

Chronic Depression: Interpersonal Sources, Therapeutic Solutions

Jeremy W. Pettit and Thomas E. Joiner

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In *Chronic Depression: Interpersonal Sources, Therapeutic Solutions*, Jeremy Pettit and Thomas Joiner draw on a solid theoretical framework and a large body of empirical research to support their key premise that the self-sustaining processes in depression are interpersonal in nature.

In the first two chapters, the authors present pertinent, up to date information regarding the course, prevalence and characteristics of depression including Major Depressive Disorder and Dysthymia. In the following chapters, the author proceed to describe the phenomenology of a number of interpersonal processes (the stress generation model, negative feedback seeking, self-verification theory, excessive reassurance seeking, interpersonal conflict avoidance, self handicapping and blame maintenance) that appear to propagate depression.

In describing the stress generation model, the authors present accumulating evidence that depressed individuals generate their own stress in a number of ways such as choosing dysfunctional mates and using poor interpersonal problem solving. The authors also present compelling evidence that people with depressive symptoms actively seek negative feedback which may serve to reinforce the chronic nature of depression.

Excessive reassurance seeking is another characteristic which may play a factor in maintaining depression. The authors point out that in a person with depression, this behavior may be motivated by an effort to seek out reassurance about one's self-worth. But because the pattern turns out to be repetitive, the people around them become annoyed, thus leading to rejection and further fueling the depression.

In the subsequent chapters, Pettit and Joiner describe other self sabotaging interpersonal behaviors such as conflict avoidance and self handicapping aimed at protecting self-esteem but often instead having the paradoxical effect of turning people off.

On the topic of therapeutic solutions, Pettit and Joiner review pharmacological treatment options and psychosocial treatments for depression including interpersonal and cognitive behavioral therapy. The authors note the potential usefulness of Cognitive Behavioral Analysis System of Psychotherapy (CBASP) developed by James McCullough, Ph.D. for the treatment of chronic depression. In CBASP chronically depressed patients learn to recognize the negative consequences of their thoughts and behavior, modify them, and create desirable outcomes that are adaptive, realistic, and attainable. In a large multisite study, CBASP was found to be an effective treatment for chronic depression.

In their final chapter on prevention, the authors point out that those in remission from depression may benefit from psycho-education about the self-sustaining processes of depression. Further study on preventing depressive relapse and recurrence through training and education on interpersonal processes will be welcome to our field.

Chronic Depression: Interpersonal Sources, Therapeutic Solutions is definitely a book worth reading whether you are a student or advanced clinician. The book provides the reader with a solid framework for understanding the nature of chronic depression, a wealth of information about depression, and pertinent empirical findings related to the interpersonal

functioning in depression. *Chronic Depression* will be a useful resource as you conceptualize and treat your patients with depression and one that you'll pick up time and time again.

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