters mutual understanding, empowers everyone, and helps heal depression. For your important needs to be taken seriously, you may have to attach consequences. If your needs aren't met, the anger, resentment, and sense of helplessness will either turn inward against you in the form of depression, or come out in ways destructive to the relationship.

Obey The Three R's of Relationships

All relationships are based on rules, roles, and rituals. The rules create boundaries and provide emotional security and physical safety. Each person must have a role to belong and not fear abandonment. And a group – be it of two or fifty – must have rituals to bind it together and give it an identity.

Build A Supportive Tribe

In everything you do and everywhere you go surround yourself with people you can count on to be supportive, share in your goals, and tell you how important you are in their lives. Explore new ways of expanding your nexus of relationships to bring them even more in line with this ideal.

7 Steps for a Depression-Free Life

Creating Optimism

1. **Identify and defeat the inner saboteur.** You need to become aware of how you may be re-creating the very circumstances that will re-trigger earlier traumas. These conditions keep you captive to – and even exacerbate – the illness. These self-defeating beliefs and behaviors are learned and can be unlearned. They are not you, but they are part of a self-reinforcing system that has a life of its own with an agenda to maintain your depression.
2. **Reconnect to your body.** Depression is an illness of the body as well as the mind. Trauma, the root cause of most depression, lodges in the body and sets up a self-perpetuating system. Trauma and depression manifest themselves in the body in several ways. Many physical problems, such as illness and injuries, can be directly associated with or caused by a mood disorder. Your body must release the emotional tension that it holds.
3. **Create healing relationships.** Build up a tribe of support and commit to a mutual satisfaction of need in each relationship. By seeking new relationships – and creating a safe and supportive relationship environment with friends, at home, and at work – you'll be able to counteract the negative aspects of past relationships or your childhood. The key is to put strong boundaries in place to protect yourself.
4. **Elevate your self-esteem.** Contrary to what the advertising industry would have you believe, self-esteem can't be bought. You need to stop accepting put-downs and find ways to elicit praise instead. Don't make self-deprecating comments and look for ways others can help you let go of negative beliefs.
5. **Uncover your competence.** Your self-esteem can't last without an inner knowledge that you do some things well – and get praised for them. Find out what you really like doing and seek out others who acknowledge your efforts. Don't be afraid to inform friends, family and co-workers of your limitations and enlist their support.
6. **Access the power of shared purpose.** We each need a sense of purpose to be depression-free and optimistic. We seek a life-affirming purpose that's altruistic, communal by nature, and that survives us as a lasting achievement. We each need to identify our overall purpose, define a mission in concrete terms, set short-term goals, give tasks a timeline, and to find people to pursue our purpose with.
7. **Deepen your relationship to the Divine.** There's no doubt that prayer and meditation are powerful. Your spiritual connection to something bigger than you – and desire for a community of shared beliefs – can give you a base of inner strength and support that cannot be found anywhere else.

8 Fundamentals of Happiness

Creating Optimism

1. **Connection to Others:** If your relationships are supportive and fulfilling, you can be healthy, happy, and optimistic and free yourself from depression. If your relationships are anything less, the reverse happens: you sink into profound pessimism.
2. **Autonomy:** Autonomy is a feeling of independence and a sense of being in control of your relationships and destiny. It's about being an individual within the context of a supportive group. Like everything significant in your life, autonomy depends on the quality of your relationships. Without it, emotional security is difficult, happiness impossible.
3. **Self-Esteem:** You can't be happy or optimistic if you don't feel good about yourself. And you can't feel good about yourself in a vacuum. Self-esteem depends on your perception of how other people view you. It will rise when you're praised, treated as important, and given appropriate attention. It will fall when one of these doesn't happen.
4. **Competence:** A sense of competence is part of your self-esteem and relates to how well you feel you function. Some people feel competent in certain areas but still have a sense of low self-esteem overall. But without a belief that you perform certain tasks really well – and that these abilities matter to the people around you – you won't have either self-esteem or happiness.
5. **Purpose:** It's very dispiriting to ask "Why am I here?" and find you have no answer. Without a sense of purpose, you risk sinking into depression and pessimism. Remember, you *can* develop a fulfilling and meaningful sense of lifelong purpose, one that will bind you to others.
6. **Connection to Your Body:** Many have lost the full capacity for direct, unfiltered contact with physical experience, which is so vital to our complete sense of self and to our capacity for pleasure and happiness. Sedentary work and schooling, shame around sex and bodily functions, chronic stress, trauma, and abuse all play a role in separating us from this vital aspect of ourselves.
7. **Connection to Nature:** We've all experienced a sense of awe, serenity, and contentment in nature. Its permanence amid change, its beauty, and its power are just some of the things that draw us in. Whether among trees or in a desert or beside a mountain creek, we feel close to our origins, close to the natural "us." Strong evidence suggests that humans become more pessimistic as they watch the despoiling of the natural world. Contact with another part of nature, companion animals, particularly dogs, who have kept us company over the eons, is a marvelous antidepressant.
8. **Spirituality:** You are neurologically geared for spirituality. We believe, and many researchers confirm, that without a solid grounding in spirituality there can be no happiness. Of course, spirituality does not necessarily imply any specific set of belief. It is a feeling of being able to commune with, or even to rely on, something greater than yourself. Sometimes spirituality takes the form of surrender and letting go, sometimes it becomes a powerful incentive to action.

Who's in your tribe?

Fight depression from outside in with good support, authors say

By Devin Rose, Tribune staff reporter

April 18, 2004

The world of "Friends," which leaves NBC in May, is enviable. Sure, the show has a surreal ratio of beautiful-to-average people, and the New York digs are incredible (and unaffordable). But what probably draws many viewers is, well, the friends. How many people have such true blues, such a great support system, in real life?

According to a husband-and-wife team of authors, Bob Murray and Alicia Fortinberry, that's precisely what we all need.

In their new book, "Creating Optimism: A Proven, Seven-Step Program for Overcoming Depression" (McGraw-Hill, \$22.95), the two say a strong social network--a tribe, as they call it--can save us from depression. They have been teaching their healing method, as part of their Uplift Program, worldwide for 20 years.

Other battles on the depression front often emphasize healing from within--with talk therapy and medication, typically. Do that, the thought goes, and the world will feel like a better place. Murray and Fortinberry say such methods have their use. But, they insist, if we improve our external world, our tribe of friends and family, our depressed brains will begin to heal.

"You can't think your way out of depression, can't even pop a pill out of it, at least not for the long term," Murray told Q. "Depression is about a failure in relationships somewhere down the line."

They write in their book that we're meant "to live in small, mutually supportive communities in close contact with nature and animals. The further you get from this ideal, the more

stressed, depressed, pessimistic and unhappy you become."

"We live in a culture that isn't really fit for humans," Murray said. "That's one of the main reasons that depression is increasing."

The two don't knock the thought that some people have a genetic propensity toward depression. "But propensity is just that," Murray said, and any genetic tendency "needs to be triggered by experience."

He also talked about serotonin, the body chemical often found in inadequate levels in depressed people--but he added a twist: "That's a symptom of depression, not a cause. Because your brain has malformed at a certain stage because of trauma that happened, it fails to uptake serotonin."

The brain's neural connections, our very "wiring," begin to change as we improve our external experiences, the authors say.

For those who find it a bit daunting to think we have to form new and better relationships to feel better, Fortinberry said (quite soothingly) that a little change goes a long way.

"We tend to think in black and white: 'I have to get a whole new tribe tomorrow, when I don't even feel like talking to my best friend,'" she said. "But the brain starts to change with every little step you take."

And both are convinced that with small change after small change, a better, more supportive society is inevitable.

"We don't have to destroy our society," Murray said. "We have to say that what's really important is the friendships, not the job, not the car that I drive, the house that I live in, but the friends that I have. Our purpose is to create relationships. We are relationship-forming animals."

For more information on the Fortinberry Murray Method, go to www.upliftprogram.com or www.creatingoptimism.com.

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DEPRESSION

A Social Problem with a Relationship Solution

— Bob Murray and Alicia Fortinberry

Depression and its myriad allied disorders are symptoms of a society that has lost its way, forcing us to live in a manner inimical to our human, genetic nature and subjecting us to trauma and abuse. Yet we—and our clients—can create healthy and meaningful lives, largely through forming fully supportive relationships that meet our human needs, as did the hunter-gatherers, our ancestors.

First, we must see beyond the myths of depression perpetuated by ignorance and vested interests and understand the true nature and causes of depression. Drug companies and much of the medical establishment assure us that antidepressants are the solution to everything, from happiness to social success, or our ability to relate to others. Their claim that the main issue in depression is the failure of the brain to uptake serotonin is a red herring. Depressed people do indeed experience a neurochemical imbalance, but this has been shown to be a symptom of a much deeper problem.

Depression is not a genetic life-sentence. There is a predisposition to depression, but it is simply that, a propensity requiring an environmental trigger. Neither is depression due solely to faulty thinking, beliefs, “schemas,” or even behaviors, although all these play a role.

WHAT DEPRESSION REALLY IS

Every recent study shows that the real culprit behind endogenous depression is childhood trauma resulting mostly from a failure of early relationships. The American Association of Pediatrics defines this trauma as “a repeated pattern

of damaging interactions between parent(s) (or significant adult) and child that becomes typical of the relationship.” This includes criticism, unrealistic expectations, physical or emotional absence, parental fighting, divorce, addiction, and even violence on television.

These traumatic events inhibit proper development of the growing brain and create the anomalies that often show up on brain scans of depressed people. The amygdala, a key area of the limbic system that warns of signs of stress or danger, becomes overactive, sending out more highly emotionally charged messages. The frontal lobe, where key decisions are made, is slow to switch off the alarm signals coming from the amygdala. (Hence Daniel Goleman’s evocative term “amygdala hijack.”)

Problems in the frontal lobe are also responsible for the difficulty most depressed and anxious people sometimes have making even simple decisions. The hippocampus, which deals with learning and forming new memories, does not have the neural capacity to help the person remember and avoid circumstances that trigger depressive episodes. Obviously, antidepressants, which address neurochemical imbalance, are not the solution to these basic malfunctions.

DEPRESSION IN THE BODY

Depression shows up not just as symptoms of sadness, inability to experience pleasure, difficulty in making decisions, and lack of energy and enthusiasm, but in a whole spectrum of related problems. These include anxiety disorders, chronic pain, many illnesses, and, recent research

suggests, even posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), bipolar disorder, and dissociative disorders.

Childhood trauma also lodges in the body as a “kinesthetic memory,” resulting in habitual muscular patterns of defense and restriction, which in turn send messages of fear, panic, distrust, anger, and sorrow to the brain. Dysfunctional ways of movement and posture can also lead to muscular pain and injury and reveal the person’s low self-esteem and vulnerability to others.

The list of illnesses that are causally linked to depression increases all the time—they



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include heart disease, back pain, and diabetes. Depression can also “somatize”—create symptoms of illness even when there’s no underlying pathology. Studies show that up to 80% of people who visit physicians do so for “functional complaints,” in which mood disorders mask as physical illnesses.

DYSFUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP PATTERNS

The incidence of childhood depression increases 23% a year, according to one Harvard study (not coincidentally, U.S. government figures show child abuse rising 10% a year). However, most endogenous depression surfaces later, triggered by stressful relationships that echo the childhood trauma.

Though we are genetically geared to form relationships, how we do so is learned. And, in the pressure-cooker of the socially unsupported nuclear (or one-parent) family, the relationships most of us learned were dysfunctional.

7 STEPS FOR A DEPRESSION-FREE LIFE

- 1 Identify and defeat the inner saboteur.
- 2 Reconnect to your body.
- 3 Create healing relationships.
- 4 Elevate your self-esteem.
- 5 Uncover your competence.
- 6 Access the power of shared purpose.
- 7 Deepen your relationship to the Divine.

In fact, the traumatized child is “programmed” to recreate the most difficult early relationships in adulthood. The child has to expend far more effort—and thus create more neural connections—to cope with unsatisfactory relationships. He or she in effect becomes “specialized” in dealing with criticism or abandonment, and as an adult

will seek out or create situations where these forms of control and abuse occur. The result: a depressive episode—or anxiety, PTSD, or somatized illness.

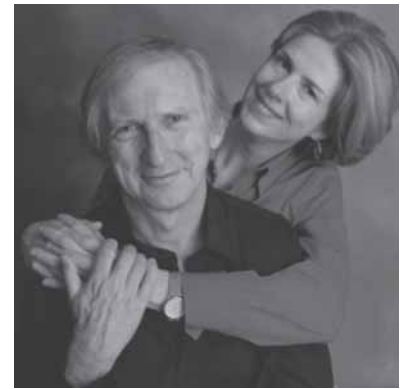
DEFEATING THE INNER SABOTEUR

The first step in overcoming depression is to identify negative childhood programming, which we sometimes anthropomorphize as the “inner saboteur.” This involves pinpointing the negative “voices” (verbal or behavioral messages) from the past that lodge beneath our conscious thoughts and goad us into self-defeating behaviors and damaging relationships. They whisper: “You’ll never amount to anything,” “Why not leave before she leaves you,” “He’s only criticizing you for your own good,” “No one could possibly love you,” “You’ll never change, why try?”

As they say of alcohol in AA, the inner saboteur is “cunning, baffling, and powerful.” As with any system, it strives to perpetuate itself and create the conditions under which it will flourish.

To defeat the inner saboteur and resist its siren song, the depressed person must first externalize these voices. Whenever possible, we recommend giving a face to the message, be it a parent, older sibling, teacher or, if memory fails, even a made-up name. These ideas and beliefs are learned, they are not us, and they can be overcome. But while identifying dysfunctional patterns and attempting to make different choices is important, it is only the first step to healing the depression spectrum.

We cannot simply decide to have different thoughts, beliefs, and reactions to external events. To effect lasting change, we must change how others relate to us. *Creating Optimism: A Proven, Seven-Step Program for Overcoming Depression*, by the authors (McGraw-Hill, 2004) offers an action plan focused on creating truly supportive relationships and other forms of con-



BOB MURRAY AND ALICIAN FORTINBERRY

nection required for authentic happiness. These techniques are also taught in the authors’ Uplift Program, sponsored by the University of South Florida in Tampa. According to follow-up questionnaires up to two years afterward, the program has a 94% success rate in enabling people to maintain an enhanced mood and fully supportive relationships.

THE RELATIONSHIP SOLUTION

The key to overcoming depression is a nexus of truly supportive, nurturing relationships that meet our functional needs. Positive relationships can help reprogram the brain by stimulating new neural connections. Research suggests that a nurturing relationship environment can even undo the neural damage caused by childhood trauma by stimulating neurogenesis,” or cell growth. That good relationships are the key to healing depression—as they are in preventing heart disease and even slowing the HIV virus—is not surprising. Human beings are relationship-forming creatures, genetically geared to live in interdependent hunter-gatherer bands of 30 to 50 people.

Human beings can’t return completely to the hunter-gatherer lifestyle, of course, but we can each form circles of caring, supportive relationships around us. We define a relationship as a mutual satisfaction of needs. If the needs being met are functional, the relationship will be positive; if dysfunctional, it will be destructive.

WHAT ARE FUNCTIONAL NEEDS?

We teach people the fundamentals of getting their needs met in relationships. To identify functional needs, it's helpful to understand that human relationship needs fall under only four categories: **physical safety** (covering everything from abandonment issues to salary), **emotional security** (trust issues often arise here), **attention** (on the face of it, fairly straightforward) and **importance** (including being involved in decisionmaking).

For our needs to be understood by others, and therefore more likely to be met, they should be communicated in concrete and action-oriented terms. By action-oriented, we mean that the needs you express must not be about cognitions, such as "I need you to believe, understand, sympathize with, think about, or want." Rather, they must specify what actions the person would have to take for you to know that they believed, understood, etc.

Expression of concrete, specific needs draws people together, while expression of generalities creates barriers. For example, if I ask you to "respect" me, you may think you know what I mean, but in fact you probably won't. And no matter how hard you try, I can always accuse you of falling short, because we never agreed on what you would have to specifically do to show me respect. The same of course is true of all generalities—from "loving me," to "giving me space," to (in the case of children especially) "being good."

Even people who have great difficulty developing supportive relationships can begin to identify their functional needs according to these standards—and ask others to do the same for them. These simple actions form new neural connections that enormously add to self-esteem. If the needs are

met, the giver's feelings of worth and empowerment blossom, and the relationship improves dramatically. If the other person isn't willing to meet or even negotiate the needs, the giver has a clear signal that this relationship is not going to help prevent or heal depression and may be part of the problem.

NEEDS IN THE FAMILY AND IN CORPORATIONS

In what we call the "pow wow," families can process and establish the rules of the house and thus help create clear boundaries that foster a sense of safety and security. This involves regular meetings in which everyone old enough to talk is invited to discuss their needs and house rules, and the consequences to each member for breaking them. We stress that once a child reaches the age of 12 or 13, they should be treated much more

others' help in ending negative self-comments such as "Gosh, I'm stupid," "This is going to sound silly, but . . ." and "It was nothing." Asking friends, family members, and colleagues to gently pull us up each time we put ourselves down is a good way of breaking the hold of the inner saboteur and enhancing our healing connection to others. We suggest that people get used to asking for appropriate praise. This includes praise for who they are as well as what they do.

Joining with others who share a common purpose and are willing to take action together to benefit the world is also a powerful antidote to depression. Our relationship to nature and to the Divine, which is essential to emotional health, can be enhanced by sharing experiences with supportive friends.

To heal ourselves—and our world—from the rift with our genetic

6 Actions for Creating Healing Relationships

- 1 **Discover your functional relationship needs in all areas of your life.**
- 2 **Prioritize needs and define your bottom line.**
- 3 **Give (say) your needs to others. Find out their needs of you.**
- 4 **Negotiate and set consequences.**
- 5 **Create the three Rs in relationships: rules, roles, and rituals.**
- 6 **Expand your network of lasting, strong, and supportive relationships.**

as an adult, and treating them as a child will only infantilize them.

The exchange of information about needs is an extremely powerful tool in corporate training and coaching, too, where people must relate and function well, often under stressful circumstances. In fact, this structure has proven useful in our work with multinational companies PricewaterhouseCoopers, Ernst & Young, and Oracle.

HEALING CONNECTIONS

There are many ways to use relationship techniques to enhance self-esteem and competence. For example, we urge students to enlist

heritage, we must powerfully reinvest in our humanity. Being fully human means being functionally connected to other people and to the world around us. To the extent that we do this, we can banish chronic depression from our lives, families, and communities.

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MEDIA LIST: Recent & Upcoming Highlights, 2004 - 05

Television

USA

Florida: FOX 13 News, Your Turn, Tampa, May 2004
NBC 6, Rick Sanchez Show, Miami, April 2004

Illinois: ABC 7, Sunday Morning News, Chicago, March 2004
[View Video](#) | [Play Audio](#) ([Windows Media Player](#))

Ohio: WCMH-NBC 4, Midday News, Columbus, March 2004

Arizona: News 13, Kold-TV CBS, Morning News, Tucson, March 2004

Colorado: The Wisdom Network, Denver, March 2004

Radio

USA

National: **20-City Drive-Time Radio Tour, September 2004**
The Deborah Ray Show, April 2004
The Michael Dresser Show, April 2004

California: KPFA 94.1 FM PBS, July 2004

Florida: WMNF, The Women's Show, May 2004
1230 AM WBZT, Coach Judy, April 2004

New York: WDST FM 100.1, Woodstock Roundtable, April 2004

Australia: ABC Southwest, July 2004 | [Interview](#)

Melbourne: 3AW, frequent guests, psychology and relationship experts

Press Coverage

USA

National: *Family Circle*, upcoming 2005
Vogue, 2004
Self, 2004
Parenting, 2004
Fitness, 2004
Perspective (Journal of the Assn. for Humanistic Psychology),
[Creating Optimism: Book Review](#), (pdf) Aug 2004
Publishers' Weekly, "Treating Healing with Feeling", March 2004
College Times, "[The Pill Popping Predicament](#)," March 2004

Illinois: *Chicago Tribune*, "[Who's in Your Tribe](#)," feature column about
(syndicated): *Creating Optimism*, April 2004
Divorce Magazine, "[Wired for Happiness](#)," (pdf) May 2004

Florida: TBAWP (Tampa Bay Assn. of Women Psychotherapists), *Creating Optimism* book review, July 2004

International: *Advance Newsmagazines*, "[Summertime Blues: Healing for Health Professionals](#)," July 2004

Australia National (syndicated): *The Sunday Telegraph*, "[10 Reasons to Feel Good About the Future](#)," June 2004
Quoted relationship experts in *Cleo* sex and love column and dating quizzes, including:
"[Have You Inherited Your Mum's Love Style?](#)" (pdf) May 2004
"[The Love Test](#)" (pdf) April 2004

Published Articles

USA National: *AHP Perspective* (Journal of the Assn for Humanistic Psychology) "[Depression: A Social Problem with a Relationship Solution](#)," June 2004
Florida: *New Times Naturally*, "[Managing Your Moods](#)," May-Jun 2004
Australia International: *WellBeing Magazine* "[Higher Power: Healing Depression Through Spirituality](#)," (pdf) June 2004

Updates to our press list can be found at: http://www.upliftprogram.com/press_list_2004.html