

*TITLE:* Exploring Depression and Beating the Blues: A CBT Self-Help Guide to Understanding and Coping with Depression in Asperger's Syndrome (ASD-Level 1)

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In among all of the difficulties people with milder forms of ASD depression has to be the very worst; in fact, the suicide rate among adults with ASD is about 30%! This is much too high and more needs to be done to help adults affected by ASD to learn to be more proactive and to nip depression in the bud.

Tony Attwood, a psychologist who is with the Minds and Hearts Clinic in Brisbane, Australia and his colleague, Michelle Garnett, developed a nifty Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) program called "Exploring Depression" that can also be done by the individual at home.

The book starts out by describing depression and how it interacts with ASD to make life so miserable. Characteristics such as catastrophic thinking, overgeneralizing, discounting any positive news or developments, always feeling inadequate and near constant anxiety all form a noxious brew that's hard to get rid of. The authors describe the characteristics of Asperger Syndrome as well, including the positive qualities, such as focus on a special interest, a strong sense of justice, reliability and punctuality, creative and divergent approaches to problems and creativity in general.

The program is divided into stages which must be done in the right sequence in order for the person to truly benefit. Stage 1 is devoted to exploring one's qualities and abilities, Stage 2 is an introduction to depression and Stage 3 presents tools for dealing with depression. Subsequent stages present specific tools including using art and other creative pursuits and tools for physical activity as studies are now finding a strong correlation between exercise and a healthy brain. The Thinking Tools help reframe one's mindset which is often skewed toward the overly negative and catastrophic thinking followed by Relaxation Tools and a Safety Plan for when the person is truly feeling suicidal and wants to end it all.

Each chapter has a set of exercises that the reader fills out. It is illustrated with charming drawings by Colin Thompson; these drawings add a light touch to an otherwise very serious topic and makes the workbook more enjoyable for the teenager or the young adult to use.

The last part of the book asks the reader to imagine a brighter, happier future which can go a long way to making one feel better about life. The reader can learn to think in such a way as to understand that bad things don't last forever, moving away that heavy stone of depression and clearing a path for a better and more balanced life. The authors are strong believers in Cognitive Behavior Therapy and so am I. In milder forms of depression, it is found to be the most effective tool around, but in more severe forms a combination of CBT and medications is often recommended. I highly recommend this workbook.