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Is Depression Beneficial?

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As unbelievable as this may sound, depression can have a variety of so-called benefits. However, we might not be at all aware of those benefits, and suffer in darkness.

As you now know, mood disorders might have had an adaptive role in the past. Even if depression is no longer adaptive, it still offers some benefits to those who experience it. Have you ever wondered what fuels YOUR depression?

The banner features the Explorable logo and the text "Quiz Time!". Below this, there are three quiz cards:

- Card 1: Image of red roller skates on a wooden deck. Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2
- Card 2: Image of a fan of colorful pencils. Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2
- Card 3: Image of a Ferris wheel at sunset. Quiz: Flags in Europe

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Subconscious Processes

Before we delve into a topic, which may seem bizarre or downright angering at first, it is important to establish a basis, by talking about a human being's subconscious processes.

You may have heard that the processes of our mind are relatively divided into conscious and subconscious. The former are those that we realize, contemplate and purposefully act upon.

On the other hand, the latter processes contain a myriad of factors, which have been forming ever since we were small children, and dictate our behavior without us realizing it.

According to a popular theory, the mind can be likened to an iceberg – only a fraction of the iceberg is above water, and these are our conscious processes. However, about 95% of the iceberg is underwater, which illustrates how largely important our subconsciousness is.

Subconsciousness and Depression

Have you ever met someone who kept saying that they hated their job, relationship, friendship, apartment, etc., but did nothing to change their circumstances?

One commonly accepted explanation for this phenomenon, is that even though consciously we do not feel good in a certain situation, its presence serves a subconscious purpose.

This may be a frustrating notion, when it comes to depression, but if you decide to think about it, you might reach useful insights. We are certainly not saying that you want to be depressed, or that you have somehow brought it on yourself. Not at all!

However, accepting the idea that depression might serve some sort of a subconscious purpose and satisfy a need you are not even aware of, would provide you with a new point of view. Additionally, you will have yet another tool for dealing with depression.

Please, keep an open, judgment-free mind as you read the following article.

Depression May Attract Support

Whenever we're faced with a difficult situation, like for example having to deal with depression, people around us tend to offer more sympathy and support. Maybe not everyone is sympathetic to your problems, but at least friends and family are.

Although having people you can rely on is crucial, most therapists agree that help should be provided only for a short period of time.

People who deal with depression must learn how to cope with their issues and become self-reliant once again. This can be achieved through behavioral activation, a practical technique, which will be discussed in detail later on.

Relieve Decision-Making

It is a commonly known fact that one of the most prominent symptoms of depression is one's difficulty making decisions. A few bad choices are enough to discourage any future attempts at getting a handle on life's difficult moments.

Friends and family might decide to help you, by making those decisions for you. Slowly but surely, depression will determine you to pass the responsibility of making decisions onto others. Why? Because it's always easier to let others decide for you, although it prevents you from living the life you want.

Making a decision implies spending time and energy on calculating risks and predicting future events. Furthermore, two of the main symptoms of depression are prolonged mental fatigue

and lack of motivation.

In that way, depression might serve a purpose by making life less strenuous, however it may also rob you of your personal dreams and desires.

It Provides a “Safe Space”

This benefit is actually a reminiscence of what depression meant for our ancestors. It was a mechanism designed to keep people out of harm's way, by forcing them to retreat, reheal and refocus.

A lead impulse of depression is to retreat. Our biased perception transforms the world into a dark place, filled with danger, loneliness, hopelessness and disappointment.

In order to achieve some sense of comfort, we may create our own small universe, where we would feel safe. Since a feeling of being secure and protected may be very comfortable, why would we want to leave this comfort zone?

What we might not understand is that the world is just as it was before. The only thing that differs is our perception, which is now under the influence of negative emotions and disturbing thoughts.

What about YOU?

Leaving aside all the pain and suffering that it causes, have you ever wondered what depression really means to you?

This is a very tough question, but try to consider what sort of benefits (material, social, physical, psychological) depression might provide for your subconsciousness.

Stepping out of one's comfort zone is always very difficult, but it will certainly help you cope with depression in a healthy way, as well as achieve your goals.

Once you observe your depression more in-depth, remember that whatever benefits depression may bring, the costs are always higher.

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