

Situational Depression: Sometimes an individual experiences life events that cause them to become stressed out. Excessive/prolonged stress and/or traumatic stressors can lead to chronic activation of the autonomic nervous system (hypothalamus, pituitary and adrenal glands) which produce stress hormones (adrenalin and cortisol). Excessive amounts of these hormones, over a prolonged period of time, can deplete neurotransmitters and produce depression symptoms.

Treatments for Situation-Induced Depression:

- Improve self-care immediately: Healthful eating, adequate sleep, and exercise.
- Avoid isolation. Ask others for help in dealing with situational stressors. Engage in activities that improve your sense of belong to something bigger than yourself.
- Ask your counselor for self-help materials on mindfulness, self-compassion and Tonglen meditations, practice daily.
- Stop/look/listen: When you have a physiological reaction, feel stressed, Stop and ask yourself, “Is there an identifiable danger here?” Look for effective ways to avoid this danger (if present) or to calm yourself (if no danger present). Listen to your thoughts and determine if your worries are relevant to the situation or just noise. Proceed appropriately.

Treatments that interrupt feelings of helplessness:

- Work with your counselor to identify life events and situational triggers that produce feelings of helplessness.
- Follow through on your obligations. Setting and keeping reasonable and realistic commitments promotes a feeling of success and competence.
- Look for inspiration and practice having positive/pleasurable experiences.
- Practice gratitude. Ask yourself, “What do I have that I’m grateful for and what is my contribution to making this happen?”

Start Where you Already Are:

- Identify what you are already doing to help yourself feel better, even if it is only temporary.
- Appreciate yourself as “good enough”. You would unlikely go around telling others what you don’t like about them. Stop telling yourself, and others, what you don’t like about yourself. Notice things you appreciate about yourself and write them down. Carry the list around with you. Spend less time comparing yourself to others.
- Make a list of your best strengths (hard worker, honest, kind, creative, disciplined, etc) and identify opportunities you have to use them in your everyday life.

My Strengths

Opportunities to use this strength