

DEPRESSION

Also in the Phoenix Introductions series

Jung: An Introduction
by Ann Casement

DEPRESSION

An Introduction

Barbara Dowds



PHOENIX
PUBLISHING HOUSE
firing the mind

First published in 2021 by
Phoenix Publishing House Ltd
62 Bucknell Road
Bicester
Oxfordshire OX26 2DS

Copyright © 2021 by Barbara Dowds

The right of Barbara Dowds to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with §§ 77 and 78 of the Copyright Design and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A C.I.P. for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN-13: 978-1-912691-79-1

Typeset by Medlar Publishing Solutions Pvt Ltd, India



www.firingthemind.com

Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
About the author	ix
Foreword <i>by Roz Carroll</i>	xi
Preface	xiii

Part I: Incidence, causes, and consequences of depression

Introduction to Part I	3
<i>CHAPTER 1</i>	
An anatomy of depression	5
<i>CHAPTER 2</i>	
Biological causes and consequences	23
<i>CHAPTER 3</i>	
An application of neuroscience	41
<i>CHAPTER 4</i>	
Childhood origins and adult triggers	53

Part II: Psychotherapy: mobilisation and meaning

Introduction to Part II	77
<i>CHAPTER 5</i>	
The message from within: moving towards authenticity	79
<i>CHAPTER 6</i>	
The therapeutic challenges of stuck mood	91
<i>CHAPTER 7</i>	
Repairing the self, building resilience	105
<i>CHAPTER 8</i>	
Brigid's story	123
Final thoughts	133
Glossary	135
References	139
Index	155

Acknowledgements

As always, my deepest thanks go to Peter Labanyi for big and small things: for reading the manuscript and making suggestions, for translating the lines from Rilke, and for all the happiness he has brought me.

I am indebted to the authors of some recent key texts which I have cited copiously: they have saved me a lot of research and reduced my word count as a result of citing them rather than the primary references within their books:

Dana, D. (2018). *The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Dowds, B. (2018). *Depression and the Erosion of the Self in Late Modernity*. London: Routledge.

Gotlib, I. H., & Hammen, C. L. (Eds.) (2014). *Handbook of Depression* (3rd edn). New York: Guilford.

Hammen, C., & Watkins, E. (2018). *Depression* (3rd edn). London: Routledge.

Maletic, V., & Raison, C. (2017). *The New Mind–Body Science of Depression*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Porges, S., & Dana, D. (Eds.) (2018). *Clinical Applications of the Polyvagal Theory*. New York: W. W. Norton.

These books can serve as further reading on the psychology (Gotlib & Hammen; Hammen & Watkins) and biology (Maletic & Raison) of depression, and the application of the polyvagal theory to therapy (Dana; Porges & Dana). My own previous book (Dowds, 2018) explores the interactions between the societal, psychodynamic, existential, and biological dimensions of depression as these manifest in deformations of the contemporary self.

About the author

Barbara Dowds is a humanistic and integrative psychotherapist, supervisor, and trainer, and lives near Dublin. She is author of *Beyond the Frustrated Self* (Karnac, 2014) and *Depression and the Erosion of the Self in Late Modernity* (Routledge, 2018). In a previous life, she was a university lecturer and researcher in molecular biology.

Foreword

The plainness of *Depression: An Introduction* as a title belies the freshness, rigour, and creative synthesis of up-to-date thinking in this book. Both broad and deep in perspective, it offers a succinct examination of the origins of depression as an outcome of genetic and attachment-based developmental patterns in a social, cultural, and economic context. Barbara Dowds does justice to the complexity of depression as a multi-faceted phenomenon and articulates the typical triggers and patterns that occur over the lifespan. This lays the ground for rich clinical illustration of the flexible holistic skills needed to work with anxious and depressed clients.

The book's coherence comes from Dowds' integration of extensive clinical experience and thorough knowledge of current research. The real achievement of the book is to bring so much knowledge into a clear discussion without ever over-simplifying the issues. Social and political change, environmental risks, and even the state of gut flora are linked to the overall model.

Rarely do we read about depression in a way that takes into account and balances childhood origins of depression with triggers in adult life that stretches to include vast social, political, and technological change.

I applaud the urgency, specificity, and prescience of Dowds' reflections on our current political and social climate and its impact on mental health.

Depression: An Introduction is a great primer for students of therapy as well as experienced practitioners who want to grasp how depression is now understood from the consensus of interdisciplinary thinking covering medical, neuroscientific, attachment-based, psychoanalytic, body-centred, and humanistic research and theory.

This is a truly fascinating read and will be of great interest to anyone who really wants to understand what depression is.

Roz Carroll

Co-editor with Jane Ryan of *What is Normal?
Psychotherapists Explore the Question* (Confer, 2020)

Preface

Do we really need another book on depression? I believe there is a place for an introduction that pulls together some of the more specialised work on the topic, presents an overview of the causes, and discusses how practitioners can tackle some of the challenges of treating this most recalcitrant and painful of conditions. Depression is very common and increasing; the scientific basis of our knowledge is constantly expanding; what we think of as a single malady in fact has multiple aetiologies; what are categorised as different psychopathologies are turning out to be genetically related; moreover, depression repeats in episodes which become increasingly resistant to treatment. Finally—and most relevant in a book for psychotherapists—depression is notoriously difficult to work with. While CBT is touted as the treatment of choice and indeed is effective in the short term, its impact is rapidly lost after treatment ceases. This is hardly surprising, since its aim is relief of symptoms rather than tackling the underlying relational and developmental problems. Most of the literature on counselling and psychotherapy for depression comes from a CBT orientation, so there is a case for a broader perspective that engages with both the blocks to treatment and what form longer-term solutions might take.

Chapter 1 contains an overview of evolutionary theories, diagnostic criteria, demographics, and depression through the lifespan. The remainder of Part I examines the causes, course, and consequences of depression in terms of a biological perspective (Chapters 2 and 3); and environmental/developmental contributions (Chapter 4).

Part II focuses on psychotherapeutic approaches. Examined are: what the client can learn from their depression (Chapter 5); blocks to therapeutic engagement and ways of working with such resistance (Chapter 6); psychodynamic/relational approaches for insecure attachment, loss, fragile self, as well as body psychotherapies for working with stress and trauma (Chapter 7); and a case study (Chapter 8). To conclude, there are some Final Thoughts around the theme of hope.