



# The Breakthrough Depression Solution

## A Personalized 9-Step Method for Beating the Physical Causes of Your Depression

By James Greenblatt, MD

Reviewed by Rosalind Michahelles

James Greenblatt, a local psychiatrist practicing in Waltham, MA gives special attention to the role nutrition can play in mental illness.

He works with both adults and children and, though fully prepared to prescribe medications when useful, he also points to the statistics showing the limited effectiveness of such drugs. In the last twenty years the number of Americans on psychiatric disability leave has trebled. What's wrong with this picture?

Looking into each patient's bio-individuality using a battery of tests – some of which may not be covered by the average HMO -- Dr. Greenblatt charts a picture to include: vitamin, mineral, amino acid, lipid, hormone, and enzyme status; food sensitivities as well as allergies; and brain wave patterns. Even a healthy diet can be deficient in, say, magnesium or zinc if the patient has digestive difficulties from food sensitivities. He asserts that “a magnesium deficiency can trigger...depression, insomnia, irritability, nervousness and anxiety, apathy, and migraine headaches.” He calls zinc the metabolic spark plug and refers to research showing its role in enhancing some of the psychiatric prescription drugs. Get your zinc level up and your meds may be more effective and you can take a lower dose!

When considering the lipid profile, readers won't be surprised to see Omega-3 fatty acids valued for their mood lifting ability. Some will raise an eyebrow, however, when they read that “low cholesterol decreases the number of serotonin receptors

in the brain.” Dr. Greenblatt, like many others, faults refined carbohydrates and sugar in the diet, in this case because they deplete precious B vitamins, which are crucial for mental health.

One chapter is devoted to amino acids, those building blocks of protein that we get from eating protein. Dr. Greenblatt feels they are so important that he declares “Sometimes the most significant intervention for the treatment of depression is supplying the patient with amino acids.” Why? Precisely because they are the building blocks of protein and thus of most neurotransmitters. Dietary protein, once digested, provides us with the amino acids. But to digest that protein in the first place we need sufficient stomach acid and sufficient protease enzymes. Either can be supplemented, if need be. Sadly, many who suffer from heartburn and indigestion which feels like too much acid, mistakenly try to neutralize that acidity when, paradoxically, just the opposite would solve the problem and improve protein digestion. And that would lead to more absorption of those important amino acids.

Dr. Greenblatt does not eschew prescription medicine for depression but he uses a tool many others don’t in deciding which drug would be best. The EEG (electroencephalography) tracks brain waves and, though it hasn’t helped with diagnosis as such (say, schizophrenia versus depression) is has helped in choosing which medicine to prescribe. This is because, whatever the diagnosis, patients with similar brain wave patterns respond in similar ways to certain drugs.

I recommend this book to anyone struggling with depression or related illnesses because they may here find clues helpful to a speedier or more thorough recovery.

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