Learning to Accept Compliments Despite Depression

by ERIC PATTERSON

Accepting Compliments

You're waiting in line for your morning coffee, and the person behind you says, "I really like your dress." You're checking out at the grocery store and the cashier says, "Wow, cool shoes!" In both situations, you smile uncomfortably and give a quick "thank you." You managed to completely deflect a compliment, and this is what your depression wants you to do. That's why we will look at accepting compliments.

Compliments are self-esteem builders and depression busters. Depression hates them, which is why learning how to accept compliments can be one of the best ways to improve your mood. Here's how:

- **Slow down and pay attention.** When you're rushing or multitasking, you fail to notice things. These things may be an opportunity to find a compliment; not all compliments are verbal. Notice the way people respond to you. Did someone hold open a door for you? Did someone smile or say hello as they passed on the street? Did a friend call to check on you today? These are all indirect compliments. People are being considerate and showing that they value you.
- **Listen.** People typically feel the need to respond quickly to others' comments, and will start thinking of what to say before the other person finishes speaking. Let the person finish. Hear them and allow time to completely process what the other person said.
- **Consider the source.** Sometimes, positive words from people we trust and value are less powerful than words from a stranger. Other times, a compliment from a stranger is quickly dismissed. Find an appropriate balance and reflect on what is important to you.
- **Consider the frequency.** Sometimes a criticism does more harm than one thousand compliments. Why is this? Being reasonable about the number of compliments you receive will likely show that they far outweigh the negatives. Keep a list of compliments received to make them more concrete. Ignore the harsh critiques.
- **Don't dismiss.** Depression seeks to rationalize a reason that the compliment was not genuine. Depression distorts reality by filtering out the good, dwelling on the bad and jumping to irrational conclusions to explain away someone's compliment or polite behavior. What if someone complimented you because they meant it?
- **Accept.** Acceptance comes from denying depression and its ability to distort your view. Realize and remember that there are good things about your personality and that your support system can see them. Choosing to believe and agree with the compliment through positive self-talk is choosing to be happier.
- **Respond with confidence.** If someone compliments your shoes, dress, watch, or haircut, say thank you! There is no need to excuse away yourself or the compliment. People who accept compliments tend to get more of them.

Conclusion

Support in the form of compliments is all around you. Seeing, hearing and accepting compliments will have a positive impact on your mood. Each compliment from yourself or another makes depression a little easier.