

# THE DEPRESSION DAGGER

Take This Into Battle



# THE BATTLE PLAN

1. Introduction

2. You Are Normal

3. The Dance

4. The Disruption

5. The Dwelling

6. The Directive

7. The Devotion

8. The Divine

9. The Discipline

10. About The Author

# INTRODUCTION

I am not a professor or a doctor. I am not a therapist, psychiatrist, mental health professional, nor did I get a degree in psychology. I am not here to tell you to "just smile" and "cheer up".

While I am not any of that, there's one thing I am...

## **A humble student of depression.**

Like millions of people, I was on anti-depressants. Mental health issues run through my family, and I've dealt with severe depression for many years. At 15, I was admitted into the psych ward.

I've lived through what depression has done to my life, have seen it ravage the lives of people I care about, and got fed up. I lost 100 pounds, moved 2,100 miles, and set out to build a better future.

However, this book is not about me. This is about you.

Depression is a demon, ready to pounce at any moment. It has no rhyme or reason. Often, it strikes when you least expect it. It is a cloud of despair, devoid of hope, empty of possibilities. It casts no judgement, it spares no soul.

## **It is here to fuck your shit up.**

I wrote this to help others tackle this demon when it makes itself known. The chapters are short, and the advice is swift. It is meant to be revisited. There is no magic bullet, special pill, or easy cure. There is only forward motion.

If you are currently experiencing suicidal thoughts, please reach out and talk to someone. You will not be weird and you are not stupid for doing so. Someone, I promise, will listen. And if you believe even for a second that you are alone, the following will remind you that you are far from it.

# YOU ARE NORMAL

Depression rips away any feeling of connectedness. It pushes you away from people you care about, and tricks you into believing that this is a unique fight, one that no one else can relate to or understand.

Here's the truth: **Your depression is not unique.** Your depression is not special. Your depression is not some never-before-seen flavor. It is as normal as getting dressed in the morning and heading into work.

The reason it seems that way is because most people don't talk about it. It's seen as a sign of weakness and a critical flaw. If you're depressed, something is wrong with you, right?

Well, I hate to burst any bubbles, but even taking depression out of the picture, you're still pretty fucked up! And that's okay. There are over 7 billion people on this planet, and none of us fit into an idyllic picture.

The news and social media may paint that picture, but bust out the scraper, and you uncover a different story. An entire series of books could be written on incredibly successful people who deal with depression, but we'll just focus on one person for the sake of brevity.

While I'm still not 100% certain this person won't become a super villain as he has the perfect story arc for it, his name is Elon Musk. If you're not familiar with Mr. Musk, here are three companies he is heavily involved in: Tesla. SpaceX. SolarCity (now part of Tesla).

From making space travel and exploration more possible to blanketing our roads with safer self-driving, more eco-friendly vehicles, he has amassed a well-deserved net worth of nearly \$12 billion.

But like the myth of the phoenix, it must become ash before it can rise again. Musk deals with depression, was bullied as a kid, fired as CEO of PayPal, lost a son, and to this day, is constantly told that he cannot do something.

Elon got to where he is today by having an insatiable hunger for something greater, and asking better questions that lead to better answers. From these questions, solutions can be created.

## **He chooses to not accept the current state.**

He chooses a path forward (and upward one could say), working on something greater than himself. Right this very moment, you have the same power.

## **While depression is not always a choice, how you deal with it absolutely is.**

Will you let depression control your life or will you throw on your finest clothes and hit up the dance floor?

That is the question.

# THE DANCE

When depression knocks, we don't want to answer. We try, hard as we might, to not open the door. We feel the immovable weight blanketed over us, wishing it to go away so we could just get on with our day.

We push it away, and tell ourselves that if we ignore it, it'll go away. Eventually, it does, but it always comes back. Next time, it won't just knock.

## It will pound and pound.

At this point, we have already lost. It becomes impossible to ignore. We give up and give in. Maybe it visits for a few hours. Maybe it stays for a few days, eating everything in your house. Maybe it moves in, becoming a really shitty roommate (and still eating your stuff).

## The more we push depression away, the more it pushes back.

Early on, we are programmed to suppress it. But this act of suppression only intensifies it. It grows stronger and stronger until it cannot be defeated.

We should not look to end our depression. It is a natural part of our lives that cannot be cast away forever. Instead, we should look to move through our depression. We should stare at it straight on, acknowledging its presence.

We should accept that it is a part of us, but does not define us. We should accept that it feeds off our inner fears and doubts, but that we can create a different story.

Instead of pushing it away, we should grip on tight. We should let it know that we are not afraid, and **we are going to tear up the fucking dance floor** whether it wants to or not.

# THE DISRUPTION

We live in the greatest time in human history. We have access to more opportunities, more resources, and thanks to social media, more people and experiences than ever before.

**However, despite being more connected than ever before, many of us couldn't feel more disconnected.**

According to a study from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, the more time young adults (aged 19-32) spend on social media, the higher the likelihood of them being depressed.

Earlier research from the likes (pun intended) of Carnegie Mellon found that interacting with others online increased feelings of bonding, and decreased feelings of loneliness. That flipped though when people just consumed content and did not interact.

Social media, if cultivated effectively, can provide incredible benefits to not only one's personal life, but professional life as well. Unfortunately, us human beings tend to gravitate more towards the negative.

How many times have you hopped on Facebook only to get pulled into a never-ending stream of news and gossip? How many times have you planned to "just check on things", and end up wasting an hour or more?

The disruption from your reality may feel good at the time, but have you ever taken a step back to analyze just how it influences your mood? Have you ever considered that your current use of social media may actually be affecting your mental health?

It's okay to "miss out". It's okay to not engage in a discussion that wastes precious time you could be putting towards something more productive and positive. It's okay to not Instagram every single thing you eat.

It's okay to not broadcast every waking moment on Snapchat. It's okay to be alone with your thoughts and in the moment **with the people right in front of you in real life**. In fact, it should be demanded.

We're quick to broadcast this constructed fairy tale of how awesome our lives are, yet many of us are living an internal nightmare. The late and great Jim Rohn said, "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with." He also said this well before the Internet was a thing.

**Today, I'd tweak this to say that you are the average of those you interact with most.**

If a lot of what's being shared by people you are connected with is negative, you're likely going to lean that way. And because of that, you're going to have way more bad days than good.

P.S. **This includes anything you talk about and focus on** It's not always "them".

Obviously, you can't control everything that scrolls across your feed, but you can take steps to greatly minimize it. Clean things up, cut things back, and watch how your mood transforms. Don't be afraid to unfriend and unfollow, to be a more positive force in the world.

**Be afraid not to.**



# THE DWELLING

The past may be forever behind us, but it's often right in front of us. The past shapes us into who we are and who we become. It's a bunch of ones and zeros of code, through years of programming, create a unique piece of software.

That software is the operating system for life, better known as the mind. The past is where we can find our core beliefs and habits, which shape our lives and how we maneuver through it now.

It's where we relive what could have been, and what we should or could have done differently.

Right now, you're telling yourself a story, one that started many years ago. It was created from a string of moments, good and bad, that have shaped your identity. Your story is your personality, what makes you, well, you.

Your story is your fears, vices, and indiscretions. Your story, ultimately, is the action or lack of that you take in living your life.

To better move through our depression, we must accept that the past is exactly where it should be: in the past. That we can never, ever change it, and no matter what you believe, it happened for a reason.

**To develop us into smarter, stronger, more understanding, better prepared people.**

Dwell if you want, but realize that it's doing nothing more than causing you more pain, pain that should be left in the past.

**All that exists and matters is right now.  
Everything else is hypothetical.**

# THE DIRECTIVE

A plan is only as good as the action you take. Depression wants to keep you pinned down, and to submit. It wants you to embrace it as your new king. But as we've already established, we will not accept it as our fate.

Instead, we will implement The Directive.

The Directive is not a complicated checklist, or sophisticated system. It is comprised of three simple steps that anyone, anywhere, can follow.

## Step 1: Do Your Routine

In layman's terms, get your ass out of bed. I know how it feels, the weight of the world smothering you. I know your bed is a safe, comfortable zone that, with sleep, can help you forget the pain that's ripping your soul to shreds.

No matter the case, you must move. You must stand up and face the day with bright eyes and a warrior spirit. You must dance. Even if your routine is as meaningless as making breakfast and throwing laundry in the washer, sticking to a routine will cultivate meaning.

## Step 2: Be Positively Productive

Whatever mind state you're in, you're going to gravitate towards similar things.

Stop paying attention to the news. Again, this is all about forward, positive motion. We are not going backwards, retreating into the haze that we know will only hinder us, not help us.

Laughter is incredibly helpful. Look up some of your favorite comedians on YouTube, and watch a few clips. Do meditation. Chat with someone you love. Listen to some awesome music. Get the blood pumping with a workout. Knock out that thing you keep putting off (you know what it is). Write about something that's interesting to you. Read a book. Learn a new skill. Play with your pet.

## Step 3: Get Into Nature

A study from the American Journal Of Preventive Medicine found that even just light walking helped reduce depression by 47%. Like your comfy bed, the confines of your walls help to shield you from what's on the other side.

But it is what's on the other side that will help you. If there is a park, walk to it. If there is a trail, hike it. If there are woods, say what's up to the trees. If there is a beach, what the hell are you waiting for!?

Even if you live in a concrete jungle, I guarantee there are interesting things around you. Whenever I'm visiting a new place, I like to do a thing that I call "freestyling", which is where I just set out with no clear direction or agenda.

I just go wherever my legs lead me. It leads to finding all sorts of cool things, and having experiences I wouldn't have otherwise. Of course, some of those treks have ended me up in questionable areas, but I haven't been murdered. Yet.

You don't have to wait to "freestyle" the next time you travel. You can do this right now in your own neighborhood!

# THE DEVOTION

Chances are, as someone reading this, you've questioned the purpose of your life more times than you can count. You've wondered what's the meaning of it, where you fit in the world, and if you can ever chisel out a spot.

You consider if you are destined for living an unremarkable, forgettable life, or one of absolute greatness. You tell yourself things will get better, they always do, but deep down inside, you question it.

You poke and prod, sniffle and scrounge for the answer. Little did you know, the answer has always been right in front of you. Things that excite us, thrill us, make us happy and feel connected, are what gives us a sense of purpose. You see, your purpose does not rest in doing a specific thing.

**Your purpose is how in which you live your life and the impact you make along the way.**

Far too often, we attach it to a thing, a thing that is constantly growing and evolving. We change jobs, we switch careers, we focus on something else.

Like the 6,130,000 "cat in a box" videos on YouTube, we try packing ourselves into a cardboard box, yet we are constantly taking on new skills and experiences.

You should not define yourself by what merely pays the bills. You are the combination of your passions. Should you not have any passions, there's a bright world out there waiting for you to join it.

Your new purpose, should you choose to devote yourself to it, is this:

**Do more of what I love and be less afraid of the reactions to it.**

That is all. And as one of my favorite writers, James Altucher has said, be 1% better each day. You can do a measly 1%, right?

# THE DIVINE

You must accept Jesus Christ as your lord and savior. Just kidding. This is not about what you must believe in. Whether you're a Christian, Catholic, Muslim, Mormon, Practicing Jew, Buddhist, Hindu, Satanist, Atheist, Agnostic or Pastafarian (look this one up), it doesn't matter.

The Divine is not necessarily an all seeing, all powerful entity. It can be, of course, depending on your flavor of religion or lack thereof, but a way of perceiving the world around us.

As you are all too aware, depression is a very selfish thing. It lures us into a trap of self doubt, frustration, and pain. But like a radio, at that moment, the self is tuned into the wrong station.

You see, The Divine is in everything. We are all, in some way, connected. We are all part of the same experience, just moving through it in a different way.

## **When we look beyond ourselves rather than getting lost in ourselves, shifts happen.**

We realize that, while our problems are very real, they are just a glimmer of what we all are experiencing as a whole.

We realize that, while a problem appears to be a big deal, years later when looking back, it really wasn't a big deal at all.

We realize that, while we were so focused on searching for happiness, the best way to find it was positively impacting others.

## **Who can you help and how can you make a difference today?**

Because believe me, you can.

# THE DISCIPLINE

We have reached the end. Or, to eat up one of the great clichés, this is just the beginning. We've covered that depression has no rhyme or reason. It can strike whenever, wherever.

We've reminded ourselves that while it feels like a lonely battle, many more are battling along right there with us. We've stressed the importance of being in better control of what we pay attention to online, and who we spend the most time with.

We've talked about The Dwelling, and to move forward into the future, we must leave behind the past. We've outlined The Directive, a simple but powerful way to loosen the chains of depression. We've helped to answer what is your purpose, and how to get outside of the suffering that depression causes.

All of this is great, but none of it will matter without The Discipline. For when depression strikes, you will not sit back and take it.

## **You will act.**

You will come back to this for inspiration, for that spark to lighting the fire of forward motion. You will not accept mediocrity. You will command greatness.

You will, despite the challenges, work on creating a better you. You will stop making excuses, and end your complaints. You will ask better questions and seek out the answers.

## **You will not allow depression to control you.**

## **You will make it your bitch.**

And I will be right there fighting with you.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Mike Stenger is copywriter based out of San Diego.  
He once had a water balloon fight indoors.

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