Learning to Depression-Proof Your Environment

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Battling Depression With a Change of Environment

You have locks on your doors to keep out unwanted guests. You put up baby gates and cover the electrical outlets to protect your little ones. You have smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms to maintain your health and safety. You even check for mold because you heard it can make you sick. With these interventions, your house is a safe place, right?

Your house might not be as safe as you would like to think, though. The biggest danger could be lurking in plain sight in your living room. It could be resting in your refrigerator without you even knowing it's there. It has the power to turn your life upside down and dramatically impact your wellbeing.

The risk is not burglars, smoke or mold. The risk is depression.

Your home is the place that you spend most of your time, and if it is not configured ideally, it could make your depression worse. If depression is a part of your life, chances are great that there are aspects of your home that reinforce and support depression, rather than reduce it.

It is time to begin the process of looking at your home as something that can work against your mental health, but don't worry. You do not have to move to improve. With a few simple modifications, you can depression-proof your environment. Here's how:

Take an Inventory

When beginning this process, take a look around your environment. What places trigger feelings of sadness and despair? Which places have positive or happy connotations? Create a list of your feelings room by room while being thoughtful and introspective. If you state only that your depression follows you everywhere, you are missing the finer details.

Since you will likely have some degree of bias, bring in a friend or family member as a consultant. Ask for their feedback about your home. What aspects would they change and what would they allow to remain?

Many times other people are apt at picking out characteristics that you will miss. After all, you spend so much time in your home it is difficult to be objective. Consider the following facets of your house to reduce depression.

Adjust Lighting/ Colors/ Textures

When you think about the stereotypical person with depression, you probably think about someone in a dark, drab room. The reason this stereotype exists is because people with depression tend to avoid bright light and bright colors. How does your home compare?

To depression-proof your home, open all blinds and shades when you wake in the morning. Even if it is a dark and gloomy day, let it in. Blocking out the outside world only increases the focus on you.

Turn on your lights and upgrade to higher wattage bulbs to increase the intensity. Additionally, invest in a few items for around the home to accent or change your color scheme. A new pillow or wall decoration can go a long way without being too much of an expense.

Consider adding a variety of textures and patterns to provide a different sensory experience. Rid yourself of the olives, browns and greys while you bring in oranges, yellows and sky blues. These colors will help bring needed positivity into your life.

Next page: adjusting arrangement, smells, and foods.

Adjust Arrangement

You do not have to be a master of feng shui to know that changing the arrangement of the furniture in your living room or bedroom can dramatically change the way you view it. The bonus comes when it changes the way you see yourself inside these rooms.

Move your couch or bed against a different wall or leave it in the middle of the room. Allow your creativity to come out as your explore and experiment with different options.

Changing your furniture will force you to change your routines. Routines are good until they develop into ruts. New routines encourage you to find new ways of doing things. This spark is an opportunity to reduce depression.

Adjust Smells

To this point, the information has focused on the sights in your home, but what about your smells? Does your place smell fresh and clean or stale and dank?

Your sense of smell is constantly working, even if you are not thinking about it. Because of the perpetual nature of this sense, modifying what you smell can influence your mood.

What smells do you like? Think about the aromas of places that have a positive association for you. Flowers, clean linens, freshly cut grass and fruits are a few of the more popular choices. The good news is that nearly every scent imaginable is available in a spray, candle or plug-in air freshener, so finding your match may be easier than you think.

Instead of choosing only one, set a rotation of smells. Your brain has the ability to get used to smells so that they are less noticeable over time. Having a new smell every few days can keep the novelty alive. Use different delivery systems to add to the variety throughout the day.

If all else fails, open a window to let in the fresh air. It will help blow out the smell of depression.

Adjust Foods

You are most likely to consume the foods and drinks that are available to you in your home. Because of this, the contents of your fridge and pantry play a vital role in your mood.

Do you eat more or less when depressed? Does your food make you depression-proof or depression-prone?

The system to inspect is simple. Are you eating fruits, vegetables and lean meats, or are you mostly consuming the contents of brightly colored boxes?

The process begins by heading to the grocery store. Stroll the aisles for some fresh, whole foods. Whole foods are ones that retain their original shape, color and size. It is true that eating higher quality foods is more expensive, but it is so valuable. How much would you pay for less depression?

Next page: more ways to adjust - food, temperature, and media.

Adjust Foods

At times, the best addition to your diet is the subtraction of sugary beverages. These drinks offer very little nutrition while their sugar can serve as a source of self-medication that conceals your depression for a short time.

Long-term, they add to weight gain and decreased self-esteem. Track the long-term effects of caffeine and alcohol. When shopping, seek out the foods that you should eat rather than the ones you want to eat.

Adjust Temperature

Until now, you may not have considered the temperature in your house as something associated with your depression.

Think about it, though. If it is a hot summer day, and your home feels like an oven, you will feel more lethargic and demotivated. This will make depression worse.

On the other hand, if it is a winter day, and your home is cold, under a blanket on the couch may be on the only comfortable spot.

When it comes to temperature, the goal is to find a balance that motivates you. If you are not sure where to start, look at your current settings. If your depression is high, make a drastic change to your thermostat to study the results. Remember, this is only experimentation, but experimentation can lead to great outcomes.

Adjust TV/ Media

People with depression tend to spend too much time staring at screens to escape and avoid their own depressive thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

All of the media that you consume impacts your wellbeing. Just like with food, you must be careful what you absorb. Clearly, going online to read information about new ways to manage your depression is more worthwhile than flinging birds at green pigs or endlessly scrolling through pictures of food that someone else ate.

Take an honest look at your TV, movie and internet habits. Do you watch too manymurder mysteries? Does the evening news bring tears to your eyes?

Refuse to engage in activities that increase your symptoms. Break the cycle by bringing more comedies or thoughtful dramas into your life. Along the way, work to unitask so that when you are watching TV, you are only watching TV. Doing too many things minimizes the experience.

The same is true for music. Music can be a fantastic form of therapeutic release, or it can be a depressant. If music is not a part of your life, take steps to make it one.

If music seems to make your symptoms worse, change the artist, genre or decade. With nearly endless musical options, there is likely a song that can take you to a better place.

Conclusion

You spend too much time in your home for it to be a depression-inducing environment. Pay more attention to your surroundings and their effect on you.

Test your senses of sight, smell, sound and touch to understand how you can make things better while you stock your fridge full of healthy food options.

Creating a depression-proof home is possible.