



DISCOVER THE HEALING POWER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

AN INTRODUCTION TO THERAPEUTIC PHOTOGRAPHY
FOR DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

- BRYCE EVANS -

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WHAT IS THERAPEUTIC PHOTOGRAPHY?

“The moment the shutter clicked, I felt a shift within me.”



ABOUT THERAPEUTIC PHOTOGRAPHY

Therapeutic photography involves taking, analyzing and using photos for the purpose of personal healing, growth, or understanding, whether done consciously or unconsciously.

By actively constructing, analyzing and reflecting on photographs by pairing it with creative writing, you are able to learn more about yourself and how you see the world.

Therapeutic Benefits of Photography and Writing

In 2010, researchers analyzed and reported a summary of over 100 studies focusing on the effects of art on physical and psychological health in [*The Connection Between Art, Healing, and Public Health: A Review of Current Literature.*](#)

Positive ways visual art and expressive writing affect our health included:

- Art allowed them to express their feelings in a symbolic manner
- Helped bring focus to positive life experiences, relieving their preoccupation with illness
- Opportunities to demonstrate continuity, challenge, and achievement enhanced self-worth and identity
- Patients can forget about their illness for a while and escape intense emotions
- Artistic self-expression might contribute to maintenance or reconstruction of a positive identity
- Art reduced stress by lowering levels of the stress hormone cortisol
- Enabled them to maintain an identity of who they were before they got sick and expand their identity in a way that resisted being defined by their illness
- Emotional writing about upsetting experiences produces long-term improvements in mood and health and can influence frequency of physician visits, immune function, stress hormones, blood pressure, and a number of social, academic, and cognitive variables

Natural Remedies For Depression and Anxiety

Art helps people express experiences that are too difficult to put into words, such as a diagnosis of cancer or the intense web of feelings that can come with depression or anxiety. Photography is one of the most accessible and least threatening forms of art and creativity, that anyone can use to express themselves and find healing.

A 2014 study found that those who took part in creating visual art had a significant increase in [psychological resiliency](#), which is a necessary tool for those suffering from depression and anxiety.

The neurotransmitter dopamine can be increased through this process, which can be lacking in those suffering from depression and has been found to immediately start to help [prevent depressive-like behaviours](#).

A person's perspective on themselves and the world can be gradually explored and changed through the process of taking photographs, analyzing them and discussing with others. [Neuroplasticity](#) tells us that our brain has the ability to change constantly throughout our lives and grow new connections.

Therapeutic Photography In Our Lives

By creating photos that tell stories you cannot put into words which then become works that you are proud of, you can start to build self-esteem. Similarly, sharing your photographs and getting positive feedback from others can help you continue to build confidence and become more comfortable expressing your opinion, thoughts, and story with others.

The wide-range of benefits involved in these techniques and practices come together to provide many of the changes needed to help bring people back up from a deep depression, calm and control anxieties, and work proactively to keep these issues from lasting or coming back again.

With the amount of photos being taken every day and the continuous increase in the ease that we can share our stories, the opportunity to put these theories into action for own lives and the lives of others is unprecedented.



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THE POWER OF A TRILLION PHOTOS

"Every day over one billion photos are shared online and I believe we are standing on top of a massive opportunity to change how we see and talk about mental health."



THE POWER OF A TRILLION PHOTOS

Photography has taken over our lives. It used to be that you needed thousands of dollars and a specific set of skills to be able to take and share photographs — it was a specialized field.

Then came the digital revolution. Now, most people are walking around with an incredibly powerful camera in their pocket that has the ability to create an image and share it instantly with billions of others.

The power of this cannot be overstated.

Every day more and more people are gaining access to cameras and an internet connection — and most importantly a relatively inexpensive channel to tell their story.

The number of photos being taken and uploaded to the internet daily is mind-boggling, but what is even more astonishing are the underlying implications of this for mental health.

Something big is happening right now in mental health with the proliferation of photography.

Photography helped me to overcome severe depression and anxiety, with the camera serving as my therapist. My photos held a mirror up to the thoughts circling around in my head, so I could finally see and begin to understand more about what I was dealing with.

I created stories from those photos to allow myself to open up more and explore these arenas within myself where I never dared to enter in the past. This small creative project quickly changed my life, and soon after became my life's work. *And I'm not the only one.*

We are approaching 1,000,000,000,000 (one trillion) new photos *per year*.

With the wide variety of social networks and platforms available today, the photos will be taken for many different reasons and used in different ways, but each and every photograph is an expression. It represents a unique voice, moment, and perspective of the world.



THE POWER OF A TRILLION PHOTOS

Those photos may be telling a story that has never been told or helping people through a struggle that may seem unbearable, something they don't have the words for.

A photograph can help express that.

Many people are doing this already and unconsciously helping themselves with the power of therapeutic photography, but may not be getting the full benefits without understanding what they are doing.

The most beautiful part of all of this is how these photos are helping us connect with each other, instantly across

the world, and building empathy for our fellow human beings.

With each of those one trillion photos comes the opportunity for endless connections to be made. A cancer survivor may help instill hope in someone who was recently diagnosed. Someone suffering from anxiety can create a self-portrait project to visualize what they feel and help the people they love understand. A single photo may spark an insight within someone that saves their life.

I have seen countless situations like these play out each day on social networks such as Instagram, Facebook, Tumblr, and our own platform for [The One Project](#), which make it drastically easier to share your story and engage with the global community.

Photography projects like Humans of New York, Project Pilgrim and The Stranger Project are helping others to share deep stories of vulnerability through photography and storytelling.

My greatest benefit from The One Project has come from the connections and conversation that has evolved from the photos and the stories.

It is what has allowed what was once my greatest fear (talking about depression) to become my greatest dream in doing this work to help others.



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10 THERAPEUTIC BENEFITS OF PHOTOGRAPHY



GETTING
OUTSIDE:

“My camera is like an
open invitation to explore
the World around me.”



GETTING OUTSIDE:

Photography often provides a motivation to get outside and connect with nature. As you begin taking photos, there's a pull that comes to find new and unique views — alternate perspectives — which will lead people outside of their door, their neighbourhood and often their country.

In regards to depression and anxiety, this can be an integral part of recovery and the tools needed to keep the symptoms at bay by providing a hobby that includes exercise (often out amongst Nature) and allows the person to get 'out of their head'.



GETTING
OUTSIDE:
CHALLENGE

#TOPmyoutside

Choose a place that you've never been before in your local area (we all have one). Somewhere that you've thought about going for a while, but put off for various reasons. Head out today with your camera and go search for a great photo. If you can't today, make plans to go out this weekend (put it on your calendar). Take a photo and tell a story about the experience.

Post your story on Instagram or [The One Project](#) using the hashtag **#TOPmyoutside**.



SELF EXPRESSION
& REFLECTION

“Every photograph has a piece of our spirit, a piece of our story, and together they can show us who we are.”



SELF EXPRESSION & REFLECTION

Your photos are a form of self-expression and reflection that can provide not only therapeutic benefits, but also powerful personal insights into who you are and how you see the World.

If patterns start to emerge in the way that you compose or edit your photographs, it can simply be a personal preference or may be an indicator of something more meaningful.

By reflecting on and reviewing your photographs, along with asking questions about them, you can uncover interesting aspects of your self and how you communicate. Your photos can act as reminders, showing you how your perspective of yourself and the world has changed over time and how you have grown as a person.



SELF EXPRESSION
& REFLECTION:
CHALLENGE

#TOPmyself

Take a photo and tell a story that represents a part of yourself, without you appearing in the photo. It can feature an item with special meaning, a place that you hold close to your heart or anything else that helps tell your story. Tell us a little bit about who you are.

Post your story on Instagram or [The One Project](#) using the hashtag **#TOPmyself**.



A SHIFT IN
PERSPECTIVE

“The camera allows us the unique opportunity to see through a new set of eyes.”



A SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE

When taking photos you are literally looking through a new (or different) lens, which can become a metaphor for the shift in perspective that it can bring for you.

Both depression and anxiety can leave you stuck in a very narrow point-of-view, almost as if you have blinders on to everything and everyone around you.

Photography allows you to step outside of that to see different perspectives, more beauty and more possibilities.

Something as simple as a small shift in perspective can have a profound impact on your life — especially when compounded with further changes over time.

Grab your camera, get out to explore the world and see it through a new lens!



A SHIFT IN
PERSPECTIVE:
CHALLENGE

#TOPnewlens

Take a photo from an angle that you don't usually use, lay down, crouch or get onto higher ground to look down. Tell a story talking about what it was like to see from this perspective and anything you may have learned.

Post your story on Instagram or [The One Project](#) using the hashtag **#TOPnewlens**.



SEARCHING
FOR BEAUTY

“I was able to start seeing beauty all around me: in darkness and in light. The ordinary became fascinating and the mundane started to shine.”



SEARCHING FOR BEAUTY

When you have a camera in your hand, you begin searching for beauty in the world more.

It's not always in the obvious places — the mundane can start to take on new meaning and light for you as your eye becomes more trained to find the next photo.

This is often connected to *gratitude*, which is another powerful tool for healing and shifting your thought patterns.



SEARCHING
FOR BEAUTY:
CHALLENGE

#TOPfoundbeauty

Go out with a special intention today of looking for beauty in the everyday. You may find something new or be reminded to appreciate something once again. Tell a story about your search for beauty and what you found.

Post your story on Instagram or [The One Project](#) using the hashtag **#TOPfoundbeauty**.



NON-VERBAL
COMMUNICATION

“A picture is worth so much more than the proverbial thousand words, as it says for us what cannot be spoken.”



NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Photography acts as non-verbal communication, which can be huge when dealing with issues like depression or anxiety that are hindered by stigma.

Using photography as a form of non-verbal communication can be a much easier way to express what's too hard to put into words. The complex web of sensations (and lack thereof) you experience during a bout of depression or the intensities of severe anxiety — it's extremely difficult to find the words to properly communicate what that's like.

That's why so many people connect with photos displaying depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. You'll see an endless stream of comments stating things like, "Wow, this is exactly how I feel!" or "Seeing this im-



NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

age made me feel less alone, I now know there are others struggling in the same way I am. Thank you."

When you are talking about a photo, it can spark an incredibly powerful conversation that helps you get to the stage that you're comfortable talking about your own personal struggles.



NON-VERBAL
COMMUNICATION:
CHALLENGE

#TOPmymessage

What has been hard for you to talk about recently? Is there a conversation you've been putting off because you feel that you don't have the words? Go out and try to say it through a photo. Write a story with it and if you're not comfortable with sharing exactly what it is, you can be more poetic and vague with your words. Let the photo do the talking.

Post your story on Instagram or [The One Project](#) using the hashtag **#TOPmymessage**.



MINDFULNESS,
FLOW & FOCUS

“When I look through the lens of my camera, everything else falls away. My anxiety and the stresses of life are gone.”



MINDFULNESS, FLOW & FOCUS

Photography can be a form of mindfulness (or present state awareness), similar to meditation, which is proven to help people suffering from depression and anxiety. Often when you're taking photos, you can find yourself in "flow", which brings many health benefits similar to meditation like calming the mind and providing relief from stress.

It helps you to focus externally — rather than getting caught up in the thoughts racing through your mind.

The same can happen during the editing or review process of looking through your images, you can find yourself "there" again in that space or that moment.



MINDFULNESS,
FLOW & FOCUS:
CHALLENGE

#TOPmyflow

Go out to take photos and try to be aware of how you feel. Is there a certain type of calm or ease once you get into it? Take a photo to represent the feeling and tell a story that talks about what your 'flow' is like.

Post your story on Instagram or [The One Project](#) using the hashtag **#TOPmyflow**.



GAINING CONTROL

“I feel a certain sense of power and control when holding my camera. The choice of the frame and which moment to capture is solely mine.”



GAINING CONTROL

When suffering from depression and anxiety, the feeling that you've lost control can often be present — which is regained when holding a camera to take photos.

You have full control over what is in the frame (and what isn't), along with all the settings that come with your camera when in manual mode to present the view in the way that you want.

Photography can be an accessible way for people to start to gain back control of their creative voice.

With every photograph, there is a small internal battle to continue creating and another to put ourselves out there through our work when sharing it.



GAINING
CONTROL:
CHALLENGE

#TOPcontrol

Take a photo and be mindful of the little choices you're making during the process. What are you cropping out of the frame? What settings are you using and why? What is the main subject you're trying to capture? Tell a story about your control and the choices you made to create your photo.

Post your story on Instagram or [The One Project](#) using the hashtag **#TOPcontrol**.



POSITIVE FEEDBACK

“Hearing empathy and understanding in people’s words about my photos was single-handedly one of the most helpful parts in the recovery of my creative voice.”



POSITIVE FEEDBACK

When we do share our photos, it can be a great way for us to gain positive feedback from our friends, loved ones and other people from around the world.

These small wins can make a huge difference early on for someone dealing with depression and anxiety, who may feel as if they have no value or way to contribute.

Sharing your work and receiving positive feedback will continue to help build confidence, open you up to share your creative voice and motivate you further to continue the process.



POSITIVE
FEEDBACK:
CHALLENGE

#TOPthankyou

Think back to a time when someone praised your photo or provided a perspective that changed the way you saw it. Take a photo (or use the photo from that experience) and tell a story about what happened and what it meant to you. *Don't forget to say thank you.*

Post your story on Instagram or [The One Project](#) using the hashtag **#TOPthankyou**.



HELPS ESTABLISH
SOCIAL BONDS

“As I began to get out and explore more, I soon found myself surrounded by a community of other people exploring with a camera in hand.”



HELPS ESTABLISH SOCIAL BONDS

Photography can be a very social activity, helping you to reach out and establish bonds with people.

Looking to capture someone's portrait up-close? You'll have to go over and ask them if that's ok. The desired photo can become the extra motivation needed to bridge the gap between yourself and others.

In the same way your camera can be a great excuse to get out and connect with people, with the process and resulting photos acting as a justified fill for any silence during your time with them.

For these reasons, photography is a great tool for anyone suffering from social anxiety. During photo walks, if you're feeling particularly anxious, you can go off on your



HELPS ESTABLISH
SOCIAL BONDS:
CHALLENGE

own without anyone suspecting anything more than your desire to capture a different view.

#TOPnewfriends

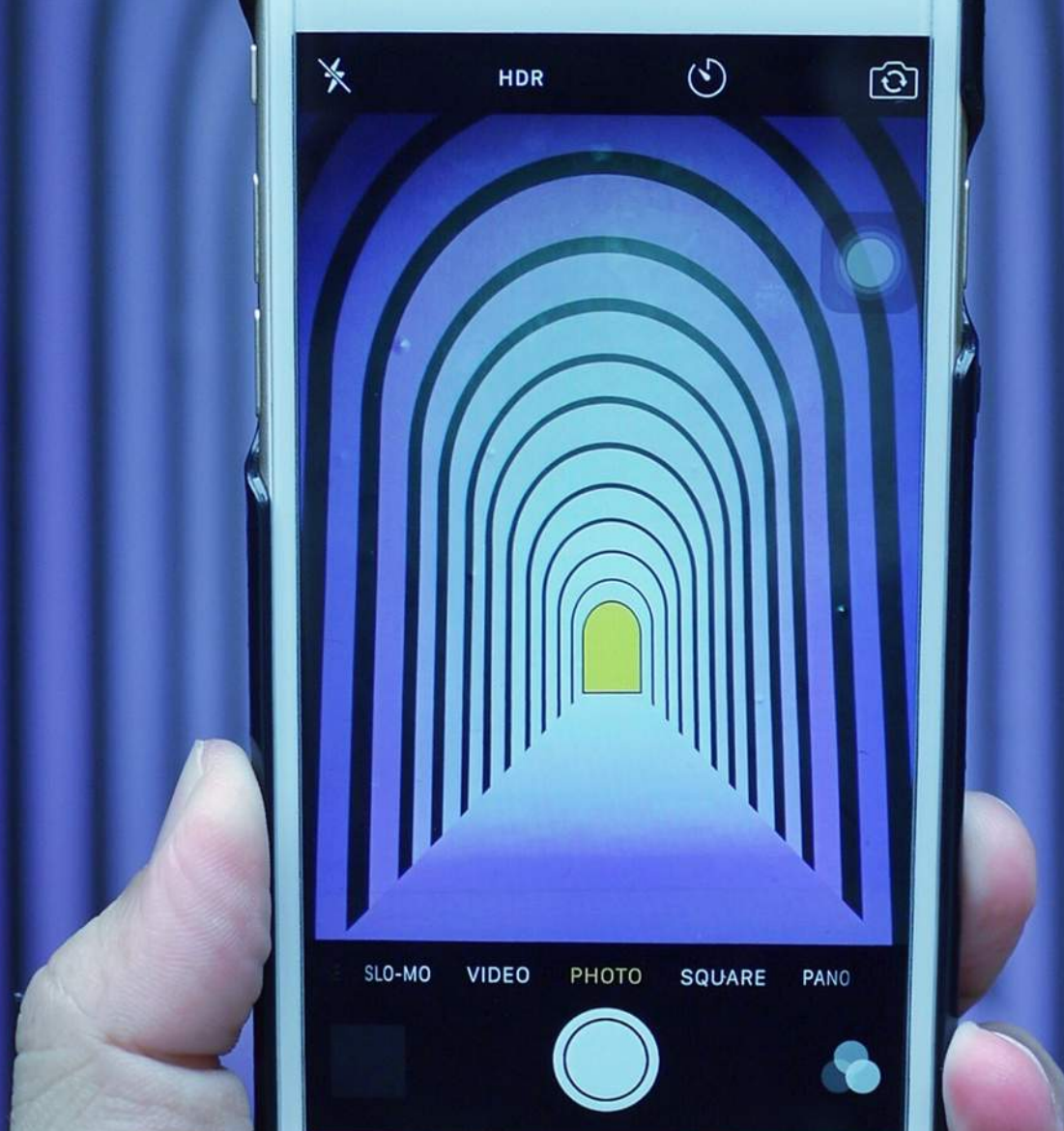
Take a photo and tell a story about someone that you've met through your photography. If it hasn't happened yet, search for photo walks or meet-ups online within your community. Can't find any? Get outside to take photos and serendipity may work in your favor.

Post your story on Instagram or [The One Project](#) using the hashtag **#TOPnewfriends**.



CONNECTING
TO THE
UNCONSCIOUS

“Your camera can become a gateway to the unconscious mind, your photos a way to let your true voice through.”



CONNECTING TO THE UNCONSCIOUS

Photography can be a connection to your subconscious mind, helping you to discover powerful personal insights about the cause behind your depression or anxiety.

Often the answers we seek externally are found within us.

It's much easier to bypass all the stigma that surrounds these topics and all of the words we normally use to discuss them. Rather than intellectualizing it all through the words, you have an immediate, visceral reaction to the visuals that can shift something within you — **that's when real change occurs.**



CONNECTING
TO THE
UNCONSCIOUS:
CHALLENGE

#TOPmyinsight

Is there an insight that you've gained through your photos in the past? If not, go through a collection of your existing photos and try to see if there are any patterns that stick out to you. Once you've found one, choose a photo and tell a story about what you've discovered.

Post your story on Instagram or [The One Project](#) using the hashtag **#TOPmyinsight**.



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FINAL THOUGHTS ON THERAPEUTIC PHOTOGRAPHY

*Why this is so important for minds, our
World and our health.*



FINAL THOUGHTS ON THERAPEUTIC PHOTOGRAPHY

I hope that you've gained a better picture of the healing power of photography and how it can be used to improve our understanding, creative expression and connection with others.

Through the ever increasing number of photos that we take and share each day, we have an unprecedented opportunity to break down barriers between us and build greater empathy.

This is a universal way of communicating and connecting that bridges borders, cultures and language.

It starts with you. The most powerful changes we can make are from within and with that, *we can change the world.*



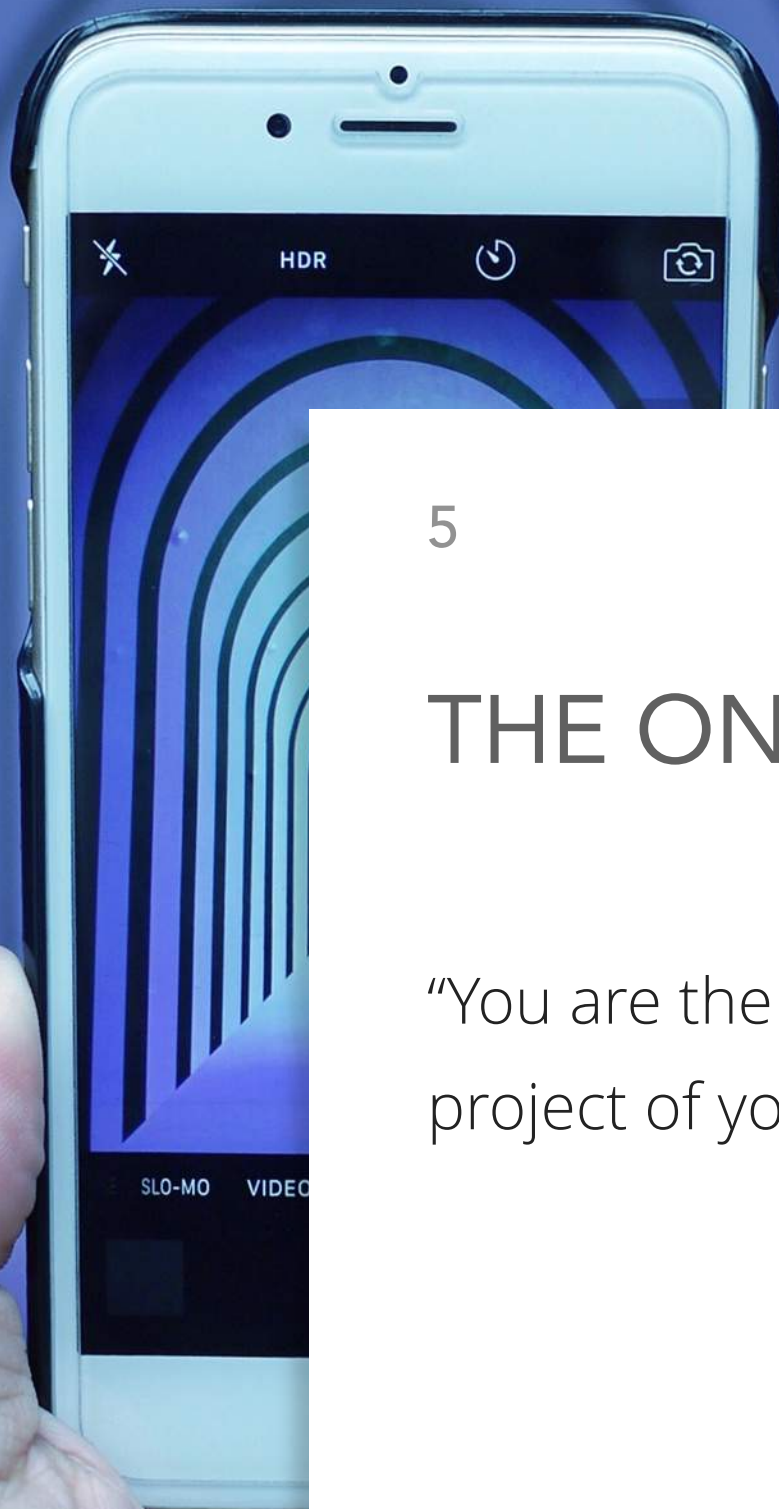
FINAL THOUGHTS ON THERAPEUTIC PHOTOGRAPHY

A simple call-to-action:

Share this with one person.

I have seen and heard of countless people whose lives have been changed and saved from the photos and stories they told and the conversations that resulted.

Although many people are already implementing therapeutic photography techniques for themselves or others, there are too many people left struggling with the feeling that they are alone. We need to help teach each other the power of a camera and an internet connection — the healing power of photography.



5

THE ONE PROJECT

"You are the most important project of your life."



WHAT IS THE ONE PROJECT?

The One Project is the photography community for people suffering from depression and anxiety. We teach how therapeutic photography (the healing power of photography) techniques can be used to better express, understand, and overcome these issues with our private online platform and courses.

[Sign up for free now.](#)

If you're interested in learning more about therapeutic photography and how our specific set of techniques can be used to help with depression and anxiety, try out our [online course](#).

Please note: I always encourage photography to be a tool within your "toolkit" of techniques and support if you're struggling with a serious issue like depression or anxiety. It's not a replacement for professional help.



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ABOUT BRYCE EVANS

Bryce Evans is Founder of The One Project and a leading expert in therapeutic photography and how it can be used for depression and anxiety – teaching, writing and speaking around the world about the healing power of photos. He's also an award-winning photographer, artist and marketing consultant discovering the art of life. Bryce has built a community over 50,000, worked with top international brands and exhibited his artwork internationally — all to help inspire and share valuable insights.

You can also watch his TEDx talk, [How Photography Saved My Life](#) to learn more about his story.

Dear Reader,

I know the paralyzing grips of anxiety and the dark depths of depression.

I've been through it. **Photography saved my life** by helping me finally start expressing, understanding and eventually overcoming severe depression and anxiety that was prolonged for years by silence.

Since that time over 5 years ago, my mission is to bring more awareness to the therapeutic power of photography through [The One Project](#).

In that time, I've spoken with thousands of others who struggle with these issues, researched and got involved in the broader field of therapeutic photography and worked to understand exactly how photography can be used as a way to cope with and overcome depression and anxiety.

I know that it can be so incredibly tiring and difficult when you're in the middle of it. Through the stories of so many others, I've seen that we all experience it in different ways — and yet it's very much the same. **You are not alone.**

Despite what you may think, it does get better. You may one day get a stroke of insight that forever changes how you see yourself and the World, but the likely reality of your recovery will be slow and gradual filled with the small wins. Celebrate them, show yourself gratitude for the hard work you're putting in and understand that all of this will provide you with so much incredibly valuable insight and strength that it will feel like a gift afterwards. Stay strong and ask for help.

Always remember, you are the most important project of your life.

- Bryce Evans

This is not the end.