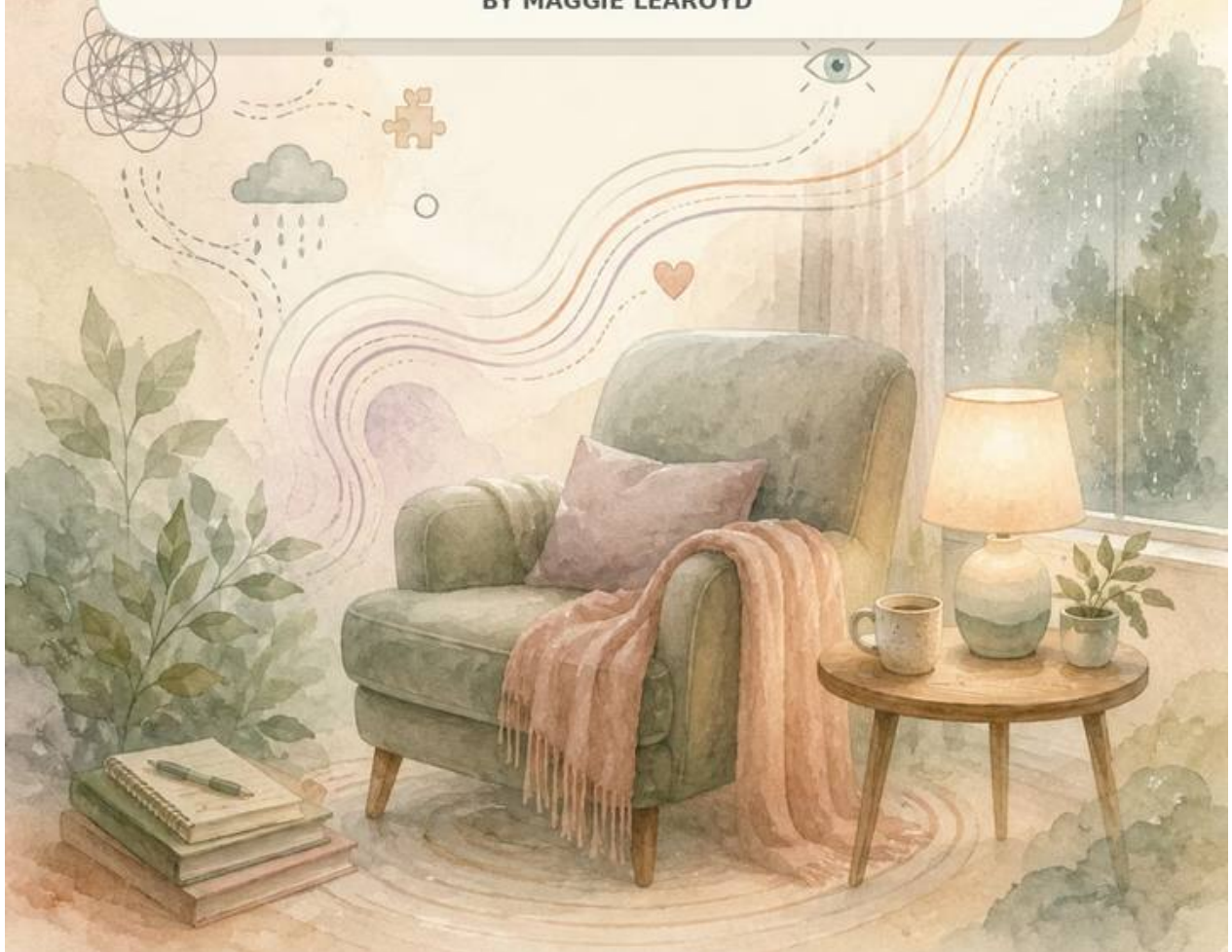


UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION · ARTICLE 1

WHY DO I FEEL LIKE THIS?

A COMPASSIONATE EXPLORATION

BY MAGGIE LEAROYD



Introduction

If you've found yourself asking, "Why do I feel like this?", you're not alone. It's often one of the first questions people ask when they're struggling with depression. You may not be able to point to a single reason for how you're feeling. Perhaps life looks "fine" from the outside, yet inside you feel disconnected, exhausted or unlike yourself.

Depression can leave people questioning who they are, why everyday life feels so difficult and whether they will ever feel better. These thoughts can feel frightening, especially if you've never experienced depression before. The good news is that there are understandable reasons why depression affects us in the way it does, and understanding those reasons can be the first step towards recovery.

Depression Is More Than Feeling Sad

Many people think depression is simply feeling very sad, but it is much more than that. It is a recognised mental health condition that can affect your emotions, thoughts, behaviour and physical wellbeing.

Some people experience overwhelming sadness, while others describe feeling emotionally numb, empty or disconnected from the world around them. You may still laugh at a joke or smile during a conversation, yet feel as though you're only going through the motions. Depression doesn't always look the way people expect it to.

Unlike sadness, which usually eases with time or changes as circumstances improve, depression often lingers. It can make everyday activities feel overwhelming and reduce your ability to experience pleasure, even from things you once loved.

Why Does Depression Happen?

There is rarely one single cause of depression. Instead, it usually develops through a combination of biological, psychological and social factors.

Biologically, changes in brain chemistry, stress hormones and the way different parts of the brain communicate with one another can influence mood, motivation and energy. Depression is not caused by a simple "chemical imbalance," but brain function can change in ways that make it harder to regulate emotions and respond to positive experiences.

Psychologically, persistent self-criticism, difficult life experiences, trauma, loss or prolonged stress can increase vulnerability. Over time, these experiences may shape the way you think about yourself, other people and the future.

Social factors also matter. Loneliness, financial worries, relationship difficulties, caring responsibilities, discrimination or ongoing work pressures can all contribute to depression or make existing symptoms worse.

For some people, there is no obvious trigger. That does not make their experience any less real.

Why Everything Feels Harder

You may have noticed that simple tasks suddenly require enormous effort. Getting dressed, replying to messages, making a meal or leaving the house can feel exhausting.

This is not because you have become lazy or lost your determination.

Depression affects areas of the brain involved in motivation, planning, attention and decision-making. When your brain is under prolonged emotional stress, even routine activities can require much more mental energy than usual. Many people describe it as trying to walk through deep water while everyone else appears to be walking on dry land.

Understanding this can help reduce self-blame. If your brain is working harder just to get through the day, it makes sense that you feel tired and overwhelmed.

Common Experiences

People with depression often experience a combination of:

Persistent low mood or emotional numbness.

Feeling exhausted, even after sleeping.

Losing interest in hobbies or activities they once enjoyed.

Difficulty concentrating or making decisions.

Feeling guilty, worthless or like a burden.

Changes in appetite or sleep.

Withdrawing from family and friends.

Feeling hopeless about the future.

Becoming more self-critical than usual.

Not everyone experiences all of these symptoms, and the severity can vary from person to person.

What Can Help?

Although depression can feel all-consuming, recovery is possible. Many people improve with the right combination of support, time and treatment.

Helpful first steps may include:

Speaking with your GP or another healthcare professional if your symptoms are persistent or affecting your daily life.

Sharing how you're feeling with someone you trust.

Setting one small, achievable goal each day rather than expecting yourself to function as you did before.

Maintaining a regular routine where possible, including eating and sleeping at consistent times.

Being compassionate towards yourself rather than criticising yourself for struggling.

Recovery is rarely about making one big change. It is usually built through many small steps that gradually become easier over time.

Reflection

If a close friend described feeling the way you do now, what would you say to them?

Would you call them lazy or weak, or would you recognise that they were struggling and deserved support?

Sometimes we extend kindness to others far more readily than we do to ourselves.

Key Takeaway

If you've been asking yourself, "Why do I feel like this?", remember that depression is a real and treatable mental health condition. It is not a sign of personal failure, and you are not alone in experiencing it.

Understanding what is happening is often the beginning of healing. While recovery takes time, many people find that with support, self-compassion and appropriate treatment, they gradually

begin to reconnect with themselves and the life they want to live.

A gentle reminder

This resource offers general information and reflection. It is not a diagnosis or a substitute for individual medical or therapeutic care. If you are worried about your safety or someone else's, seek urgent professional support.

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