

Life... I'm depressed the minute I wake up

S i t u a t i o n :

Starting the day is really tough for me. I swear the minute I open my eyes, I feel depressed. Once I get to work it's a little better, but most of the time as soon as the alarm rings all I want to do is curl up into a ball, pull the covers up over my head and forget about the day. I don't seem to have any energy, even though I know I slept well. What can I do to change my mood that early in the day?

A n s w e r :

It's common to wake up depressed if you're suffering from depression. Most depressives don't start their day in a sunny mood and then go downhill, even though we'd like it to be different.

It sounds as if you're checking your mood as soon as you wake up and based on what you feel, do some predicting of what the morning or what the rest of your day will be like. Compare it to waking up sneezing and coughing, and right that minute predict that by the end of the day you'll have a full blown case of the flu. The point is, you may or may not. You don't know.

You know that staying in bed is not an option when you have to go to work. And hitting the snooze button a half dozen times is, in a sense, "proving" to yourself that you are tired, that you do "need" or "deserve" to get more rest.

Two reasons to get up at your pre-appointed time: One – when you do you don't have to rush. Staying in bed steals precious "getting ready" time. If it takes you a full hour to comfortably get out the door and you skim off 20 minutes by sleeping in, you're either going to cut into your get-ready time or your commute time. Either way, it's going to make you rush and the rushing will make you feel tense. You don't need the added stress. Two – If you've had a decent night's rest, feeling tired is only a feeling, it's not a fact. And you'll have to remind yourself of that fact. You do have the physical energy to do what needs to be done. You can push back the covers, you can make your feet hit the floor, you can take a shower, etc. You may not feel like it, but you CAN.

So when you wake up tomorrow and think, "I'm tired," tell yourself, "I've slept and I can get moving, now!" Then move, and keep moving. You may have to play coach or drill sergeant for a few days or weeks until you change your routine. It's not unusual to have to keep reminding yourself, "I have had enough sleep. I can move even though I don't feel like it." Saying it once and expecting it to click will not work to magically transform your mood. It does take a conscious effort. Your effort. You have to convince you, no one else can do it for you.

Depression does rob our vitality, our energy. We have to realize that our energetic feelings didn't disappear overnight (although in some cases it feels that way). And even

more important, the energy isn't going to return in one glorious burst. It's going to come back gradually, and only by changing your thoughts and forcing (if that's what it takes) forcing yourself to move. If you change nothing, nothing will change!

One more suggestion: Don't try to monitor your improvement on a daily basis. It'll only make you more discouraged. It's like being on a diet and weighing yourself every day. Take inventory only after a full week of getting up "on time" for work. And if you find that you felt a bit better two out of the five days, that's improvement. Even one out of five is improvement. Don't expect to come out five out of five for even the first month. If it does happen, it'll be a nice surprise. Setting unrealistic expectations will only make you feel disappointed and more discouraged, and even more down. And that's exactly what you're making every attempt to avoid.

Be honest with your inventory. Don't ignore the fragments of "I felt a little better time." It's crucial for you to recognize them. Like so many of us – if we don't consciously look for the good – we don't see it.

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