

# Your Wellness

Strategies for Mental Health, Career, and Family Success

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Recco Santee Richardson, Ph.D., LPC

## Dr. Recco's Corner

Listen! It is time to talk about our depression. We all say and act like we want change in our lives. Yet, some of us still avoid dealing with our depression. So, let's try another way to nail down the importance of addressing our depression. With as much love and mercy as I can muster up, I want to tell you that our level of depression is hurting our relationships.

Let's be honest. Before all the wars, the passing away of a loved one and the recent COVID-19, we were depressed. In fact, before the divorce, before the bankruptcy, before the change in jobs and before our children started acting out, we were depressed.

Why is it so hard for us to admit that we battle with depression and need real help? Is it because we are too friendly towards our depression? I've come to believe that depression is public enemy number one. Yes, I said it! Depression is not our friend. For all practical purposes it is an enemy.

Why would we continue to sleep with the enemy? I'm finding that for the most important things in life; we must make up our minds and simply do something about it. Addressing our depression is an important thing. Depression does not have to negatively impact on our lives. It does not have unlimited power that forces us into submission. There are things we can do to overcome whatever level of depression that comes our way.

As for me, I've decided that I will not be depressed. Have you decided? I have decided in my mind that there is too much life out there for me to enjoy. Have you decided this too? I have come this far by faith, hope and humility and will not let depression compromise what is truly mine. Have you done the stated yet? I have answered the call to address my depression. Have you?

**Recco**

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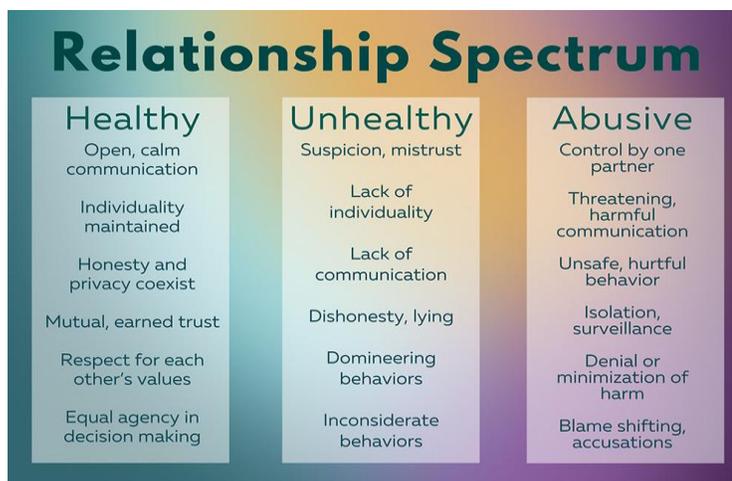


## What is a Relationship

A relationship is a connection we share with others. They are the cornerstone of emotional and psychological well-being. Relationships include friendships, family dynamics, romantic partnerships, and professional connections. We even experience relationships with our ourselves. It is the most important relationship overall because if we do not have a good relationship with ourselves, how can we have good relationships with others? It is believed that the quality of relationships significantly impacts our mental health self-esteem and overall life satisfaction.

Teensforcourage.org reported on the ranges of relationships (see chart #1). Their below relationship spectrum chart gives a good look at the ranges of healthy to abusive relationships.

### Chart #1 Relationship Spectrum



### Characteristics of Relationships

There are seven characteristics within healthy relationships – respect, trust, honesty, communication, compromise, individuality, and self-confidence.

- 1). Respect is essential in relationships; both partners should value each other's ideas and boundaries.
- 2). Trust is crucial in relationships, as both partners must rely on each other.
- 3). Honesty is essential. Partners should openly share their feelings without judgment, as trust and respect require honesty.
- 4). Communication is about speaking and listening. Be open, honest, and respectful with your partner, and try to understand one another.
- 5). Compromise means accepting that you and your partner won't always agree. Be open to different perspectives and willing to adjust.



Chaunjon'a Jennings-Verdun  
Master's Level Counseling Intern

**"Healthy relationships are possible to have"**  
Dr. Recco

6). Individuality means recognizing both you and your partner as unique individuals in the relationship, respecting each other's friendships, and supporting separate hobbies and interests.

7). Having self-confidence means respecting yourself and believing in who you are, which is essential for building healthy relationships with others.

There are six characteristics within unhealthy relationships – control, dishonesty, disrespect, dependence, physical violence, and sexual violence.

1). Control occurs when a partner dictates your actions, isolates you from loved ones, and directs all relationship decisions—often manipulating you into believing these choices are yours.

2). Dishonesty occurs when your partner lies to hide things from you, or if they take something from you without permission.

3). Disrespect is when your partner mocks your ideas or destroys your belongings.

4). Dependence occurs when a partner claims they can't live without you or makes their identity revolve around the relationship. While it may appear flattering, this is unhealthy. It becomes abusive if your partner threatens self-harm or suicide if you leave.

5). Physical violence, such as hitting, shoving, slapping, hair pulling, choking, or threatening these acts, is abusive and unacceptable in healthy relationships.

6). Sexual violence includes being pressured, coerced, or forced into sexual acts without your consent, even if you have consented before.

Overall, healthy relationships demand ongoing work and emotional maturity. When grounded in respect, trust, and clear communication, they offer support and foster growth. Understanding these dynamics benefits both those we help and our own development.

**“The goal is healthy relationships.”  
Dr. Recco**

# RSRC Program Services



Recco S. Richardson Consulting, Inc.

## Who Are We

Recco S. Richardson Consulting Inc. (RSRC) is a multi-faceted human service agency that provides innovative and effective mental health services, psycho-educational classes, community programs, seminars/workshops, and research. The organization was founded in 2005 by Recco Santee Richardson, Ph.D., LPC.



"Families are our focus."  
Dr. Recco

## Our Services/Programs

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## Therapist's Spotlight

Featuring: Monica Blackwell, MA, LLPC

For the Month of February, Monica Blackwell is the Therapist Spotlight. She is a Limited Licensed Professional Counselor. She worked here at Recco S. Richardson Consulting on a contractual part-time basis. Monica makes it a priority to be available to help her clients whenever she is not at her full-time job. She plans on retiring from her full-time job to be able to invest more time in her role as a therapist. Monica's current counseling caseload features teens and adults, which is the age range she feels most confident helping.

As a person and therapist, Monica is constantly growing, dedicated to learning, willing to ask essential questions, and guides her clients. She has been working toward becoming a fully licensed therapist as well and is a model of inspiration to many people.

### 1). What seems to be a central theme of your clients dating/family life and how to do help them?

Monica feels that the central theme of her clients dating, and family life is building healthy relationships and balancing their personal needs and expectations. She likes to encourage them to have effective and healthy communication. They can do this by expressing their needs, feelings, and concerns. Monica encourages her clients to always make their partner or family feel safe within the relationship. Her hope is that they will balance family living by setting boundaries, managing expectation, and creating a safe place for wholesome communication. This ensures that development takes place, goals are met, and everyone benefits.

### 2). When in doubt, what should a person do? Why?

She reported that when in doubt it is good to avoid rushing the decision-making process. One way this can be accomplished is to sleep on the decision, relax and reflect for several days, sincerely pray, and focus on the facts. Monica also mentioned that talking with a trusted person also can help block out doubt and make quality decisions.

### 3). What suggestions do you give clients who just want to disappear or escape life?

Monica takes it very seriously when someone feels like they want to disappear or escape life. When this occurs with her clients, she starts off with letting them know that she understands that they are emotionally exhausted and not alone in life. She helps them navigate life experiences, find ways to take breaks, creatively reduce their load and stressors, and eliminate the pressure. Monica also encourages them to recognize that troubles can be temporary and that it is important to change their mindset. Lastly, she shares with them ways to practice self-care, secure personal coping skills, and negotiate the removal of triggers from their life.

### 4). How should a person deal with the current world problems and issues?

She stated that everyone deals with current issues of the world differently and that it is critical to stay informed. Monica went on to say that it is helpful to not overloaded on social media and to recognize what cannot be controlled.



Monica Blackwell  
MA, LLPC

"Monica continues be a  
light of hope to others."

Dr. Recco

### **5). What seems to evade your clients the most and how do you help them secure it?**

Monica suggested that most clients are not aware of how to handle life experiences, overcome emotional challenges, trust others after being hurt, walk in personal confidence, let go of the need to control everything, avoid being anxious, and execute good boundaries. She tries to encourage and promote emotional skills that help her client cope better. To accomplish this, Monica utilizes cognitive restructuring which helps clients identify problems and situations, name their emotions, and ask the right questions.

### **6). What seems to be the missing link in most people lives and how can counseling sessions help them?**

For the most part, Monica feels like the missing link in most people's lives is personal connections, a sense of purpose, the presence of peace, being emotional aware, and inner fulfillment.

Monica believes that some people are not properly taught to process their emotions, effectively deal with stress, and correctly respond to trauma. As a result, she finds herself often encouraging her clients and teaching/re-teaching them how to learn how, the best way to cope, engaging in and with their purpose and living a healthy emotional life that features safety. To find the missing link in life, Monica found that her clients benefit from having a vision board. The board highlights their purpose and promotes visions and realistic expectations.

### **7). Talk about a time when you solved a major problem in your life and how you did it.**

There have been several major problems in Monica's life. She stated that what helped her the most was recognizing the situations for what they were, taking accountability for her fault ad actions, ask for forgiveness if she has wronged anyone, deciding to move on, and not letting things become a problem.

### **8). Why is it important for individuals and clients to walk in their purpose?**

Monica feels that purpose gives us direction. Without purpose, we can feel lost. She went on to say that when a person sets healthy goals and follows through on them, it can give a sense of purpose and hop. She often says that people with purpose know how to better handle storms and reach fulfillment in life.

### **9). What are the most important things in life and how can clients protect them?**

She stated that clients ultimately determine what is most important in their lives. To reach this point, she helps them enhance their mental and physical health, procure feeling connected, identify their talents and map out a plan to pursue their purpose. Monica shares with her clients' ways to protect what is important to them, find balance in life, set good boundaries, love on those who love them, let go of toxic relationships and recognize what gives them inner peace and emotional stability. Monica regularly encourages everyone to engage in things that gives them joy, utilize their support system, remain you accountable to others, and avoid all negative talk or risk-taking behaviors.

**"We can learn to  
manage life better."  
Dr. Recco**

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and necessary."  
Dr. Recco**

## A Look At Thought Stopping

By: Jiandan Leslie Hu, Master's Level Counseling Intern

In the 2019 book titled “45 techniques every counselor should know” B.T. Erford describes thought stopping as a structured cognitive-behavioral technique that helps clients interrupt intrusive, repetitive, or distressing thought patterns. The purpose is to catch an unhelpful thought early, stop it before it builds momentum, and then guide the client to replace it with something more constructive.

Erford lays out a four-step process for implementing the technique. Below are the steps.

- 1). First, the counselor and client start by identifying the exact thoughts that need to be addressed. Naming the target thought clearly is important because the technique works best when clients know precisely what they intend to interrupt.
- 2). Second, the client closes their eyes and imagine a situation where the unwanted thought usually appears. This primes the mind to bring the thought forward.
- 3). Third the actual interruption, in which the counselor firmly says “Stop” to break the cognitive sequence.
- 4). The fourth and final step is thought substitution. Here, the client inserts a new, healthier thought into the space that the unwanted thought once occupied. At first the substitution is said out loud, but with practice the client shifts to using internal, imagery-based substitutions.



In the book, Erford goes on to explain that thought interruption itself involves a gradual transfer of control from the counselor to the client. In the beginning, the client voices the intrusive thought aloud and the counselor responds with a clear “Stop” every time the thought appears. Later, the client signals silently when the thought emerges, and the counselor continues to interrupt it.

As the client practices, the responsibility shifts, and the client begins interrupting their own internal thoughts. Over time, the goal is for the client to do this independently, using a confident and immediate internal “Stop” when the thought appears.

Because some clients need more than a verbal command, Erford outlines variations of the method that help address negative thoughts. Many people benefit from a small physical action that reinforces the interruption. What works for many people are small actions such as snapping a rubber band on the wrist, pinching the skin lightly, pressing fingernails into the palm, or performing a quick physical movement such as standing up or turning around.

Erford includes a detailed case example involving Nong, a 17-year-old student who experiences intense perfectionistic anxiety and constant self-critical thoughts about her academic performance. Nong practices saying her negative statements aloud, then interrupts them with “Stop it,” followed by a calming positive message such as “Everything is going to be okay.”



Leslie Hu

Master's Level Counseling Intern

**“We can address  
our negative  
thoughts.”**

**Dr. Recco**

The counselor also helps her practice inserting deep breathing and relaxing visual imagery. When Nong worries about using the technique in public, the counselor introduces the rubber band strategy so she can interrupt her thoughts discreetly.

A key aspect of Erford's book is the review of research that shows that thought stopping has been applied to many areas that people struggle with, including obsessive thinking, ruminative brooding, phobias, hypochondriasis, intrusive memories, negative self-talk, insomnia, and even hallucinations.

There are mixed results regarding the effectiveness of thought stopping. Many research studies reported that it helps reduce distress, improves mood, and helps clients gain control over intrusive thoughts. In addition, some research shows significant decreases in depression, especially when thought stopping is part of a multicomponent cognitive-behavioral program.

Other research studies caution that suppressing thoughts can sometimes make them rebound or return more intensely. Because of this, Erford stresses that clinicians should use the technique thoughtfully and tailor it to each client.

Because of the differing research findings, it is important for therapist and individuals be aware of what thought stopping is and what it is not, what it does and what it does not do and myths and misconceptions about it.

As a developing and new therapist to the field, my take aways from the research and this article is that thought stopping does not work instantly and is a temporary tool to refocus. I also found that it interrupts and re-directs thoughts, is not a good fit for everyone, and is a short-term tool meant to complement deeper strategies and approaches to helping clients.

**"Being aware helps address distress and unwanted thoughts."**

**Dr. Recco**

# When Depression Hurts Our Love Relationships

By: Recco Santee Richardson, Ph.D., LPC

The focus of this article is to provide ordinary people with a better understanding of depression and how it impacts our love relationships. As we review this topic, the goal is to conceptualize and secure strategies for what helps us and helps our depressed children, co-workers, intimate partners and others. It behooves all of us to be equipped to help others negotiate their depression.

Depression is best negotiated by securing healthy emotions and developing coping skills. This is a tall task to complete but a worthwhile one all the same. I'm finding that all of us have the ability and competence to intervene and promote mental health wellness to those who struggle with depression.

## Definition

Depression is a persistent negative feeling that moves us to experience various emotional, social and physical symptoms and problems. A similar word to depression is sadness. Sadness means to feel down and blue due to a loss, change, disappointment or anger. According to the Diagnostic Statistical Manual 5 (2020), there are several types of depression (see chart 1).



"Our depression can be managed."  
Dr. Recco

## Chart #1 Types of Depression

Adjustment Disorder With Depression	Persistent Depressive Disorder
Seasonal Affect Disorder	Post-Partum Depression
Major Depressive Disorder	Bipolar Disorder
Psychotic Depression	Disruptive Mood Dysregulation
Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder	

The depressions most likely to cause severe harm to our love relationships are Major Depressive Disorder and Bipolar Disorder with Depression. This is true because of their ability to promote intense moodiness, relentless irritability, severe isolation, the presence of manic/mania, suicidal ideations, prominent fatigue, excessive forgetfulness, callous disregard, on-going annoyance and the list goes on.

## Prevalence & Causes of Depression in Adults

It is held that about 17.3 million adults in America experience at least one major depressive episode. As well, it is believed that just over 7 percent of all U.S. adults experience a major depressive symptom. The prevalence of major depressive episode is higher among adult females at 8.7 percent compared to 5.3 percent for males (Healthline, 2018).

Depression can occur to anyone, at any age, and to people of any race or ethnic group. Many argue that depression is never a "normal" part of life, no matter what your age, gender or health situation (Mental Health America, 2020). Way too many people could live more fulfilled lives, but they resist treatment. They believe their depression is not serious, that they can treat it themselves or that it is a personal weakness rather than a serious medical problem.

## What Causes Depression

In a nutshell, there are several reasons we and the people we love, experience depression. It is generally agreed to that the causes of depression are the following.

- 1). Biological differences:** People with depression appear to have physical changes in their brains. The significance of these changes is still uncertain but may eventually help pinpoint causes.
- 2). Brain chemistry:** Neurotransmitters are naturally occurring brain chemicals that likely play a role in depression. Recent research indicates that changes in the function and effect of these neurotransmitters and how they interact with neurocircuits involved in maintaining mood stability, may play a significant role in depression and its treatment.
- 3). Hormones:** Changes in the body's balance of hormones may be involved in causing or triggering depression. Hormone changes can result with pregnancy and during the weeks or months after delivery (postpartum) and from thyroid problems, menopause or several other conditions.
- 4). Genetics/Inherited Traits:** Depression is more common in people whose blood relatives also have this condition. Researchers are trying to find genes that may cause depression.
- 5). Situations:** The things that happen in life and the world around us can cause depressive experiences. When situations bind together, they can traumatize us and promote depression.
- 6). Co-Occurrence/Dual Diagnosis:** It is possible for conditions/symptoms such as high blood pressure, anxiety, cancer and diabetes to cause levels of depression.
- 7). Other:** In addition, there are several other things that can lead us to experience depression such as having low esteem, being too dependent on others, harsh criticism of ourselves, a pessimistic outlook, unrelenting stress, financial strain, relationship problems, substance abuse and weight problems.

### Addressing Depression Through Stress Management

One of the best ways to address and decrease bouts of depression is to gain victory over the stress in our lives. Stress is a word derived from the Latin word ‘Stringier’ meaning to draw tight. It was popularly used in the 17th century to mean hardship, strain, adversity or affliction.



It is a physical or psychological stimulus that can produce mental tension or physiological reactions that produce illness (physical-high blood pressure, heart attack, and mental illness- anxiety, depression, moodiness). In

today's world, stress is a buzzword used to describe the physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioral response to events that are appraised as threatening and challenging. It has been proven that stress alters the body's response to the demand that is placed on it. This is true because prolonged stress can “disturb the homeostasis” of an organism. The disruption can trigger various changes, including an alteration in behavior, autonomic function and over-activation of hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis.

“There are reasons why we battle depression.”

Dr. Recco

## The Relationship Between Stress, Anxiety & Depression

Below is a quick review of the relationship between stress, depression and anxiety. Anxiety is added to the discussion because it acts and presents like depression's cousin. When one is present, the other one is not far behind. They are like salt, pepper, Batman, and Robin.

- 1). The ability to cope with a stressor is a crucial determinant of health.
- 2). The chemical mediators (stress hormones) play an important role in promoting stress adaptation.
- 3). Stress is a predecessor and is a causative factor for the development of anxiety and depression.
- 4) Both depression and anxiety are the result of an inappropriate adaptation of stress.
- 5). Depression and anxiety are termed as stress-related disorders and are associated with the HPA axis (hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal axis).

### Stress Tolerance & Depression

Now is a good time to introduce the word stress tolerance. Stress tolerance means the ability to tolerate life and situations without becoming overwhelmed (anxious) or oppressed (depressed). It is the threshold at which an individual can effectively and consistently deal with and manage stressful situations.

To better understand and appreciate stress tolerance and its ability to decrease and address depression, a review of the types of stress and their definitions is needed.

- 1). Acute Stress:** Defined as and characterized to be immediate danger that occurs within a short span of time.
- 2). Chronic Stress:** Defined and characterized by the persistent presence of sources of frustration, depression or anxiety that a person encounters every day.
- 3). Traumatic Stress:** Defined and characterized as the occurrence of a life-threatening event that evokes fear and helplessness.

### Why Stress Tolerance Is the Key

Upon a closer look, stress tolerance is one of the best ways to overcome depression that undermines our loving relationships. When it comes to stress tolerance, it is held that:

- 1). It allows us to avoid undue anxiety, panic attacks and health concerns (Workplacetesting.com, 2019).
- 2). It is a way of thinking, responding and reframing that is critical to trauma management.
- 3). It is one of the 12 executive functioning tasks of our brain that is housed in the emotion control task area.

"We have to better tolerate stress."  
Dr. Recco

4). It is key to individuals being able to thrive in stressful situations, cope with uncertainty and manage change.

5). Failure to address chronic and traumatic stress can increase the risk of illness, depression and early mortality, among other things.

### How To Become More Stress Tolerant

There are several ways to increase our stress tolerance so that we can have healthier love relationships. Below are some examples.

**1). Accept The Unknown:** A review of the literature reveals that the ability to embrace stress requires a high tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty. The act of accepting the unknown or what we cannot change, helps us to be more stress tolerant.

**2). Address Our Trauma:** We all have been traumatized by something in our lives. For sure bad things do happen to good people. To build our stress tolerance and experience improved love relationships, we must talk about, accept, understand and move on from the trauma.

**3). Attend Counseling:** Various clinical counseling treatment strategies such as psychotherapy and behavior therapy have been successful in treating stress. The success is due to the interventions helping clients to be more aware of internal processing and gaining control over bodily stress.

### Benefits Of Stress Tolerance

When our stress tolerance is enhanced, we can expect a whole new world to open to us and our love relationships. The new awakening can happen because of the benefits associated with enhanced stress tolerance. Chart #2 list some of the benefits.

*Chart #2 Benefits of Stress Tolerance*

Positive View Of Stress	Better Coping Skill	Remain Reality Based
Pathways To Success	Focus On Growth Mindset	Frames Experiences
Learning Opportunity	Emotional Relief	Learn from Situations
Good Decision	Conceptualize Better	Improved Wisdom

"Stress has benefits."  
Dr. Recco

"We are here  
just for you."  
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## How to Contact Us

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