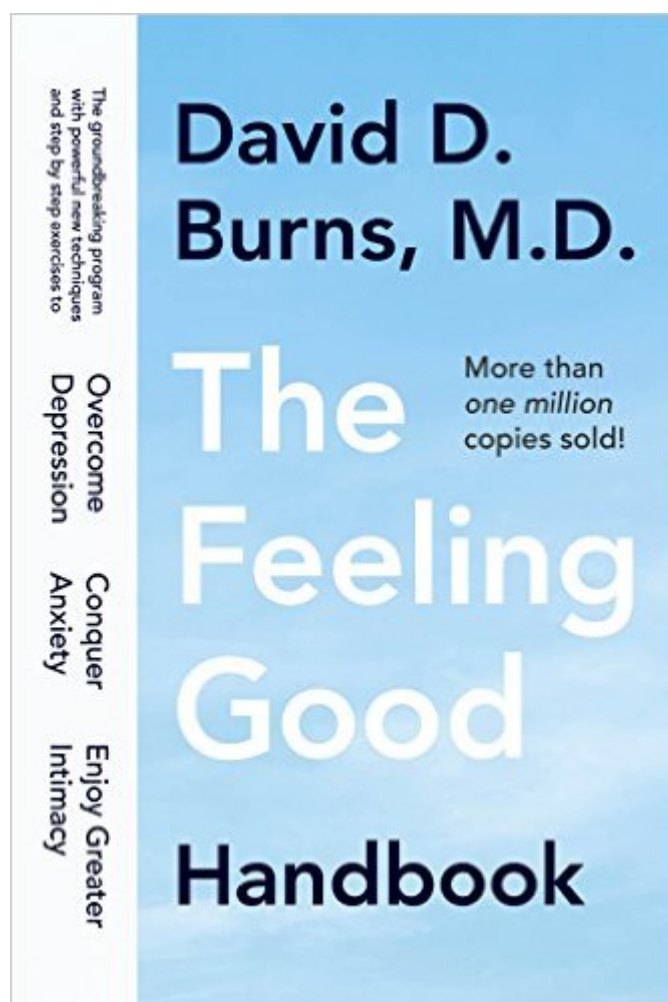


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# The Feeling Good Handbook



## Synopsis

Make life an exhilarating experience! With his phenomenally successful *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*, Dr. David Burns introduced a groundbreaking, drug-free treatment for depression. In this bestselling companion, he reveals powerful new techniques and provides step-by-step exercises that help you cope with the full range of everyday problems. Free yourself from fears, phobias, and panic attacks. Overcome self-defeating attitudes. Discover the five secrets of intimate communication. Put an end to marital conflict. Conquer procrastination and unleash your potential for success. With everything you need to know about commonly prescribed psychiatric drugs and anxiety disorders such as agoraphobia and obsessive-compulsive disorder, this remarkable guide can show you how to feel good about yourself and the people you care about. You will discover that life can be an exhilarating experience. "A wonderful achievement" the best in its class. "M. Anthony Bates, Clinical Psychologist, Presbyterian Medical Center, Philadelphia" "Clear, systematic, forceful." "Albert Ellis, PhD, President, Albert Ellis Institute"

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## Customer Reviews

In both this book and its predecessor ("*Feeling Good*"), David Burns has done an excellent job of putting tools into our hands so we can change the feelings and behaviors that we want to change. The tools in this book that I've found most helpful include (i) instruments to measure both anxiety and depression, (ii) a "pleasure-predicting sheet," (iii) a daily mood log to help identify and change unwanted feelings, and (iv) tools to help you overcome procrastination. I agree with another reviewer who said that this book and "*Feeling Good*" overlap to a great extent, and I recommend this one.

You don't need to read "Feeling Good" first, and the worksheets in this "Handbook" are larger and easier to copy and work with. While Dr. Burns uses tools from cognitive behavioral therapy, I strongly recommend that you also obtain "A Guide to Rational Living," by Albert Ellis. Dr. Ellis invented rational (cognitive) behavioral therapy in the mid-1950s and still writes, lectures, and works with clients. While Burns' books are generally better written than Ellis', Dr. Ellis teaches you how to use cognitive techniques more effectively than Dr. Burns does. Instead of just showing you how to recognize faulty thinking that produces unwanted feelings and behaviors and think of alternative thoughts, Dr. Ellis teaches you how to PERSUADE YOURSELF that this faulty thinking is both irrational and counter-productive. In my view, the difference in their approaches is similar to that between an intellectual discussion and a thoroughly persuasive speech. In order to make the desired changes, you need to convincingly and powerfully persuade yourself to change your thinking.

This is a crucial book to evaluate for those suffering from depression but skeptical of the effectiveness of most psychologists and self-help books. Burns is one of the biggest popularizers of cognitive-behavioral therapy, one of extremely few therapeutic forms that have stood up to any scientific scrutiny. Over the last 20 years, CBT has become the predominant form of therapy practiced by psychologists. This book is intensive CBT, much more involving and direct than the form practiced in most psychologists' offices. Burns takes a very simple approach: he does not place any weight on diagnostic categories or figuring out "why" people behave the way they do or the roots of their problems. Instead, every depressed thought is traced to irrational thought processes. Why those thought processes were developed is irrelevant; the challenge is identifying one's distortions and learning to think more rationally. Contrary to some reviewers' opinions, I believe this book is best for people who have long-term depression in the medium range (recurrent major depression or dysthymia), with substantial experiences with psychologists. Clearly for more extreme cases - a manic depressive or a suicidal person - the first course of action should be a psychiatrist or psychologist, not a self-help book. This book requires a very high level of involvement and personal responsibility. I believe that it is patients who think of themselves as having a medical problem, seeing psychologists and taking medication for years and perhaps feeling dependent on them, who will at some crisis point become frustrated, develop the energy and motivation to work through a book like this and benefit the most from it.

Many people don't buy into the whole "root of your problems" mentality that seems to infect the

mental health fields nowadays. That's understandable. There certainly is something to be said for a more pragmatic, straightforward approach to the treatment of certain mental states. It is to this group of people that Dr. David Burns addresses his Feeling Good Handbook. The methods in The Feeling Good Handbook are aimed at helping those suffering from depression, anxiety, and other "mild" mental issues to train themselves into healthy mental patterns. Burns has put together a series of writing exercises and journaling that is intended to help readers recognize fallacies in their thought processes. He then spends a great deal of time on each of these fallacies of thought and how to overcome them. Burns is an avid supporter of cognitive therapy. It is obvious that Burns feels the best way to mental health is through learning to master these negative thought processes. Furthermore, he states outright that it is possible to train yourself to be positive and happy by following these exercises. Like most self-help books, Burns' popular book has both positive and negative attributes. Burns has managed to accurately classify the thought traps that those suffering from clinical depression and anxiety fall into. He also presents them in such a way that they are easily memorable and will often return to the reader's mind throughout the course of the day. Burns also includes a surprisingly accurate quiz to gauge the progress of the reader. However, Burn's book depends very heavily on the reader following his instructions with exactness--and some of them are extremely tedious. This is, perhaps, not the best way to help those suffering with depression.

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