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# The Deception of Depression: How a Melancholy Mood Can Sink a Marriage

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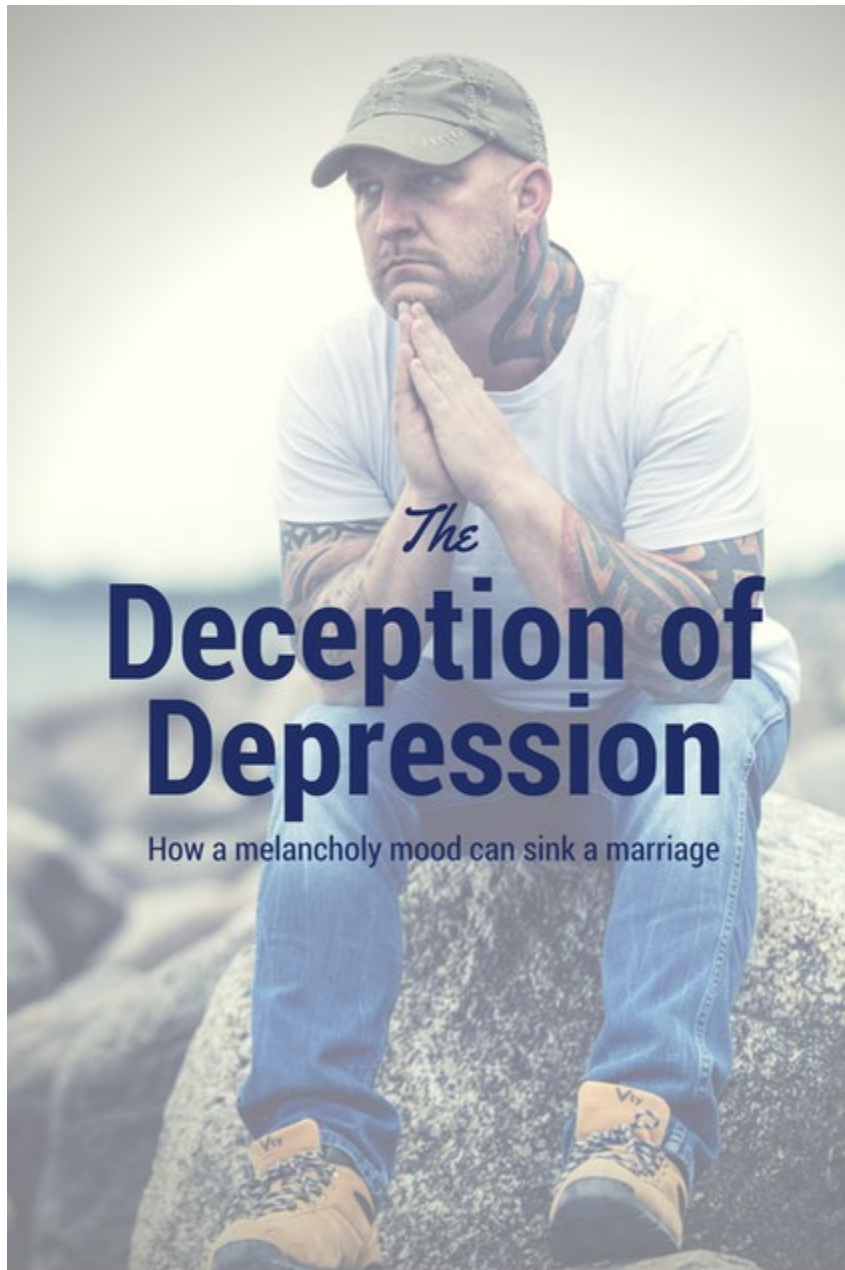
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## The Deception of Depression: How a Melancholy Mood Can Sink a Marriage

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Logan was a doctoral student studying ancient Italian poetry. His life was filled with shelves of old books and a teaching job where he was supposed to inspire lethargic freshmen. His doctoral adviser was difficult and inconsistent, and Logan was a people-

pleaser who worried that his adviser and students were always upset with him. He came to see me at the request of his wife, Yuko, who was starting to panic at his change in personality. "He used to be cheerful, fun-loving, and interested in his work," she said. "Now he is a zombie. He goes through the motions and doesn't talk to me, or anyone. He comes home and goes to bed and then shuffles off in the morning. Even when he is in front of the computer or with a book he isn't engaged with it. He hasn't paid any attention to me in ages."

When we first met, Logan was hunched in his chair like he was trying to disappear. His voice was small and weak, and he listed so many things that were overwhelming him, I couldn't keep track of them. Life was squeezing him, and he was making whimpering noises.

### ***The Look of Depression***

Logan was seriously depressed. Changes in sleeping and eating? Check. Loss of interest in activities he used to like? Check. Feelings of guilt? Nonstop. And so on. He spoke in self-defeating terms: "I am dumb, why did I think I could do this? I am a disappointment to Yuko." And he described intense emotional pain and suicidal thoughts: "I will never finish and my family will be better off without me." Clearly his pain was killing both him and his marriage.

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A man with a toothache cannot be in love, and it is the same with emotional hurt. A throbbing ache in the soul leaves little for anything else.



### ***Depression and Relationships***

Depression takes the relationship down with the victim. Many studies show how this happens. For starters, depressed people often exude waves of negativity, which is hard for a partner to deal with. They also make more bad choices when depressed, like driving drunk or saying mean things. Non-depressed partners often worry or feel guilty for what is happening. One study found when a person looks at their depressed partner's face, it causes a depressed reaction in their own brain. It is stressful to see another in pain, and this feeds a vicious cycle. When Yuko would become upset, it would trigger Logan's distorted perceptions. He saw her emotion as hostile, even when it wasn't. He assumed she became upset because she hated him, when the reality was that she was worrying.

The cycle continues as the depressed partner is consumed by their pain and can't feel

affection or attend to the other person. When someone is distressed, they lose touch with their intuition and can't understand others' expressions or body language. The pain takes all the focus. There is a proverb that says a man with a toothache cannot be in love, and it is the same with emotional hurt. A throbbing ache in the soul leaves little for anything else.

Logan demonstrated many altered, depressed perceptions. He “knew” his students thought he was a horrible teacher, when the reality was that most were tired and not into poetry. His melancholy mood amplified his self-criticism, and his words became irrational and harsh.

Fortunately, therapy, better self-care and open communication with Yuko helped Logan rebound. After his depression lifted, he saw things more clearly, was less inclined to extreme negativity, and his hope returned that he could succeed in his studies and his relationship. If you or someone you love is struggling, reach out for help. A relationship can be a healing force, and partners can work to find resources and feel better together.

Adapted from the upcoming book, *Love Me True: Overcoming the Surprising Ways we Deceive in Relationships*.

Cedar Fort Publishing, 2016

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