

The Pieces Depression Took Away

Recognising what has been lost - and how that can feel

Depression can take things quietly. Not always possessions or people, but pieces of everyday life that once felt so ordinary you never imagined needing to grieve them. Confidence. Concentration. Desire. Patience. Plans. Friendships. A sense of humour. The ability to make a simple decision. The feeling that the future belongs to you. Sometimes you only realise how much has changed when you try to reach for one of those things and discover it is no longer easily there.

That loss can be difficult to explain because somebody may look at your life and tell you what you still have. A home, family, work, people who care. They may mean well, but gratitude does not cancel grief. You can know that there are good things in your life and still ache for the parts of yourself or your world that depression has altered.

There is also a particular pain in losses that nobody else marks. There is no card for the friendship you gradually stopped answering. No ceremony for the career plan you no longer believe you can manage. Nobody necessarily notices when you stop singing in the car, wearing clothes you enjoyed, cooking something you loved or imagining next summer. Yet these small disappearances can change how life feels.

What did depression take?

For one person it may be energy; for another, trust in their own judgement. Some people lose routines because even basic tasks become overwhelming. Others withdraw socially until relationships become distant. Depression can affect libido and physical closeness, making somebody worry that love itself has disappeared. It can interfere with concentration and memory, which may undermine confidence at work or in study. It can make the future feel so flat that dreams which once mattered begin to seem unrealistic or irrelevant.

When these changes accumulate, it is understandable to feel angry as well as sad. You may resent the time that has passed, opportunities you could not take, or the amount of energy other people seem able to spend without thinking. Anger does not mean you are recovering badly. Sometimes it is part of recognising that something mattered.

The loss of confidence

Confidence is often one of the least visible casualties. If you have repeatedly struggled to concentrate, cancelled plans, forgotten things, needed help or been unable to complete tasks that once felt straightforward, you can begin to distrust yourself. Then even when some energy returns, confidence may remain behind. You might ask other people to decide, avoid opportunities or assume you will not cope before you have tried.

You are allowed to name the loss. Recognising what depression has taken is not the same as deciding it can never return. Sometimes grief is part of making sense of what happened.

A personal reflection

I think people are sometimes encouraged to look for positives so quickly that they never get the chance to say, 'This cost me something.' We can be frightened that acknowledging loss will make somebody more depressed, but being understood can be very different from being encouraged to stay in despair. There is room to say both: this hurt me, and I am still here.

Some losses may eventually be reclaimed. Others may return in a different form. And there may be things you decide you no longer want back. The purpose of noticing the pieces is not to create a list of everything that is wrong. It is to understand why you might feel changed and to give yourself permission to respond to that with care.

Exercise: Naming What Was Lost

Choose only what feels manageable. You do not need to fill every space, and you do not have to turn every loss into a recovery goal.

Something depression changed	What I miss about it
A piece I may want to reclaim	A piece I am ready to let change

A gentle next question: If one of these pieces matters to you, what would contact with it look like rather than complete recovery of it? Confidence might begin with one decision. Friendship might begin with one honest message. Creativity might begin with ten minutes. The first step does not need to replace everything that was lost.

What if some pieces do not come back?

This can be one of the hardest questions. There are experiences that change us, and pretending otherwise can feel dismissive. But a changed life is not automatically an empty life. If an old plan no longer fits, meaning can develop elsewhere. If a relationship has changed, new forms of connection may still be possible. If your capacity is different, your worth has not become smaller with it.

There is no requirement to find a lesson in depression. You do not have to be grateful for what happened or turn pain into a success story. You are allowed simply to build from where you are.

Books chosen for this piece

Paul Kalanithi - *When Breath Becomes Air*

This memoir is about serious illness rather than depression, but I have chosen it because it explores what happens when a life and future someone expected are suddenly altered. Its relevance here is the question of identity when plans, roles and assumptions change. It is emotionally intense and includes death and illness, so it will not be the right choice for everyone.

Julia Samuel - *Grief Works*

Although primarily about bereavement, Samuel's work is useful for understanding grief as a response to loss more broadly. The Pieces Depression Took Away includes losses that may never receive public recognition. This book can help give language to grief while also recognising that grief is individual rather than a fixed sequence everyone must follow.

Edith Eger - *The Gift*

Eger writes about emotional freedom, choice and living after painful experiences. I have chosen this title rather than her longer memoir because its shorter thematic chapters may be more manageable when concentration is limited. The useful idea here is not that loss should be turned into something positive, but that what happened and what happens next are not exactly the same question.

You do not have to replace every loss

Some things can be mourned without immediately being replaced. There is often pressure to respond to loss with a plan: new friends, new goals, a new career, a new routine. Sometimes the more compassionate response is simply to acknowledge, 'That mattered to me, and I miss it.' From there, you can decide later whether you want to reclaim, rebuild, replace or release it.

When you need more support

If depression remains persistent, is worsening or continues to significantly affect everyday life, consider speaking with a GP or mental-health professional. If you feel unable to keep yourself safe or think you may act on thoughts of harming yourself, seek urgent help. In the UK, NHS 111 can advise on urgent care; in an immediate emergency call 999 or go to A&E.;

Message from Maggie

If depression has taken pieces of your life, I am not going to tell you to simply focus on what you still have. I want there to be room for what you miss as well. Name it if you need to. Grieve it if it mattered. And when you are ready, look towards the light without demanding that it erase the darkness behind you. Some pieces may return, some may change, and some may become part of the story of how you found a different way forward.