



# HEALING THE DEPENDENCY ON DEPRESSION

*Are You A Depression Addict?*

**BRONWYN BARTER**

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I give you all my thanks and I am grateful.

# Preface

I am writing this book because after my own experience of depression I have thought long and hard about why it is that some of my clients don't seem to be able to get off the merry-go-round of depression.

I have had a professional practice as a therapist using the breathing technique of Rebirthing for seventeen years. A full explanation of the modality of Rebirthing is given in the next section of this book.

Most people come to me for the sole (soul) purpose of healing emotional pain. I am speaking of the pain that is named by them as grief, sadness, anger, frustration, despondence, and the like.

Many clients come to me with a medical diagnosis of depression and have taken on that explanation of their feelings as an illness. For some it has become a way of life. I have some ideas that may help you identify the reasons why you may have become depressed and some explanations of how you can help yourself without chemicals and lifelong drama.





# Before you begin ...

This book is a not medical handbook. It is designed to shine for those souls who suffer from long-term depression—a light into the dark tunnel of sadness and helplessness.

The information herein is for the depression dependents, their families and friends, who can see that there is a condition of “stuckness” around their depression and they want to free themselves of the merry-go-round of depression, drugs and helplessness. This book is for those who feel like they are missing out on life as a result of their own or other people's depression.

My expertise is in Rebirthing/Breathwork. In my practice I do not consult with those people who have a psychosis. I refer anyone who has a psychological condition to a psychiatrist or psychologist. This is a very specialized field and should be respected as such. If you have been diagnosed with a mental illness please accept and follow the advice of your practitioner.

I do not consider many people who are diagnosed by the medical profession as being clinically depressed, as psychotic. In pain yes; psychotic no. I can usually tell by the time my initial interview is completed whether or not Rebirthing/Breathwork is appropriate for my client.

I teach my student practitioners the limitations of Rebirthing and there is a professional code of ethics on this matter. This is plainly laid out and adhered to by the Australian Academy of Rebirthing/Breathwork members.

If you have a medically diagnosed psychiatric condition, it is important that you pay attention to your medical care provider and follow their instructions about your medication and lifestyle.

This book is written to provide information to a wide audience. I do not expect you to take this as personal or individual advice.

All names in the case studies have been changed to protect the privacy of the clients. Small details have been omitted to further prevent any identification. I have consulted in five states in Australia and have also Rebirthed at conferences overseas and am constantly amazed at the similarity of issues of people from all walks of life, nationalities and religions.

# The Rebirthing Technique

*Change is something that we all know needs to happen for our growth and a happy life, yet we deny ourselves the benefits of change mainly out of fear of the unknown.*

Rebirthing is a very effective way to help people overcome depression states in their life. The experiences that I want to share with you have come from facilitating thousands of Rebirthing sessions in the past seventeen years. The process of Rebirthing is powerful due to the fact that it is a deletive process. That means that when you have a Rebirthing session you are able to eliminate the suppressed emotion that is held in the body at a cellular level. After a Rebirthing session, clients often experience a feeling of lightness and happiness because they have deleted the emotional heaviness that has been stored in the emotional, energetic body. Consequently, a feeling of relief takes the place of sadness and fear and other anxieties. Most upsets come from a lack of understanding of a situation and once clarity and truth is gained, a sense of normality and peace is restored. Rebirthing is more than a talkfest between the client and the practitioner.

***Rebirthing is undertaken in the following manner:***

The client lies on the floor on a mattress and breathes the

Rebirthing breath guided by a Rebirther. The breath is taken in, using a conscious and circular pattern, breathing in and then out without any gaps in the flow of air. This breathing style, using oxygen in the air we breathe in, is the catalyst for the elimination of tension and energy held in the body. Oxygen, given the freedom to perform its true purpose in the body, that is to eliminate the toxins from the bloodstream, can also eliminate the emotional toxins and give instant relief to a client who is suffering the effects of stress and trauma. Gradually and miraculously the body begins to relax and a new awareness of present and past patterns of behaviour can be easily recognized by the client. With the insights that they gain clients are able to make important decisions and realizations about their lives. With new insights and clarity they can go about changing their unwanted outcomes and create a "new life." Hence the name Rebirthing.

I have watched many miracles occur as I sit with my clients and am always in awe of the miraculous healing they achieve by this simple breathing technique.

Unfortunately, Rebirthing has had a chequered history that has usually been the result of performing other practices in the name of Rebirthing. In the past, the Rebirthing technique has been practiced by backyard practitioners after reading a book or taking a weekend course. Thankfully, nowadays most Rebirthing practitioners are highly qualified and have achieved personal growth and self-healing before stepping into the role of being a Rebirthing practitioner. The confraternity of professional Rebirthers recognizes the importance of developing accredited trainings to protect the integrity of this wonderfully simple yet powerful process. I have included some websites and contacts of qualified practitioners so you can access a qualified Rebirthing practitioner near you.

Rebirthing is a breathing technique that helps the client relieve themselves of the suppressed emotion that has been bottled up

for a long time. An emotion, or e-motion, is energy in motion. When emotion is held in the body, the energy becomes stuck. If emotion is not expressed, the energy is diverted to cells of the body and becomes energetically cemented there. When this emotion is released in the form of tears, laughter, anger, and the full range of expressions that are possible, the person becomes unstuck and feels an immense relief and lightness. Many endorphins are released by breathing, relaxing, and releasing pure emotion, the results can only be described as miraculous.

During the process of a Rebirthing session it is obvious that prior to a person's emotional expression of feelings, they have particular thoughts that trigger those feelings.

When the Rebirther asks the client about the thought that they had just prior to experiencing their current feelings, the client is able to answer the Rebirther with the thought that created that feeling. By using the Rebirthing breath, the breath that accesses feelings in the client's body it is easier to let the emotion be felt and released, along with the accompanying thought. The thought usually has had a negative influence on the client, so releasing the negative energy created by that thought is extremely beneficial and healing.

For example, a client could be having a Rebirthing session and begin to feel upset and start to cry. The Rebirther will encourage the client to keep the conscious connected breath going whilst the client will continue to release the energy, sometimes, as in this case, in the form of tears. After the tears have subsided, the Rebirther will enquire, "What was the thought that triggered the emotion?" The client will then be able to answer with a realization that they have had some negative thought or sadness hidden in their psyche. The breath acts like a releaser and when used in conjunction with a safe and caring environment, the person is easily able to release the held emotion and remove the "stuckness."

The first thing a new client will often say to me is, "I am depressed."

They have defined their "self" as a condition because they have self-diagnosed or agreed with the diagnosis of someone else. We know that thought creates our reality and by the very declaration of the words "I am depressed," these poor souls have repeatedly described themselves as the diagnosis. I first remind them that they are themselves and that depression is not who or what they are. They are a person who is feeling the effects of depression and not depression itself. That would be like saying, "I am diabetes," or "I am a broken leg!"

You may say this is literalism and I agree. Yet the subconscious mind doesn't make distinctions between what you say and what you mean.

### **Elizabeth**

Elizabeth was an example of this. She constantly suffered minor stomach ailments. These bouts of dyspepsia and indigestion, nausea, and similar upsets, caused her to be tired and listless. She had great hopes and dreams for her future but these nagging ailments kept her on an up and down cycle. While they were never serious, she went to doctors to get check ups and tests. However, no one could find what was causing her constant ailments.

One day she came into the Rebirthing session slumped into the chair and launched into a tirade of, "I am sick and tired of all this illness, I'm totally fed up and sick to the stomach with it all. It's all giving me the shits."

As the words, poured from her mouth she heard herself saying and describing exactly the symptoms of her illnesses: sick, tired, nausea, and bouts of diarrhea. I don't know how many times she had said these same words in the past, but it was as if she had just heard them for the very first time. She knew that she had just

caught herself speaking negatively about her body. She also knew the effect that could have on the outcome of her life. Thoughts create our reality, especially when they are verbalized.

Her eyes widened with surprise and she began to laugh and cry simultaneously. She was laughing because of the relief of finding one of the causes of her illnesses and crying from the relief that she felt in her body. After her Rebirthing session that day she went home with an affirmation to install into her mind. It was that her body could be fit and healthy. Today she lives a very full life. She works all day in an administration role and teaches music classes in the evenings and loves it!

My clients often tell me that they are tired of talking about their issues when they go to a therapist. Often there have been many and by now they are tired, failing, and at the point of giving up hope of ever living a normal life. If their depression has been long-term, they have probably developed their own strategies to deal with it in daily life. These will include, sleeping all day and night, prescription drugs, or self-medication with alcohol and marijuana, cigarettes, shopping, TV, gambling, food, sometimes amphetamines, and party drugs.

When I ask clients the question, "How long have you been feeling depressed?" they will say it has been since they were a child or use the term "always." In other words, the depression has taken such a hold that they can't remember when they were happy.

However, most clients recognize that there was an event or a series of events that led them into a downward spiral. This could have taken place as a child or since, but whatever the cause, they are not able to rise up the ladder of emotions to the level of having an enthusiasm for life and all that it has to offer.

Sadness is not the natural human state. Sadness is the culmination of a series of things that are not in harmony in a person's life.



Sadness is the result of disharmony. When a person who feels sad arrives at a consultation, I know that there are fundamental elements that are out of place in that person's life.

Perhaps they are having trouble communicating with someone else. In instances where the client has had their communication cut off or denied by the other party, the sad person feels sad due to the lack of communications. When a person is not being spoken to, or if another person is not replying to your phone calls or email messages, the instigator of that communication can begin to feel quite upset. The reason for this is that our attention is being held, consciously or unconsciously, waiting for a reply. When your communication is not returned and there is no discussion, the person who is waiting begins to wonder what has happened to the other person. Have they got the message? Are they avoiding me? Are they okay? Depending on the type of relationship they have with person, the sender of the initial communication can become quite upset.

It's not too worrying if we are talking about an acquaintance or work mate. But if the relationship is emotional as with a partner, close friend, parent, child, or any close relationship then the affect is greater.

The person who is not returning calls is often deliberately causing a lack of communication, and may be doing so to cause hurt and harm. It's like walking out in the middle of a conversation. This is controlling behaviour. It is subversive and clients who are subjected to this behaviour are at a loss to know what they have done or what happened. They may obsess about what will happen in their relationship with the person who does these things.

Clients, who suffer from the effect of others controlling them, often have breakthrough moments when it is explained to them that they have been controlled in a hidden, or sometimes obvious, way and that they can change the effect people have over them!

Another cause of depression can arise from working or living in a negative environment. I cannot too strongly say that the environment in which you spend your time is crucial to the overall demeanour that you will eventually reflect. To attempt to live an enthusiastic happy life in an environment where others are doing the opposite will rob you of your energy and eventually drag you down. Surround yourself with those who wish you well and have a happy outlook about life. It will make yours a lot easier!

Physical illness causes depression in some people. The problem with this depression condition is that a depressed and negative thinking mind has a profoundly negative effect on the healing process of the physical body. This is a time when we need to be positive and supportive of the amazing healing capacity of our bodies. Yes, it is a challenge when pain is present in our life and yet we can stay focused on healing our bodies and do all that we can to give our body what it needs to facilitate the best and easiest way to heal. I see people with disease and pain who take little or no responsibility for their own health and then complain that the drugs are not working!

People who suffer from feelings of depression may exhibit addictive behaviour. The causes of this are many, yet what I have observed is that the results of talking about how bad they feel to a friend and family often gives the people who are concerned about them an opportunity to rescue and nurture with an unfortunate detrimental affect.

Friends and family may also be in a depressed state, so now we have a situation that causes a group of friends/family to spiral downwards together. Depressed people cannot help depressed people; often the solutions they offer each other are tainted with negative attitudes and dysfunctional solutions.

I strongly suggest that you monitor how you feel after spending time with certain people; it can be a good indication as to

whether they are a positive or negative influence on you. If you feel worse after being with some of your friends, arrange your life to spend less time with them while you rebuild your energy levels. You may be better off going for a walk, reading self-help books, or going to an uplifting movie.

### **Ron**

A young man who comes to mind is Ron. Ron was a very bright and happy young fellow in his late twenties. As a teenager he was diagnosed with manic depression, commonly called bi-polar disorder nowadays. On tracing his history I found that he had a perfect upbringing. His parents were kind and loving and he was allowed to be very much his own person. Ron had a way about him that was a little confusing. His obvious compassion for others and a real understanding of the world and its fascinations were obvious. Yet his humour was sarcastic with a bite to it that could snap the tail off a monkey!

In consultation with his girlfriend, Sally, who was struggling with his mood swings, she spoke about Ron's lack of action in all sorts of things. This included doing the housework, paying his bills on a regular basis, and simple living skills.

She said, "It's like he doesn't want to take responsibility for his life." This was a truth for her. Although she felt annoyed by the situation she felt better for naming the problem as she saw it. She acknowledged the fact that she was feeling tired because of Ron's lack of action and that she was taking too much responsibility for him.

When Ron and Sally spoke about what they could do to make corrections about their situation Ron realized that he always contracted the bi-polar condition when he was faced with new and challenging situations. Ron's mother had always nurtured him during these times and Sally, a real nurturer also, had stepped into this role. The fascinating thing is that Sally's father had suf-

ferred from depression and luckily for her, she understood the probability of repeating parental patterns when choosing a partner and consciously stopped herself from rescuing Ron. Instead she chose to support him to heal his condition. This is the difference between co-dependence and co-commitment.

Ron and Sally now have firm agreements about how they take personal responsibility for themselves. Ron forces himself to do the things that he had stopped doing. He feels better when he sees his achievements at the end of each day. Sally continues lovingly in the relationship while she works at her determination to love and yet not to rescue her beloved Ron. It's a work in progress.

I divide the forms of depression that I have identified into four categories: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. These divisions of the types of depression that I see are not often recognized so they might provide you with new explanations as to the ways that you have become depressed and stayed that way. You might identify with a combination of two, three or all four states. They are not the tick the boxes methods of identification of depression. You will have to look inside yourself and find your own realizations.

It was not until I embraced the ways that I had become depressed, and how I was depressed, that I was able to get a grip on the strategies to turn my sadness off and do my life with happiness again. I had to re-learn the ways to be and stay happy. In order to do that I had to realize and discover what was keeping me down.



# Chapter One

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## The Catalyst

*Sometimes we need to be pushed to make changes in our lives, even though, like a child being born, the pushing feels painful. Then we can experience a new life.*

Nineteen ninety-nine was both the best and worst year of my life. It was the year that ended my attachments to other people and what they thought of me. That was a great relief. It was also the year that I decided that if my life didn't improve that I would end it.

I was feeling depressed.

I had always been a happy person. Despite some major traumatic experiences and challenges that saddened me, I could usually bounce back and take life as it came.

My parents died three months apart when I was twenty-one years old. As I see it now, it was a major trauma for me. I was a young mother, happily married and living in a regional town in South Australia. The loss of both parents seemed to take a back seat in my conscious mind as I carried on with the responsibilities of my children, my relationship, and organizing my home. That's how I had always coped with life; I got busy and coped.

Another major upheaval in my life was the end of my marriage to the father of my children. I was raised as a devout Catholic

girl. Although much of the religion never made sense to me, one thing that I clung onto and respected was the concept of a sacred marriage. Marriage was, to me, the gift of being able to make a vow of allegiance to another and commit to live in a relationship full of love and respect for life. It still is that way for me.

All my dreams of a long, happy marriage fell into a well of co-dependent toxicity. I couldn't stay; so I left for the sanity of both my husband and myself. Then I got really busy! I worked three jobs and partied hard to avoid even thinking about what was going on in my life, not to mention the massive denial of my feelings. I knew, subconsciously of course, that if I ventured into the realm of my feelings it would take a great deal of effort to deal with them and heal them. I was not ready.

I was forty years of age and my family had disintegrated. My sons who were now adults didn't need me any more. My parents had been dead for nineteen years and it was time to begin a new life. It was time to re-invent myself.

Then I met Frank.

My sister introduced me to Frank one evening at a dinner party at her house. He was fascinating—a tall lean man with sparkling eyes who talked about things that I hadn't ever heard of. He was open and interested in world affairs and spoke of the concepts of making a difference in the world that we live in. He spoke of his cats and openly, right there in the lounge room, his eyes welled up with tears when he spoke of one he had lost. Wow! He was awake and fully living. I fell in love, hook, line and sinker.

Frank and I began a relationship and he introduced me to the concept of releasing the past emotional baggage with a process of breathing techniques called Rebirthing. I had started a whole new journey.

In the year that I met Frank and the twelve months that followed, I enrolled in fourteen weekend courses, several weeknight

courses and trained as a professional Rebirther/Breathworker. I became a course junkie. My mind was like a sponge and I was learning very fast from my observations of other course junkies that if the course material is not fully integrated into life, then all the courses and books in the world won't change a thing in my life. Weekend after weekend I would sit in course rooms and listen, learn, watch, and observe. I learned a great deal about the course junkie syndrome; after all, I was one!

I promised myself that I wasn't going to waste my opportunity to change the outcomes of my life. I was going to use and put into practice all my new learning. I had spent hundreds of hours in classrooms and workshops and tens of thousands of dollars in obtaining new knowledge; I wasn't going to waste it.

I began a Rebirthing practice. Life went along quite nicely. Frank and I got married after a few years and the children of our previous marriages seemed to be doing well. Along with the odd wave that life tends to give souls from time to time, our lives were sailing in the general direction of getting better and better.

I had changed my circle of friends and now I only surrounded myself with people who were on the path of personal growth and self-development. That group of friends was quite a small group. At the time, my experience, with those who had not yet chosen to travel the road of personal development, was that they thought that I was weird.

My realization about that now is that I probably was!

When one begins this spiritual journey, it's very easy to use jargon and give slight hints of disapproval if someone says something negative or nearly so. It's the egocentric, *I know something you don't know*, syndrome that would push most people away very fast. The *them and us* thinking has no place in spiritual community. We are all the same. Some have had the privilege of finding information before others; that is the only difference. It's up to the first-finders to demonstrate that this



change is available to everyone by showing how it works. Don't shove your newly-found information down the throats of people who don't want it.

My group of party friends had diminished. I wasn't working three jobs anymore but I was very busy with my Rebirthing/Breathwork practice and I began training other Rebirthers/Breathworkers.

The friends I now surround myself with knew all my secrets and I knew theirs. We were very close. We got together and had great dinners and supported each other and listened to the personal stories about each other's families and shared the confidences that close friends have with each other. Then one day it all stopped.

To this day I still have no idea what happened but it just all stopped. The entire group of friends stopped communicating with me. No phone calls, no messages, friends didn't return my calls, nothing. A couple of times one or the other would pick up the phone when I called, only to say that they had something that they were doing at the time and that they would phone me back. They never called back.

To say that I was upset would be a tragic understatement. All of my thoughts were devoted to what I must have said or what I must have done. I couldn't figure it out. I thought that we were close enough to be honest with each other. These people had all done personal development and had learned about telling the truth with compassion.

Day after day the emptiness and sadness set in. Frank could not console me. I had never experienced this level of grief and what felt like betrayal in my life. I spoke to other Rebirthers to try to get some clarity. I Rebirthed myself, did hours of clearing my mind, and nothing seemed to shift this wound on my heart. The pain in my heart became physical and thoughts of suicide flashed through my mind on a daily basis. If they, my friends, thought that

I was so bad that they couldn't communicate with me enough to even explain why I had been ostracized, maybe the planet would be better off without me. I now realized that the old co-dependent behaviour was still alive and thriving within me. I was not yet self-determined enough to care less about what others think about me, to stay in my own integrity, and to be 100 percent myself. What others thought about me mattered way too much. It was to the point that if they didn't like me anymore I would consider suicide. Wow, I can hardly believe now that I had ever thought like that!

As a consequence of all this turmoil, my Rebirthing practice suffered because, as a healer, I was an emotional mess. I couldn't be helpful to anyone else. I went to work in a department store to get out of the house every day, but I knew that was a temporary measure. My first love was Rebirthing and I would go back to it when I had my strength back. I just didn't know how long it would take to get that happy me back.

I was turning fifty soon and Frank thought that it would be a good idea to have a party for me. I was in too much grief and depression to have a party as the people I wanted to be there weren't speaking to me. Funny thing is that looking back on it, I did have other friends who we could have invited who would have been very happy to come and celebrate with me. But I wasn't interested in them. I was obsessed with those who had hurt me!

We took off on the motorbike instead of having a party and did a trip to the mountains interstate in Victoria where I began to heal my heart. Sitting on the back of a motorbike having the road pass underneath you at a considerable speed, smelling the grass, the new-mown hay or the wood fires from the homesteads has a way of putting life back into perspective. The air of the mountain forest has a scent to it that is unique and I found myself being overwhelmed by the true beauty and simplicity of nature.

Crying inside a motorbike helmet is a messy business. On that trip I did a lot of it and came home to my own heart.

After that trip I taught myself how to stop being depressed. I realized that I had been down so long that I was having trouble getting up again. Sadness and feeling low can be habit forming. It can become an addiction, a dependency.

My sadness had become such a part of my life that I had forgotten how to have a wonderful day. My mission now was to find a way to be happy and stay that way!

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