

Depression, Health, Boredom, Interesting People, and Self-Esteem

By *Harrison Barnes*

I remember my first encounters with the self-improvement industry when I was younger. In many areas of the United States, people look at self-improvement as something that is absolutely crazy. That is how the people around me viewed it when I was growing up. When I think about self-improvement, however, I think about people doing things like:

- ...trying to improve their mood and level of happiness
- ...trying to improve their health
- ...trying to become interested in new things
- ...trying to meet other interesting people
- ...trying to improve their self-esteem

This is for the most part what self-improvement is all about--these five things mentioned above. It takes on different forms (and some people make one or more of these issues their sole focus) but this is essentially what self-improvement is about. The people who do these five things well are the ones who experience the most change and live the best lives.

I have spent a lot of time with people who focus on these five things and I can tell you that they have usually managed to transform their lives into something that is so far beyond what I saw growing up, it is unbelievable. Some of these people own islands in exotic places. Others have the partner of their dreams. Others have confidence they have used to forge amazing careers on the world stage. Others have more friends than they can count. Focusing on these five areas and learning to excel in them can mean the difference between your living the life of your dreams--and living an average life.

When you start thinking about the "average" person out there, you start to realize that what is going on in the world is not inspiring for everyone. I have heard the average adult American often described as someone who

- ...is mildly depressed
- ...is at least 25 pounds overweight and unhealthy
- ...is bored most of the time
- ...does not know many interesting people
- ...has low self-esteem

This description of the average person is, in my opinion, quite true. When you go to an average town in America, these are the kinds of people you meet. This description comprises many of my relatives, and I am sure it comprises many of your relatives as well. This may even describe you. Many people fit this mold.

I am not being judgmental about this; however, it is extremely important to point this out because, all in all, it relates to you. These characteristics of (1) depression, (2) being overweight, (3) being bored, (4) not knowing interesting people, and (5) having low self-esteem are all things that hold the average person back. In contrast, the people who seem to have the most success in everything they do fight the tide that seems to naturally draw people toward each of these pitfalls.

Make no mistake about it: there is a tide out there that is pushing most of us to be depressed, unhealthy, bored, around boring people, and with low self-esteem. If you think about it, this is where the greater weight of the world is pushing most people--and it is pushing you too. Reverse this tide and spend your life fighting for the opposite, and you will experience much more success and happiness than you can imagine.

1. Fight Against Depression in Your Life. Being depressed is a huge danger. When you are depressed, you are less effective in everything you do because you spend most of your energy focused on negative thoughts. You look at the world in a negative manner and see unhappiness instead of happiness. The world does not look like the fun place it should, and instead, it appears to be an unpleasant place--sometimes extremely so. You see only obstacles, not opportunity. You do not have the energy you need to complete things and succeed.

According to a 2009 *USA Today* article:

The number of Americans using antidepressants doubled in only a decade, while the number seeing psychiatrists continued to fall, a study shows. About 10% of Americans — or 27 million people — were taking antidepressants in 2005, the last year for which data were available at the time the study was written. That's about twice the number in 1996, according to the study of nearly 50,000 children and adults in today's *Archives of General Psychiatry*. Yet the majority weren't being treated for depression. Half of those taking antidepressants used them for back pain, nerve pain, fatigue, sleep difficulties or other problems, the study says. http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2009-08-03-antidepressants_N.htm

Despite these numbers, it is certain that the number of people who are depressed is much higher than the number of people using antidepressants, and probably several times so.

In order to fight depression, it is important that we take numerous actions in our daily lives. For example, we should do our best to avoid being around depressed people because their attitudes will wear off on us. It is also difficult to be depressed when you are moving and active; therefore, keeping active is important. Being around inspiring people and events can help you avoid being depressed too, as can exercise and a healthy diet. Talking through your problems can help you avoid being depressed. Dwelling on positive thoughts and accomplishments can also help you stay in a happy, healthy state of mind. Seeing a [doctor or therapist](#) if you are depressed for too long is also a good idea to get guidance.

2. Fight Being Overweight and Unhealthy. Numerous studies have linked obesity to all sorts of other problems:

"Research Links Obesity with Depression, Other Mood Disorders"

Despite the stereotype, fat people are not more jolly than people of normal weight, according to a study that instead found obesity strongly linked with depression and other mood disorders.

Whether obesity might cause these problems or is the result of them is not certain, and the research does not provide an answer, but there are theories to support both arguments.

Depression often causes people to abandon activities, and some medications used to treat mental illness can cause weight gain. On the other hand, obesity is often seen as a stigma, and overweight people often are subject to teasing and other hurtful behavior.

The study of more than 9,000 adults found that mood and anxiety disorders, including depression, were about 25 percent more common in the obese people studied than in the non-obese. Substance abuse was an exception: Obese people were about 25 percent less likely to abuse drugs or alcohol than slimmer participants.

The results, which appear in the July issue of *Archives of General Psychiatry*, "suggest that the cultural stereotype of the jolly fat person is more a figment of our imagination than a reality," said Dr. Wayne Fenton of the National Institute of Mental Health, which funded the study. "The take-home message for doctors is to be on the lookout for depression among their patients who are overweight."

Both conditions are quite common. About one-third of US adults are obese, and depression affects about 10 percent of the population, or nearly 21 million US adults in a given year.

Previous studies produced conflicting results on whether obesity is linked with mental illness including depression, although a growing body of research suggests there is an association.

This latest study helps resolve the question, said Dr. Susan McElroy, a psychiatry professor at the University of Cincinnati and editor of a textbook on obesity and mental disorders.

The number of Americans who are overweight and unhealthy is incredible, as reflected in the following government statistics from 2005-2006:

- Percent of non-institutionalized adults age 20 years and over who are overweight or obese: 67%
- Percent of adolescents age 12-19 years who are overweight: 18%
- Percent of children age 6-11 years who are overweight: 15%
- Percent of children age 2-5 years who are overweight: 11% <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/overwt.htm>

Being overweight and obese has numerous side effects that can hurt you from reaching your full potential in your career and life. For example, obesity can have a major impact on whether you are hired or promoted by certain employers:

Employment provides an outlet for social discrimination. There is evidence that obesity causes discrimination in work settings. With different reasons relating to obesity, employers have specific ways to avoid hiring obese people. Job placement and promotion are affected by obesity and gender compounds weight discrimination.

Why do Employers not hire those who are Obese?

Stereotypes can lead employers not to hire an obese person. People who are obese are seen as "less desirable" employees who, compared with others, are less competent, less productive, not industrious, disorganized, indecisive, inactive, and less successful." ... Employers have three main reasons to not hire an obese person. Employers use store image, insurance costs and future health conditions, and physical limitations as reasons not to hire obese people.

<http://www.uhh.hawaii.edu/academics/hohonu/writing.php?id=111>

It is a difficult news to digest, but if you are going to reach your full potential in your career and in your life, obesity is something you need to fight against as much as you possibly can. Maintaining a healthy weight is something you should do your best to achieve, as doing so will benefit you both professionally and personally. Obesity has been shown to relate to the quality of our moods and productivity; therefore, in order to succeed you need to make sure that you are as psychologically and physically fit as possible.

Consider developing a dietary plan and strategy that enables you to have the best health possible. You also need to stick to an exercise plan that allows you to stay fit.

Maintaining your ideal weight can help you live much longer and can give you the energy and focus to do well in your career. In addition, exercise can help alleviate stress. Virtually every successful person I know has made exercise and weight control a priority, and it is something that they are continually striving to maintain. You too should make this a priority.

3. Do Fun Things and Have Various Interests, so You Are Not Bored. I am not sure why this is; however, the most happy and successful people out there generally have strong interests in one or many things outside of work, and they are never bored. The strong outside interest could be something as simple as fly fishing, or it could be contemporary literature, for example.

Hobbies and interests are a great way for us to relieve stress and they are helpful in allowing us to divert our focus away from the subject of our work to something completely unrelated. In addition, hobbies expose us to people with similar interests, which helps us make friends.

It is important that you have interests and do things you enjoy when you are not working. These interests could require you to read or learn new things. Regardless of what you choose to do, having outside interests will make you more interesting and will make your life fuller.

When you are bored you tend to wallow. Wallowing typically will not lead to your making the most of yourself. When you wallow, for example, you tend to get depressed and you tend to eat more and be unhealthy. You need to put yourself in a place wherein you are occupied, alert, and interested. Being interested in outside things will also make you more interesting to others, which will lead to your being more successful as well.

4. Spend Your Time with and Seek out Other Interesting People. It is important that you spend your time with people who are interesting and are also seeking to succeed, as you are. If you are around people with the shared goals of avoiding depression, being healthy, and having outside interests, the odds are very good that you will be similarly motivated and you can keep each other on track.

When you are around interesting people, you will find yourself becoming more like them as well. The benefit of spending your

time around accomplished people is that the people who are part of the group challenge each other and support each other to grow. You will see other accomplished people setting goals, and you will imitate them by setting your own goals, for example. You should seek out interesting people in your life and do your best to be around them. Interesting people will "pick you up" and help you grow and become more accomplished. They will also keep you engaged, help you avoid being bored, and connect you with opportunities that interest you.

5. Work on Your Self-Esteem. Nothing can hold us back like having low self-esteem. I have seen people with very little talent rise to great heights due to nothing more than the sheer force of their self-esteem. It is important that you do everything you can to develop your self-esteem. The better you feel about yourself, the more you can accomplish and the more strength you will have to finish whatever projects you start.

Self-esteem comes from many places, and many people base their confidence on things they have done in the past. Other people base their self-esteem on what other people say about them. Still others base their self-esteem on their weight or how good their job is. The thing about self-esteem is that it really needs to be internal and should be unwavering, no matter what stage of life we are in or how well we may feel we are doing at something. Self-esteem should be a constant and we should make every effort to continually feel good about ourselves, because not doing so will hurt us tremendously.

There are many methods to improve your self-esteem, such as [journaling](#), therapy, self-hypnosis, engaging in activities you are good at that give you reinforcement, and others. Everyone will have their own solutions and ideas about what they can do to improve their self-esteem. The important thing is that you do whatever you can to ensure you have high self-esteem because not doing so will hold you back and prevent you from becoming the person you are capable of becoming.

In order to be everything you are capable of being, it is essential that you fight against (1) depression, (2) being overweight and unhealthy, (3) being bored, (4) not knowing interesting people, and (5) having low self-esteem. Your daily activities and goals should relate to bringing yourself up in each of these categories, as you rise to meet life's many challenges.

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