

# 101 Simple Ways to Kick the Depression Habit and Get Happier Without Prozac

by Patrice Dickey

1. Look at where you are. Decide whether it's acceptable to stay there. If it is, accept it. If it's not, resolve to change it. It's all up to you.
2. Get out of bed or off the couch and start moving around. Get out of the recliner.
3. Stand up and breathe deeply, all the way into your abdomen, from the belly up. Fill your lungs with oxygen.
4. Raise your arms over your head with a big inhale, and on the exhale let yourself go forward into a standing forward fold. Inhale and arch halfway up with your hands on shins or thighs, pressing your spine longer. Let your belly fill up with oxygen again.
5. Exhale, release back down in a forward fold, and then inhale all the way up to standing. Repeat until you feel the tingling of the inner body that lets you know you're more than just a lump of

sadness, or as it's called in *The Power of Now*, the Pain Body.

6. Turn off your TV and consider never turning it on again—except for your own specific selections. Especially consider this: stop getting your news from TV. It is designed to be alarmist and tap into our deepest fears. It gets the adrenaline going and then hooks us—making us fear junkies and pessimists.
7. Get your news from sources you can control, like newspapers, news magazines or the Internet. At least you can turn the pages yourself! It's up to you what you feed your brain. **STOP THE FEAR DIET!**
8. Read something positive for 10-15 minutes every morning to kick-start your day. Whether it's a book of prayer, the Bible, affirmations or even Pollyanna, read positive things because you become what you focus upon. Make it something funny or sunny!

9. Start meditating, and don't be intimidated by that word. Meditation is simply conscious contact with the Higher Power or the Universal Force. Let yourself sit quietly for ten minutes, with both feet on the floor and your hands in your lap—spine erect and not leaning against a chair. Breathe in the word “Divine.” Breathe out “Love.” If you can't do it for ten minutes, try three minutes. Feel the peace of Divine Love fill your heart.
10. Make an outreach call. Get in touch with a friend or family member who has a positive outlook or something uplifting to offer.
11. Make a pact with that person or prayer partner to always offer a listening ear, and to share experience, strength and hope rather than dumping a lot of negatives on them. Share your concerns, yes, but don't get caught in

the downward spiral of negativity that can infect the rest of your day.

12. If friends or family members seem to have a toxic effect on you, shift your attention elsewhere and don't devote so much time or energy to them. To shield yourself from their negativity, use an imaginary energy bubble to surround yourself in light when you absolutely must be around them.
13. Eat a decent breakfast, and leave out "the whites" as much as possible: sugar, flour, dairy products. Maybe this means switching to a protein shake of soymilk, flax oil, protein powder and a banana made in the blender. The one I make of chocolate Silk and whey protein tastes like the most sinful thick fast food shake! There's no deprivation here and it keeps me energized from 8am until late afternoon.
14. Really take a look at your nutrition. Energy tends to spike and drop all day

based on what you eat. If you're eating sweets and pastries, switch to grapes, apple slices, raisins and nuts when your energy flags (in moderation, of course!) One handful and put 'em away. Don't leave them out on the counter to 'pick up' — it's too tempting.

15. Get up and move throughout the day. If we wake up with deep breathing, forward bends and stretching (which is part of the essence of Sun Salutation in yoga practice) we can keep the energy working and endorphins flowing with other bursts of activity to counteract stress.
16. Get hooked on endorphins. Start small by walking around the block or around the mall. Get a friend to join you.
17. One study says that walking a dog on a regular basis adds two years to your life, not only because of the exercise, but also because of the act of giving. If

you don't own a dog and don't want to own one, walk your neighbor's dog. Everyone benefits!

18. Get a pet. What could be more comforting when you're feeling down than a plump, purring kitty on your lap, the excited wag of "man's best friend" when you're not feeling up to par, or even the uplifting song of a bird? Fish gliding in a tank can be fascinating to watch, and can even put you into a meditative place effortlessly.
19. Listen to uplifting music. Did you know music was one of humankind's first mood altering methods? Put on Beethoven's "Pastorale" and let your heart be glad. Play whatever music you love that doesn't have a low, dark, heavy vibration, unless it's drumming.
20. Sing out! Play a CD with positive lyrics like "I Feel Good!" by James Brown and belt 'em right along with the artist. Not only do the positive

messages lift your mind, the oxygen in your lungs lifts your body.

21. Let a little smile come to your lips. Even if you don't inwardly feel like smiling, when the smile muscles in your face are employed, something shifts in your physiology and you actually do begin to feel better. If the idea of smiling is more than you can handle, grimace like a chimpanzee—but don't wrinkle your forehead. The same muscles engage and the effect is similar. Shriek like a chimp for added benefit!
22. Back to what you eat you are. Try to cut out as much processed food as possible—like cookies, crackers and junk food, which have a high degree of Omega-6 fatty acids (the bad ones). We need Omega-3 fatty acids from fish and nuts to keep us mentally stable and balanced. Also, start taking vitamin B.

Nutrition is a HUGE factor in helping you feel even keel, or not.

23. Start keeping a calendar or planner. At the beginning of each week, write down when you're going to exercise, and get in the habit by following through for three weeks. It only takes 21 days to build a habit. As the Spanish proverb says, "Habits are first cobwebs, then cables." Make your habits the ones that lift you up.
24. Use your planner to jot down all those scraps of ideas that swirl around in your brain, bothering you because you haven't corralled them. When they're written down, you can access them easily and they won't be nattering at you and cluttering your brain. The shortest pencil is better than the longest memory.
25. Before you commit yourself to an expensive PDA, decide whether you're a big picture person who needs to be

able to see the whole week or the whole month. In other words, don't drive yourself insane with the new technology just because it looks hip. Learn what's right for you. Some people are into longhand.

26. Learn to prioritize—another sure path to sane living. To paraphrase Mark Twain, “If you have three frogs to eat before breakfast, eat the ugliest one first.”
27. If several major projects loom during the week, block out large enough chunks of time on your calendar to accomplish them. Get in your office and close the door; get in your cube and put up a “Quietly Working” sign. Let people know your boundaries. Prepare to be tested. Stick to your priorities.
28. En route to your calls or the office, use the time wisely! Either sing along with really upbeat music that you choose, or listen to motivational tapes

or CDs or books on tape. Why let your head get bent by radio hate mongers who constant blame and bash? It's counterproductive and adds to your stress level, which creates cortisol in your system and causes you to age faster. Who wants that?

29. Make a game of sending blessings to everyone in traffic who cuts you off or otherwise messes with your groove. See how much good energy you can lend to the situation. See if that shifts your own emotions. (Confession: I work on this almost every day!)
30. Become aware of your negative thought patterns by tracking when the bad stuff pops into your mind. Unless we're aware of how frequently we poison our minds with tales of doom and gloom, how can we stop doing it? One woman accumulated more than 100 'doom' chit marks before noon. Once she became aware of how she

was letting her mind poison her day, she was able to stop her negative thoughts in their tracks.

31. Rev up your anteater! Automatic Negative Thinking, or ANTS, march across our brains in battalions! Suck ‘em up! Spit ‘em out! Move on!
32. Begin to observe what’s happening right in this moment. Is **RIGHT NOW** so awful? Or is it just guilt or shame over the past or fear of the future that’s bringing you down?
33. Even if you can only stay in the moment by counting your breath, sometimes that’s the best way to survive a sad or scary situation. Always take it back to the breath.
34. Yoga means union—of breathing technique and movement with the awareness of the inner sacred space. We can all go there for solace and connection with the Universal Divine. If these ideas appeal to you, try yoga.

35. Lots of people find their divine connection through walking, running, bicycling, swimming, dance or even golf. Start moving. Even if you're confined to a chair, lifting light weights over your head and breathing deeply can get your mojo workin'. Action is key!
36. Mow or rake the lawn. What beats the satisfaction of seeing where you've made a solid impact? Not only that, it's good exercise and saves you the fee of the lawn care service. When you switch the rake from hand to hand, you stimulate areas of your brain and that gives you a physical and psychological lift.
37. If you don't have a lawn to mow or rake, volunteer your services to an elderly person who needs help. You'll feel 100% better to see the smile on their face.

38. Volunteering in any way that strikes you will lift your spirits. When you take the focus off your problems they begin to melt away. Albert Schweitzer said, “The only ones who will be truly happy are those who will have sought and found a way to serve.”
39. Take a little child on a walk. Get out of your head and into theirs: discover their sense of wonderment. Become like a little child and you will enter the kingdom of heaven—the heaven that is within us all.
40. Pray. Ask for Divine help. Don’t think you have the solution locked up in your mind. Divine solutions are far bigger than ours. Simply ask for guidance and not for specific outcomes.
41. Shift your focus to whatever the BEST may be coming to you. Sometimes we spiral into the worst possible outcomes, envisioning ourselves homeless in a ditch. Spiritual

leaders from throughout history have all said something similar to this Truth: “As you think, so you shall be.” See yourself succeeding.

42. Think BIG! Focus on major blessings pouring down on you. The Universe is continuously pouring out blessings like Niagara Falls and it’s up to us whether we use a thimble to capture them—or a teacup, bucket, lake—or an ocean. Expand!
43. If you suffer from deservability issues springing from any number of unbalanced or addictive family backgrounds—and who hasn’t?—these include alcoholism, drug addiction, emotional or sexual abuse, rage-aholism, illness or invalid in the family, or being “over-churched”—find a recovery group that deals with those issues and start attending. Attend at least six meetings before you decide whether it’s for you. Recovery in every

shape and size is available in all cities and many smaller towns. Plus, it only costs one dollar. Cheap salvation, and oh-so-powerful!

44. Turn over your problems and **SURRENDER** to the Divine Flow. Stop trying to force the issues. Let yourself sob. You'll feel better after the physical release. Tears of sorrow and anxiety contain a lot of toxins. You're flushing them out and creating a space inside you for the miracles to land.
45. Think back to something dreamy you enjoyed doing as a child. How long has it been since you've dangled a stick in a stream and just watched the water move past it? Give yourself permission to do that childlike thing. Let your mind wander into the wonderful world of imagination as you give the stick in the water your full attention.

46. Give thanks! Look around and be grateful for all you have. Be grateful for what is to come. Start a gratitude list of all you have now, beginning with the fact that you're still breathing. If even that notion depresses you, count your breaths and focus only on that.
47. Start a journal and know that you're the only one who will ever see it. Don't worry about being perfect. A journal is a great cheap psychiatrist. Pour out your heart and see how issues begin to resolve themselves. One caution: write about it, let go and move on. Don't revisit the same topic endlessly because that can actually add to the down feeling. As Dale Carnegie said in *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living*, "Don't saw sawdust."
48. Focus on your strengths. Start a list of your strengths and don't stop until you reach 100. Even if it takes a long time. If you get stumped, ask a true

friend (not a sarcastic one!) to tell you some of the strengths they see in you. It's amazing what they might see that you can't, because you're viewing yourself from your self-critical mode and they're seeing with eyes of love.

49. Put positive thoughts and quotations wherever you need to see them: right next to your bed; on the bathroom mirror; on the refrigerator; on the dashboard of your car. Read, contemplate and absorb them. Believe them and let them burn new neural pathways in your brain—positive paths.
50. Write a love letter to yourself, as though you are the most precious and adored creature ever born. In God's eyes, that is exactly who you are. Self-love comes first. If you don't treat yourself with love and kindness, how can you give that to anyone else?
51. Write a love letter to anything—animal, vegetable or mineral—just to

prime the little pump in your heart and get the love flowing outward again.

52. Become aware of what song lyrics are playing over and over in your mind, and cut out the sad ‘n’ sorry songs about being dumped on and stomped down. For years I didn’t wake up and realize that I’d been singing myself country songs about desperate romance and broken hearts for at least two decades!.

53. Make up a song to sing to your very own heart, and nurture it when you’re in the depths of despair. Here’s the one I made up to the tune of the old hymn “This is my Father’s World.” *I love my little heart/I make room for it to grow/When it peeps out I want to shout, “My heart, I love you so!”/ My little purple heart/It expands as it grows whole/And all God’s love flowing from above/Fills up my hopeful soul.* It literally made my heart glad.

54. While you're at it, make up a song describing what you DO want in life. Sing it to yourself frequently. Program your subconscious mind with words and music.
55. If you're feeling fearful, here's a little Zen walking affirmation that you can say or sing over and over to yourself, programming your mind: *'I thank God I am strong and safe from danger and from harm/I thank God I am peaceful and calm in spirit and in mind/ I thank God I am healthy and happy in body and soul/ I thank God that I live in the ease of being—I thank God for making me whole.'*
56. Clean your house. Send the dust bunnies flying. Open the window and let some air into your space. Wash your sheets and smell the freshness. Or, wash your car. You've made a tangible difference, and that helps attitude.

57. Clear your desk. What could be more depressing than stacks and scraps of paper that you haven't dealt with yet? Progress, not perfection. Keep that in mind while clearing up any aspect of your life.
58. Go through your closets and get rid of anything you haven't worn this season—or send it packing to your “Halloween closet.” You can make some decent money from consignment shops, or get a tax deduction for donations if you itemize.
59. Do the same with furniture: clear the stuff out and create a space in your life for new energy, enthusiasm or ideas to flow in. Remember, action is key.
60. Get a book or take a class on Feng Shui (the ancient Chinese art of energy flow) and reconfigure furniture, mirrors and especially your bed so you aren't thwarting sleep or romance with blocked energy.

61. Add some color to your life. Buy a flower planter and hang it where you can see it and enjoy it often. Take care of the little flowers and see how they delight in your care.
62. Plan a garden. Let your imagination play with all the textures, colors and varieties of flowers and vegetables. Remember that green is a color too—it's the color of healing energy, and also the color of your heart center. Gazing at greenery, not greenbacks, is the greater key to happiness.
63. Plant your garden or pots. Nothing is as grounding or stabilizing as getting your hands down in the dirt. Plus you're concentrating on a project and not on your own woes.
64. Weed your garden—or help someone else weed theirs. Each weed pulled is a metaphor for some defeated or victimized thought that you're allowing to choke off your own happiness.

65. Water your garden. Let your self get quiet inside as you bestow the blessing of water on your tender friends and imagine their growth. Really look at your flowers and plants. Caress them and tell them how beautiful they are. They do respond to your love! The more you give away, the more wells up inside you.
66. Eat some chocolate. All things in moderation of course. Its chemical makeup does have an uplifting effect on your body.
67. Go outside, raise up your arms and soak up all the beautiful energy from the living creatures surrounding you. Whether it's the forest, a neighborhood, a desert or a city street, everything is composed of energy. Fill yourself up with it.
68. Give your soul a treat by inhaling the rich fragrance of flowers. Let yourself get drunk on the fragrance. Or try

aromatherapy. Lavender calms and balances at the same time. Citrus and peppermint perk you up. Ylang-ylang makes you feel sensuous. Find the essential oils you love and start diffusing them into your environment.

69. Go fishing. It's really a beautiful form of meditation—let your mind get quiet and still, and let things sort themselves out.

70. Rent a goofy movie—Marx Brothers classics and Mel Brooks spoofs work great. Norman Cousins describes laughing himself back to health from a deadly disease in his book *Anatomy of an Illness*. New studies show that laughing at funny movies provides some of the same benefits as regular aerobic exercise!

71. Give someone a compliment—and make it sincere. How to do this? Compliment one of their strengths and back it up with evidence, for example,

“Paula, I really admire your ability to focus on your goals and persevere without letting obstacles interfere with the vision.”

72. Try a different route to work. Mild depression is a habit; choosing an optimistic approach is also a habit. Begin to shake yourself out of your depressed rut by challenging yourself to do something different.
73. Create something new in the kitchen. Not only does concentrating on a new recipe cause you to focus in the moment, you also have something delicious to share with family, friends and neighbors.
74. Take a nap. Allow yourself the luxury of letting your body have what it needs. Sorrow is heavy and requires time to decompress and rejuvenate.
75. Treat yourself gently. Acknowledge that you need such treatment now from yourself and others. Ask for it. If

people don't treat you gently in your time of need, cross them off your list. They're toxic for you.

76. Get a vibrator. Nothing like a good endorphin jolt from the root chakra to help you slip into deep relaxation.
77. Learn to knit—it's another Zen meditative experience disguised as a grandmotherly pursuit! Knitting clubs are springing up all over the country. You might want to start one yourself.
78. Fly a kite. Take a kid—or not. It turns your vision upward, and that, along with watching a brilliant kite dance in the sky, has a positive effect on your body. Your body is actually weakened by staring down at the ground because the energy channel along your spine is disrupted by the tilt of your head. Strengthen that energy flow by looking up!
79. Do some accounting. When your emotional brain is upset or reeling off

into drama, sit down and balance your checkbook—a rational activity. Things will fall into place. If part of your depression stems from the condition of your checking account, half of the solution comes from determining the true nature of the situation. You have to face it some day. Running away doesn't work.

80. Tutor someone. Think of all the kids (and adults) who need help in learning how to read. By showing an interest in them, you'll lift both of you up.
81. Learn to salsa, swing, square dance or tea dance. Who knows what kind of Latin lover, big bopper, cowpoke or prince you'll meet while you're moving around the dance floor?
82. Walk in the woods. Breathe deeply of the fresh air. Open your ears to the birdsongs. Open your heart to the sky. Don't let yourself suffer from 'Nature

Deficit Disorder,’ as Richard Louv named it.

83. Start a coffee klatch or bunko or bridge game in your neighborhood. Get together and gab. Enjoy the camaraderie.
84. Go gem or shell hunting. Sift through the silt or sand for the elusive treasures. Get a hot glue gun and make something pretty with your loot—a picture frame or a tree ornament.
85. Live in the image of the Creator, since that’s who we are, made in the Creator’s image. Remember what you loved to do as a child and start again. Was it building Lego models? Sewing clothes for your dolls?
86. Join a Habitat for Humanity house building effort. Have you seen the smiles of those first-time homeowners as they move into their freshly built homes? All that work involves

movement, and volunteer work is doubly uplifting.

87. Sign up for a class at the local college's evening extension—or get permission to audit a class. Expand your mind with new information. Make new friends. Let the cobwebs air out!
88. Shoot some photos and share them with your subject, or just enjoy them yourself.
89. Get a makeover. Change your hairstyle. Treat yourself to a new outfit. Get a facial. Let yourself be buffed and puffed. Walk out with a new attitude.
90. Begin the process of getting out of debt. Contact Debtors Anonymous if you need help. It will free your spirit.
91. Go yardsailing. Nothing beats the victory of paying \$2 for something you'd have bought for \$40 in a retail

store. Remember, this is the way self-made millionaires think.

92. Shift the focus back to yourself. Stop pointing the finger of blame at others. Resolve to get to know your best friend: You. Plenty of books are available to help you get started, including *Please Understand Me* by David Keirse and Marilyn Bates. If you don't know who you are, how can you understand what makes you truly happy?
93. Take a bath in Epsom salts or soothing elixir of your choice, and feel your sore muscles relaxing into jello. Light aroma candles by the tub and make it an altar to your serenity.
94. Join a drumming circle or beat a stack of pillows with a tennis racket. Pound out the anxiety and feel your tension slip away.

95. Learn to chant. Buddhist chanting helped Tina Turner heal her life after severe abuse by her husband.
96. If it suits you, get religion. Enjoy the church ladies and the galvanizing optimism and upbeat message of the contemporary churches. You'll probably enhance your social life, and you might even find Spirit there!
97. Get a massage, or swap massages with your partner. The effect of hands-on therapies is magical. Really stay in your body instead of your head. Skin to skin contact is good.
98. Find someone to hug—and hug them hard, with strong arms. Let yourself be enveloped in that warmth.
99. Lie on the earth and absorb its energy. Let the sun bathe your skin for at least 10-15 minutes daily—without sunscreen, believe it or not, or sun glasses. This elemental absorption is very balancing to the human system.

100. Cross-train your brain. If a task looks too much to tackle, stand up and touch your right knee with your left elbow, do the reverse and march a few times. Not only does it get your energy flowing, it literally helps you organize your mind by stimulating both sides of the cerebrum, so that you can deal better with what's happening right now.
101. Follow the words of *Row Row Row Your Boat*. Notice that it encourages us to go “gently down the stream” — not to struggle and fight the flow. Note that the desired attitude for travel is “merrily.” It's all about what we dream up for ourselves. As the lyric says, “Life is but a dream.” Stop resisting what is. Don't try to push the river. Steer your little boat out into the current and go with the Flow. All things truly are unfolding in Divine Order. The less we try to push to

achieve our Ego's own way, the easier  
Life works for us.