

# THE #1 CHOICE: BETWEEN DEPRESSION AND CREATIVITY

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**Ask yourself the following 5 questions and you'll be able to tell if you're depressed.**

You don't even need a list of symptoms.

- Do you tell yourself that, "It's too late" to pursue your dreams?
- Are you waiting to have enough money to do something you really love?
- Do you call yourself selfish, entitled, or unrealistic whenever you long for a more creative life?
- Do you worry that your family and friends would think you're wacky if you behave more creatively?
- Do you feel guilty for wanting more and tell yourself to be grateful or tolerate what you have?

If you said 'yes' to even one of these questions, you are keeping yourself from reaching for full self expression. You are suppressing your vitality. You are depressing yourself. Can you see that if you are cutting off your yearning, your desire for a more expressive, imaginative life, you are DEPRIVING YOURSELF of a major source of natural inborn joy?

In order to cut yourself off from joy that way, you'd have to have beliefs that limit you severely. Beliefs embedded in a "yes" answer to the above questions include, "I can't", "I don't deserve it", "I'll never...", "I don't matter", "What I want doesn't matter", and "I have to do what others want me to do to keep their love." Also, "I'm a better person if I don't want too much; I Have to make do, settle." Another belief might be, "If I have something good, it takes away from someone else."

**Now a confession: I lied by implication.** I suggested in the title of this article that you could chose between being creative and not being creative. But the truth is that there is no way you can not be creative.

The real choice is between creating guilt, shame, grief, fear, distress, anguish, loss OR more joy, interest, self confidence, pride, peace, belonging, connection and meaning.

Creating things of meaning and beauty, and sharing them with others has been a means of enlivening and de-depressing people for centuries. In a famous demonstration of this principle, Milton Erickson, a highly regarded hypnotist and therapist gave a sorely depressed woman doctor's orders to repot her violets and give them away. As she completed her task, she experienced joy, connection and pride. Her recovery from depression was quick and striking.

So, what small (or larger if you wish) creative step could you make today? How does it feel to think of doing it? What- if anything- do you tell yourself about how or why you "shouldn't" or "couldn't" do it? After noticing your suppressive thoughts, do it anyway!

*Dr. Jane Bolton, a marriage and family therapist, master results coach and contemporary psychoanalyst and is dedicated to supporting people in the fullest expression of their Authentic Selves. This includes Discovery, Understanding, Acceptance, Expression, and Empowerment of the Self. Call 310.838.6363 or visit [www.Dr-Jane-Bolton.com](http://www.Dr-Jane-Bolton.com)*