How to Be Happy for Others When You’re Not Happy

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Sharing Joy When Coping With Depression

This subject is really a matter of balance. On one side, you have to be honest and remain true to how you are feeling, while on the other side you also have to recognize that while depression has a lot of emotional side effects, we are still primarily in control of how we react and respond to situations around us. It's not an easy balance to find, nor is it easy to step back and consciously choose how to react - but it is possible.

Getting Started

First of all, don't fake it; forcing false emotions will only create an uncomfortable situation for all involved. It's important to be honest and open with those you care about. Forcing yourself to be or feel something you're not will likely only add to the negative connotations and stigma around depression. By lying about how you feel you could be setting an example that depression is an illness to be hidden. Instead, focus on yourself and your healing. Talk to those around you and if necessary, explain to the person that while you are happy for them, you're not in an emotional state to properly express yourself.

In my experience with depression and those who are affected by it, each individual goes through it differently, experiencing different symptoms and side effects as well as the initial cause of the illness. Finding the balance between understanding and accepting how you feel and consciously deciding how to respond will be more difficult for some than for others. This doesn't just apply to those with depression but for anybody who experiences strong emotions and reactions. Depression presents itself in a wide range of emotions; this could be sadness, anger, frustration, despair, or even indifference. For most people who are affected by depression, while these negative feelings are often strong and constantly present, we are still able to control our responses and reactions.

In order to do this, we must first be aware and accepting of how we naturally feel. In many cases, this awareness will provide us the opportunity to respond in a more positive way. For example, if someone is in a bad mood and is responding to those around them in a negative and harsh manner, often if this mood is pointed out, the person is then made aware of how they are behaving and is ultimately given the chance to change this. Understand that with depression, this may seem like a daunting task and could be a lot harder than it would be for the average person as the emotions are a lot stronger. But it's incredibly empowering to realize that you have this opportunity; that to an extent, you are able to choose how you respond to a situation.

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Activities That Can Help Make a Difference

Meditation

Meditation is a technique used to self-regulate the mind and inner thoughts. It can often be used as a form of

relaxation and inner reflection and with regular practice and effort a person can achieve a relaxed state and sense of calm. This could be of great benefit to those with depression as it could help to regulate their mood. As mentioned, bringing awareness to a negative feeling and acknowledging that you feel that way provides the opportunity to consciously choose to respond in a positive manner. Practicing meditation and inner reflection may help to make this process easier.

Exercise

Exercise has been proven to have a positive effect on those with depression as any form of exercise will release endorphins, which help to offset stress and negative emotions. This could be a good way to help combat some of the symptoms of depression and create an overall improvement in mood which would make being happy for others come a lot more naturally.

Yoga

Yoga is a fantastic way to combine meditation and exercise into one activity. While there are many different styles of yoga, the more relaxing forms often focus on being in the moment and bringing attention to the breath which are common practice in meditation. Yoga is a form of moving meditation and is a great activity for those suffering from depression, as we are able to bring our awareness inward while still flowing from pose to pose gaining the benefits from the exercise as well.

Therapy

If you find that your depression is causing you to feel an overwhelming amount of negativity and you're struggling to overcome these emotions on your own, therapy might be a great way to get the help that is needed. Depression affects everybody differently and there will be people who need some extra support to ease some of the symptoms. Being happy for others can be a heavy burden and a lot to ask for from someone who is deeply suffering. Group therapy and support groups could give you a chance to share your experiences and may help to provide some outside perspective.

Art and Creative Outlets

Art can be a great way of expressing emotion and inner thoughts without words. Many people find it calming as it can provide a distraction and an opportunity to put emotions into a productive task. Creative writing and free journaling are also examples of creative outlets. It doesn't have to be published or shared with anybody but it can be a great way to help organize thoughts. Creative writing provides an escape or chance to express ourselves outside of our current situation. Having a creative outlet and form of expression can bring a balance back into your life and can help to make bad days a little bit better.

Conclusion

While it's important to stay true to your natural emotion and be honest about how you feel, it's empowering to know that we can have the opportunity to consciously choose how we react or respond to a situation. When suffering from the various symptoms of depression, being happy for someone else can feel like an impossible task but there are ways in which we can help bring our mood around or gain some perspective. It won't be easy, and it may be more difficult for some to grasp than for others, but find the inspiration in knowing that it's possible to regain that control.