

# Stress Bytes Newsletter

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**"WHEN STRESS BITES, BITE BACK!"**

THE NEWSLETTER OF ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, PH.D.  
LICENSED CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR.

## The Secret to a Productive Depression

I learned a long time ago that the secret to having a productive depression is approaching it correctly and with perspective. Let me qualify this by saying that the type of depression I'm talking about is what's known as a reactive or situational depression. This is different than a clinical depression. A reactive/situational depression is caused by one's conscious or unconscious reaction to life events or situations, such as career or marital problems, death or divorce, or major life transitions. In other words, in a reactive depression life is temporarily tough and your depression is a natural reaction to that situation. If life kicked you in the gut or gave you more than you can handle, a reactive depression is nature's way of getting a time to recoup and regroup.

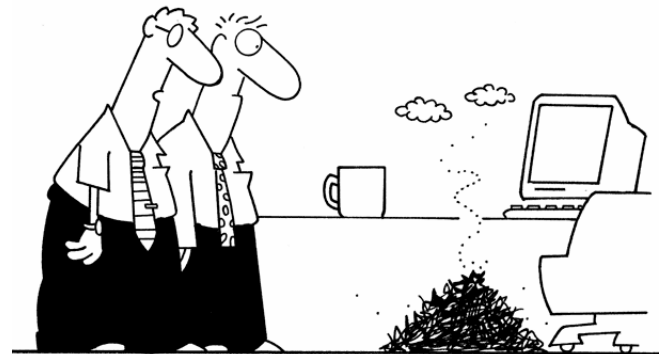
On the other hand, if life is fine and you're still depressed or have "always" been depressed and it doesn't let up, it's likely you have a clinical depression. In simple terms, your brain

chemistry is out of whack. This occurs because it "runs in the family" or because an untreated reactive depression took up permanent residence. I see this a lot with people who have been abused as children. In the case of clinical depression, medication is often the only thing that will start to shift the mood. Counseling will help once the mood lifting.

So let's talk about the ways to handle a reactive depression and make it into productive depression. First, don't fight against it and pretend you're fine. That will prolong it. Depression slows us down on purpose. One way to look at it is as an inner call to a personal reflective time. It's time to withdraw from the world, your usual activities and delve into an exploration of the inner realm. I find a metaphor of descent and return helpful when thinking about reactive depression. Something in your life is passing away to make room for something new to come. What is required of you is

to hold vigil, listened, wait, mourn, and gnash teeth for what is dying while watching with hope and expectation for what is about to into your life. Depression is a "descent into the underworld" like in the myth of Persephone who was abducted by Hades, Lord of the Underworld, and who also returned from that dissent with great wisdom that she shared in the upperworld.

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**"She was on vacation for three weeks, but burned up on re-entry."**

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**Annette Vaillancourt, Ph.D.**

Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor

231 W. Main, 2W  
Carbondale, IL 62901

Phone: 618-549-5935

[www.GotStressGetHelp.com](http://www.GotStressGetHelp.com)

E-mail: [DrAnnette@Hughes.net](mailto:DrAnnette@Hughes.net)

## The Secret to a Productive Depression—cont'd

The second part of having a productive depression is to watch for the signs of what's trying to come into your life. These signs may arise spontaneously in dreams or through meaningful events called synchronicities. You can use art to evoke unconscious material or guidance. Try a drawing or doodling with no attempt to create or make something art-worthy. Get a set of colored pens or pencils and a sketchbook and draw what you're feeling. Like a dream, your drawings may not "make sense" at conscious level, but if you post them where you can see them, they will work on you. Or share them with a friend or your therapist. Tell the story of the drawing and ask for feedback from others.

If you are more kinesthetic than visual, try dancing or moving your body to explore and express your depressive feelings. Select music that fits your mood or dance without music. Gabrielle Roth, creator of The Five Rhythms and author of "Sweat Your Prayers," uses music and free-form dance to evoke catharsis and transformation at a body level.

If you slow down, descend into the unconscious, pay attention, consciously evoke the wisdom from the unconscious, eventually you'll return to the upper world. Gradually you will return to feeling normal -- having acquired the wisdom and confidence that will help you move into the next age of your life. Confidence comes with knowing the path of descent and return and the process -- should you have to travel that way again.



**“This job has cost me my health, my family,  
and my soul. Can I get a receipt?”**

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## Am I Depressed?

1. Do you feel sad, blue, unhappy or "down in the dumps"?  
A. Never B. Rarely C. Sometimes D. Very Often E. Most of the time
  
2. Do you feel tired, having little energy, unable to concentrate?  
A. Never B. Rarely C. Sometimes D. Very Often E. Most of the time
  
3. Do you feel uneasy, restless or irritable?  
A. Never B. Rarely C. Sometimes D. Very Often E. Most of the time
  
4. Do you have trouble sleeping or eating (too little or too much)?  
A. Never B. Rarely C. Sometimes D. Very Often E. Most of the time
  
5. Do you feel that you are not enjoying the activities that you used to?  
A. Never B. Rarely C. Sometimes D. Very Often E. Most of the time
  
6. Do you feel that you lost interest in sex or experiencing sexual difficulties?  
A. Never B. Rarely C. Sometimes D. Very Often E. Most of the time
  
7. Do you feel that it takes you longer than before to make decisions or unable to concentrate?  
A. Never B. Rarely C. Sometimes D. Very Often E. Most of the time
  
8. Do you feel inadequate, like a failure or that nobody likes you anymore?  
A. Never B. Rarely C. Sometimes D. Very Often E. Most of the time
  
9. Do you feel guilty without a rational reason, or put yourself down?  
A. Never B. Rarely C. Sometimes D. Very Often E. Most of the time
  
10. Do you feel that things always go or will go wrong no matter how hard you try?  
A. Never B. Rarely C. Sometimes D. Very Often E. Most of the time E. Most of the time

If you answered "Most of the time" to the majority of these questions, it indicates that you might need an evaluation for clinical depression.

**Annette Vaillancourt, Ph.D.**  
**Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor**

Schwartz Building  
231 W. Main, 2W  
Carbondale, IL 62901

Phone: 618-549-5935  
E-mail: [DrAnnette@hughes.net](mailto:DrAnnette@hughes.net)



***The Stress Doctor is IN!!!***

IN ADDITION TO MY OTHER  
N U M E R O U S  
ACQUAINTANCES, I HAVE  
ONE MORE INTIMATE  
C O N F I D A N T . M Y  
DEPRESSION IS THE MOST  
FAITHFUL MISTRESS I HAVE  
KNOWN -- NO WONDER,  
THEN, THAT I RETURN THE  
L O V E . - S O R E N  
KIERKEGAARD

THE BEST CURE FOR  
WORRY, DEPRESSION,  
MELANCHOLY, BROODING,  
IS TO GO DELIBERATELY  
FORTH AND TRY TO LIFT  
WITH ONE'S SYMPATHY THE  
GLOOM OF SOMEBODY  
ELSE. - ARNOLD BENNETT

REMEMBER THAT THERE IS  
NOTHING STABLE IN  
H U M A N A F F A I R S ;  
THEREFORE AVOID UNDUE  
ELATION IN PROSPERITY,  
OR UNDUE DEPRESSION IN  
ADVERSITY.  
SOCRATES



**"I've developed a stress management program based  
on the Shut Up And Stop Whining Principle."**

**ANNETTE VAILLANCOURT, PH.D.**

LICENSED CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

- 16 years experience gently helping individuals, couples and groups resolve personal problems, manage stress, and reach their full potential.
- Specializing in Women's Issues and Stress Management
- Emotional Freedom Technique

Call (618) 549-5935 to set up an appointment

## **Books to Inspire— The Secret by Rhonda Byrne**

Fragments of a Great Secret have been found in the oral traditions, in literature, in religions and philosophies throughout the centuries. For the first time, all the pieces of The Secret come together in an incredible revelation that will be life-transforming for all who experience it.

In this book, you'll learn how to use The Secret in every aspect of your life -- money, health, relationships, happiness, and in every interaction you have in the world. You'll begin to understand the hidden, untapped power that's within you, and this revelation can bring joy to every aspect of your life.

The Secret contains wisdom from modern-day teachers -- men and women who have used it to achieve health, wealth, and happiness. By applying the knowledge of The Secret, they bring to light compelling stories of eradicating disease, acquiring massive wealth, overcoming obstacles, and achieving what many would regard as impossible.