

Depression & Spirituality

*“When I said, ‘My foot is slipping,’ your love, O Lord, supported me.
When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul.”
-- Psalm 94: 18-19*

During periods of depression, we may feel betrayal or abandonment from God. We may then turn away from God, and away from nurturing our soul. Or we may look to our “false self oriented God” and become harshly critical or punitive of ourselves, perhaps feeling that depression is somehow sinful or a punishment from God.

Our spirituality plays an important role in coping with issues of depression. To nurture our soul, we look to develop healthy aspects of spirituality, or those which come from our “core self oriented God.” In this image, God is positive, loving, forgiving, comforting, and protecting, albeit challenging us in gentle ways. God speaks through our heart, rather than our conscience and uses a language of love to counter those negative voices of depression. A healthy spirituality can provide a meaningful belief and sense of purpose in the world, help us make sense of our struggles, and connect us to a supportive community with shared values.

Compare the values of a healthy vs. unhealthy spirituality. Recognize that our struggles, including depression, may lead us towards the unhealthy practices. Look for ways to nurture your spirituality along the healthy path.

<i>Healthy Spirituality</i>	<i>Unhealthy Spirituality</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Complements & enhances other aspects of the self and soul, e.g., physical, mental, emotional, through prayer, journaling, artwork, etc. ◆ Involves an open, flexible, investigatory process ◆ Helps the person’s spirituality grow and evolve beyond any particular people, group, or practices ◆ Allow person to grow beyond their own ego, or false self ◆ Promotes growth in healthy, social relationships ◆ Deepens capacity to love, serve, and care ◆ Does not harm self or others physically, mentally, emotionally, or spiritually 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Avoids or interferes with other aspects of the self and soul, e.g., an escape from painful feelings or insights ◆ Pursued in rigid, legalistic, or secretive ways ◆ Leaves the person dependent on a person, group, or practice ◆ Tied to goals of ego mastery or false self-inflation ◆ Impedes growth in relationships, e.g., promotes isolation or alienation ◆ Leaves person more self-centered, grandiose, or controlling ◆ Causes harm or damage to self or others

Adapted from *But Where is God? Psychotherapy and the Religious Search*. John C. Robinson, Ph.D. Nova Science Publishers, 1999 (Troitsa Books).

The following book is an excellent companion for nurturing along the spiritual journey:
Everyday Simplicity: A Practical Guide to Spiritual Growth. Robert J. Wicks. Sorin Books: Notre Dame, IN. 2000.