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Depression—what's the cause
and is there a cure?



History Fair + Home School: A Great Combination

Participating in a history fair can greatly enhance your child's learning and offer the opportunity to make lifelong memories.

For the Walker family of Greer, South Carolina, home schooling and participating in history fairs has been a great educational combination. Veteran home school mom Sandy and her daughter Laura, a high school junior, have been participating in local, state, and national history fairs for the past five years. In a recent discussion, they shared helpful information about their history fair experiences.

Sandy, what is a history fair?

A history fair is a competition in which school-age children present their history projects to judges.

The judges rate the students on the overall quality of their projects and on the students' ability to communicate on both how they performed their research and why their topic is appropriate and historically significant.

Why did you decide to involve your family in a history fair?

Our involvement with history projects sprang from several years of participation in the BJ Home Educators' Science Fair. When BJ Home Education Services added a history fair to their science fair, we allowed our children to choose a history project if they preferred

that to a science project. (We have required them to choose one or the other each year, but we have allowed them to do both as long as we're convinced they have the time and determination to complete both projects.)

Laura, why did you want to participate in a history fair?

I had done science fairs for several years before Bob Jones started the history fair. I thought it would be neat to do a history fair. My first year of doing a history project was very enjoyable. A history project is a little easier than a science project because there are so many topics out there for anyone, at any age, to do.

Sandy, describe briefly how to create a history fair project.

We start by going to the Internet to see what the National History Day theme is for the year.* Usually I print a list of the sample topics provided on the website. This gives us something to mull over. Then the children and I discuss possible topics that they think would be interesting, researchable, and appropriate, given that year's theme. Next, the children begin researching. Sources we've used include books, magazines, newspapers, interviews, visits to historical sites, Internet searches, and

BJ Home Educators' Science and History Fair

- Who?** All home school students enrolled in grades 1–12
- What?** Home school students may choose to enter a science project, a history project, or both.
- Where?** BJU Main Campus—Student Center
- When?** Saturday, February 25, 2006

For further information, please call 1.800.845.5731, ext. 3329 (locally, 864.242.5100, ext. 3329) and speak to the registration coordinator. Or visit the BJU Press website at bjup.com and click Resources Online to access the registration form and resource packet.

mission trips. The children take notes and make bibliography entries as they go. Finally, the children pull everything together to write a short process paper and to complete the exhibit, presentation, or documentary for the judges to score.

In your opinion, what is the key ingredient in a winning history fair project?

Ultimately, I think that the choice of topic is the most critical element to a winning project. I think a great topic has three main characteristics. It's interesting to your student, it's able to be widely researched for both primary and secondary sources, and it fits snugly into the National History Day theme. If your child has a great topic, he's

made a big step toward a wonderful project.

Laura, what were your most enjoyable project and most memorable experience?

I did a project two years ago about the orphan trains, using Mrs. Dorothy Urch, a Greenville resident, as my primary source. Mrs. Urch is a sweet Christian lady in her nineties who rode on the orphan trains to Iowa. I made a documentary for that project, which was very enjoyable. Meeting Mrs. Urch and getting to know her story was the most memorable experience for me, but competing in the State History Fair and doing a project on bananas my second-grade year were just as memorable. I don't know why I remember my banana project so well, but for some



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“Ultimately, I think that the choice of topic is the most critical element to a winning project.”

reason, that one has stuck with me for a long time.

Why would you encourage other students to participate in history fairs?

I have really enjoyed the opportunities the history fairs have given me. I have learned a lot, not only about the subject of my project, but also about more basic things like writing a research paper, making a display board, knowing how to research a project, and even down to the very basic skill of learning how to type quickly and efficiently. Even though it can get very tedious constantly researching and thinking about your project, I would not miss the opportunities these fairs have given me to meet people, to go places, and to learn facts about a variety of things.

Sandy, in your experience, what are the benefits of participating in the BJ History Fair and the National History Day Fair?

We believe that participation in history fairs benefits our children academically, socially, and

spiritually. The academic benefits include the researching, writing, organizing, and attention to detail that a well-done project requires. We’ve watched our children grow socially as they learn to communicate their ideas and findings, first to

parents and friends, and then to judges. Attending fairs also allows them to polish basic social skills with children from varying backgrounds and beliefs. Our children accrue spiritual benefits by seeing personally the necessity of self-disciplined effort. They also reflect upon God’s providence as He accomplishes His will by turning hearts of kings, exalting certain people, and overthrowing others.

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Laura Walker as Revolutionary War heroine Emily Geiger in her history fair project called “Message Destroyed, Meaning Delivered.”

A Cozy Conversation with Eileen Berry

Eileen Berry is a poet, teacher of writing, and author of two children's books. We met one Friday over cups of tea to talk about her latest story, *Haiku on Your Shoe*.

Nancy Bopp: You've dedicated this "To Daddy, who has always nurtured my love for storymaking." Tell me about that.

Eileen Berry: I think my dad's encouragement of my imagination as a child had a lot to do with my desire to pursue creative writing. I was always giving my stuffed animals personalities or impersonating various characters I had made up. My dad would enter into the fun and play along. He was never dismissive of all this as silly and beneath him, and his loving interest in my little games taught me that creativity was something to be valued and nurtured.

NB: There's a nurturing mom in the story. Is she like your mom?

EB: My mom was really great about steering my thinking into a spiritual direction, especially the way I thought about my problems. One thing [she] did to encourage child-parent communication was to have a snack time with my sister and me when we came home from school each day.

NB: Snack time's in the book! I loved that.

EB: [For us] it was a time to relax and unwind before getting on with school work or piano practice. If anything disturbing or distressing had happened at school that day, snack time was usually the time when it would come out.

NB: Jeremy's mom listened and talked to him, and he is seen later remembering her words.

You show Jeremy remembering his teacher's words.

EB: Parents and teachers are a powerful influence, particularly at the age level this book was written for. I think it's true that when kids feel loved by an adult, they are more likely to open up to that person and listen to his advice.

NB: What made you write a story about a language barrier?

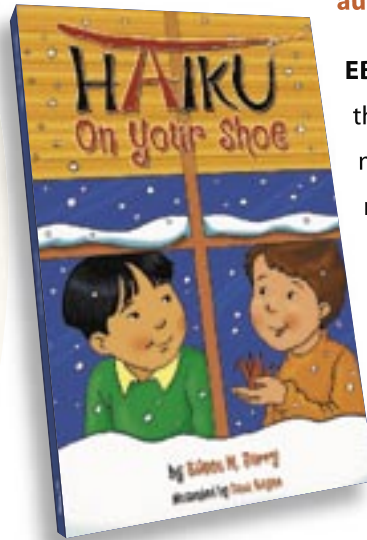
EB: The idea came from my experiences in ESL tutoring (English as a Second Language). . . I've spent quite a bit of time in Japanese households and learned a little about how American life appears from their cultural perspective.



NB: Jeremy and Taka are the story’s focus, but other children, Scot and Lily, for instance, contribute memorable behavior. What of them?

EB: I wanted to show that the good communication lines between [Jeremy] and his mom strengthened him and made him more stable than some of the other children in the story. I hope that reading the book might encourage some children to talk over their problems with their parents rather than bottling things up inside.

NB: Also, *Haiku on Your Shoe* will encourage parents who may not feel prepared to think about or answer the big things their children are saying. You show Jeremy’s mom using her imagination. She sees simple things—icicles,



candle wax, marshmallows—and then she thoughtfully engages her son to think compassionately toward Taka. You’ve written a huge theme in a short book for a young audience. Why compassion?

EB: The theme came from something the Lord had been impressing on me, and that is the need to continue reaching out with love to people even when I feel rebuffed or rejected by them. It’s a very hard thing to do, even for an adult, but it’s such a defining trait of God. Sometimes [our] perspective changes things if we can get beyond ourselves to “walk in other people’s shoes.”

NB: Your story itself is a haiku: small but surprisingly large.

Nancy Bopp is a staff writer for Marketing Development at BJU Press.

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History becomes “His-story” as the children research and learn.

How do you incorporate these experiences into your home school?

We’ve learned that the key is to start early. We try to select topics early in the school year and then complete portions of the project in “little bits.” We also try to work ahead in our regular history curriculum so that we can devote several class sessions to the project as we get close to the history fair date. Since all of our children do either a history or science project, we devote the week prior to the fair almost exclusively to projects. Throughout the school year I substitute portions of the projects for certain assignments involving researching, outlining, and organizing

facts. For example, I skip English lessons that highlight a particular aspect of library research since I know the children have already covered this. The research paper required for a high-school history project becomes a high-schooler’s research project for the school year, and I grade his process paper as a writing assignment. This helps prevent upheaval in my lesson plan schedule.

Obviously, participating in an event such as this can greatly enhance a home school student’s learning and give him an opportunity to make wonderful memories that could impact his life forever. How about that for a great combination! 🍪

* The National History Day is a yearlong educational program for grades 6–12 that culminates in a national contest every June.

Defeating Depression

When a person talks to me about depression, I don't have to struggle to empathize. I relate all too well.

If you struggle at times with “getting down” or perhaps know of someone who does, I'd like to encourage you with one simple truth. And before you dismiss this as the counsel of an aloof academic who just doesn't get it, remember—I've wrestled with this problem. That simple truth is this: to be depressed is to be blessed.

How could I even suggest such an idea? Let me illustrate. One day my car's “check engine” light came on. At first I ignored it, hoping it might somehow go off by itself, but it didn't. Every time I turned the key, that light just glared at me. Finally I gave in. I went to a local dealership. The problem was that an electronic module was “out of range.” Something under the hood was failing. The car was still running, but an electrical part was breaking down. They replaced the module and reset the light, and I was on my way.

I didn't like seeing that “check engine” light come on. I certainly didn't enjoy paying the diagnostic fee. But even though that red dashboard glow initially was a “hurt,” in the long run it was a help—and since I replaced the module before it completely failed, I was never stuck on the side of the road with a broken-down car. In hindsight, having the “check engine” light come on was a blessing!

Let's suppose I took my car to a mechanic and said, “The ‘check engine’ light is on. Can you fix it?” He then reached under the dash, pulled the bulb out, and replied, “It's off. Problem fixed!” Yes, it's true that the check engine light would no longer be glowing, but that wouldn't really solve the problem. I may have felt better,

but I also may have found myself stranded one day, the result of an electrical failure.

The key to defeating depression is remembering that depression is not the problem, only a symptom of the problem—an indication that something is “out of the proper range.” We need to determine what causes the depression. Since depression is often defined as “hopelessness” (see Ps. 42:5, 11), another way to ask this is, “Why am I feeling hopeless?”

Certainly physical factors could be involved. We all tend to struggle more if we are not eating properly, exercising regularly, and getting adequate rest. An organic problem can play a role, so a physical exam is a good analytical step. Apart from physical causes, though, why do we sometimes feel depressed?

Often the problem is misplaced hope. We tend to believe that once we get something or once a certain event takes place, then we will be happy. For example, consider the following statements:

“Once our church supports me full-time and I quit my part-time job, I’ll be happy.”

“Once our people begin to respond better to my preaching, I’ll be satisfied.”

“If only we could relocate to a newer part of town, we could really reach this county, and I would be fulfilled.”

Certainly there’s nothing wrong with hoping to be supported full-time, wanting to see God use your preaching, or desiring new ministry opportunities. Yet sometimes we want these too much. We seek them more than we seek Christ (Matt. 6:33). Sometimes we treasure things other than Christ (Matt. 6:21). We may even forget that Christ is the “pearl of great price”—worth more than everything else that we possess (Matt. 13:45, 46)!

Why then is depression a blessing? It’s God’s way of getting our attention, similar to a spiritual “check engine” light. It’s God’s way of warning us that our focus is shifting, our vision is getting cloudy. It’s God asking us yet again, “What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity [emptiness], and are become vain [empty]?” (Jer. 2:5). If we find ourselves feeling empty, there’s a pretty good chance that we have been walking after emptiness! Yet when we pursue Jehovah, we find our thirst quenched with “living waters” (Jer. 2:13).

How then do we defeat depression? By remembering that depression is not really the problem but is instead a symptom of a problem. We should thank God for showing us that we have been hoping in something other than Him! Whether we have placed our hope in good health, cordial

family relationships, or a growing congregation, we must acknowledge that this is misplaced hope. We must confess yet again, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (Ps. 73:25–26). We must again remember that “They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed” (Ps. 34:5).

When you hope in God and God alone, you will find again that “the God of hope” really is able to “fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 15:13). When you return to longing for Him and Him alone as you read His Word, you will again experience that the Scriptures really do give you hope (Rom. 15:4) and that the fruit of the Spirit still includes joy and peace (Gal. 5:22).

May the Lord help us to hope in Him and Him alone! And for those times when our hope begins to drift toward lesser things, may He gently remind us that when we are depressed, we really are blessed. 🙏

Dr. Greg Mazak serves as associate pastor at Trinity Bible Church of Greer, South Carolina, and is the head of the MS program in Counseling at Bob Jones University.

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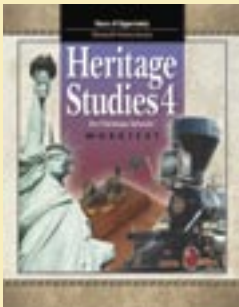


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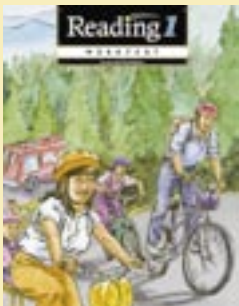
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