

# 7 Lilly's Antidepressant Life

## #7 Fighting Depression After the Super Bowl

Hi Everybody, welcome to Lilly's Antidepressant Life where we can share our experiences with depression in a safe, healthy environment. And my number one message I want to tell everyone is that You Are Not Alone.

There are a lot of us depression warriors fighting the daily battles that rage inside our own bodies. It's important to take the time to acknowledge each other, and lift one another up. I know sometimes I am too bogged down to be able to climb out of the pit of despair myself, and I need a friendly hand to give me that boost.

Today, I want to talk about the big game we just had here in the US = The Super Bowl! I wrote a blog about it for today's 3 O'Clock Wednesday on my website [lillystrong.com](http://lillystrong.com). I hope you'll check it out and leave me a comment about your thoughts.

Did you enjoy the game this year? It was super fun! I went to a small party with friends and had a fabulous time, but it's not like that every year. In fact, I can say that Super Bowl parties can be huge triggers for my depression and anxiety.

And it always makes me wonder: why?

Cue a moment of self-reflection.

I am a self-blamer. I criticize myself very harshly and don't really give myself a break. So, when I find myself in an overwhelming social situation, I usually end up telling myself that it is my fault, and that it's a weakness of mine that I can't socialize like everyone else.

I think it took the experience of having 3 children on various parts of the autism spectrum for me to clearly see that there is no "right or wrong" way to deal with social situations. Everybody has a different tolerance for noise, lights, excitement, and visual stimulation.

My oldest child will quite literally melt into the wall as if he can escape by becoming invisible. My middle child will rise to the social challenge and laugh and talk and carry on...but then will need to retreat to "regroup" for several hours afterward. Sometimes even days. And that's ok.

My youngest child, the only one with more severe autism, will actually become hyper-focused. Almost like it's a survival technique, he can block out everything else

around him and focus intently on the one task he is doing. Of course, that means he needs something to focus on, and if he doesn't have anything to do, he will resort to rocking or stimming of some sort.

For example, we went to Dave and Busters a couple months ago. It was crazy loud with flashing lights and video games screeching from every corner. I was done and ready to leave within half an hour, but my youngest had found a video game he particularly enjoyed and was completely immersed in it. He was able to tune out everything else and pour his heart and soul into this one game. I think that's a gift. I wish I could be like that.

So I can see all three of my children react differently to the same situation and understand and empathize with each one.

Yes, I don't give myself a break? Something is wrong with that. Something terribly wrong!

And that sentence is actually the echo in my brain that perpetuates my self-blame: Something is terribly wrong. Why is something terribly wrong with ME?

I can tell you that your feelings are perfectly valid, and I believe that wholeheartedly. I can defend each way my children react to the same situation quite logically. But I can't accept my own feelings.

So here is my first point - accept yourself.  
In all situations.

Even during the craziest, wildest Super Bowl party ever. If you need to take a little break - do it! If it's too noisy, pop in earbuds. If you feel you are getting carried away with drinking too much, sip some water for a while.

Life is not one-sized-fits-all. It is customizable. You need to do you at all times. You need socially engineer your experience so that it is enjoyable instead of overwhelming.

The other big thing I notice is the emotional flow of watching a sporting event. There are really big highs and deep, deep lows. It's a rollercoaster of emotions.

Well, guess what? When you are dealing with depression you are probably already on an emotional rollercoaster. And the low points in depression are super low. The kind of low that makes you want to crawl into bed in a dark room and hibernate for eternity.

Not exactly the best feeling during a Super Bowl party, right?

When I think about it, I think I spend a lot of time and energy on keeping my mood stable and easy going. That's always my goal. But a Super Bowl party is the opposite of that. You are groaning with each bad call and jumping up to celebrate with a win.

It is not easygoing. It is not stable or even-keeled.

It can be exhausting.

But for me it is also too much fun that I don't want to miss it. At least, not usually. There was one year that my son and I sat on my bed and watched the Superbowl on my little laptop and that was about all the excitement I could handle at that time.

But this year, I went to party and had a blast!

So what is the take away from that?

I can enjoy social situations like a Super Bowl party. I can handle the ups and downs and all the stimulation...as long as I move through the day with intentionality.

It always boils down to being self-aware, which is not usually our default setting, right?

I need to realize my limitations and vulnerabilities.

I'm sure you've noticed that my voice is a little like a Disney character. I don't do well in big group settings. I can't be heard, I hate trying to communicate when everyone is going to say "what?" a bunch of times, so I tend to fade into the background like my oldest son. This obviously can trigger feelings of depression for me. Why am I so terrible at socializing? Why can't I be like everybody else?

Solution? I can avoid the trigger in various ways by thinking about it in advance. I can choose to stick with a small gathering. I can host a small gathering myself where I can be in control of the volume levels. If I am in a big group, I can intentionally pull someone away to a quiet corner to communicate better. That power is in my hands.

Along with my depression, I suffer from PTSD. So sudden noises make my heart leap out of my chest and make me feel panicked. I know this is my reality. I can't control my reaction. So I can intentionally avoid some triggers. I'm not going to go to a noisy sports bar that is bursting with rowdy, inebriated sports fans so loud that I won't be able to hear myself think. I can almost guarantee that there will be loud noises attacking my senses. I check before hand to see if the party I want to go to is going to have fireworks. That is another trigger that is best for me to avoid. Or, if I don't want to miss out, I can set an alarm to tell me when it's time for the fireworks, and then I can go sit in my car where it isn't quite so loud.

Do you have triggers? Are there certain things that are going to spark your anxiety or depression and threaten to ruin your good time? Take a moment to think about what sets you off.

**These feelings are all valid**, there is nothing wrong with you, and acknowledging them is the first step towards understanding your emotional landscape a bit better.

Take a moment to consider how you've been feeling post-Super Bowl. Have feelings of sadness, anxiety, or isolation been stirred?

Recognizing these triggers isn't about assigning blame or feeling guilty; it's about gaining insights into what affects your emotional well-being. By identifying these triggers, you can start to develop strategies for coping with similar situations in the future, ensuring that you're better prepared to take care of yourself, no matter what the calendar throws your way. And the platinum coping mechanism is self-care.

After the big game, I find that I need to up my self-care game just a little. It's a way to ease the feelings of depression that can be activated by a big activity.

Nothing huge. Just self-care that is intentional.

I will plan to take a little walk during the sunset. I will write on my calendar that I am going to get some coffee with a friend on a certain day. I will plan to binge-watch a show I've been wanting to see.

Since I plan to do it, it's an intentional time that I am carving out just for me. That is relaying the message to my own brain that I am worth it. I am deserving of extra care.

What a rush, right? I spend so much time self-blaming and feeling like I am failing in so many areas that just that little bit of self-love is incredibly powerful.

If you have found that your depression has plunged a bit after the Super Bowl, know that it is ok. It's normal. It happens to a lot of people. Don't let your depression trigger even more depression.

Take a moment to plan some self-care. You deserve it....

No, deserve isn't the right word. Self-care is not a prize or a reward. It is essential. You NEED it. Prioritize yourself and give yourself some intentionality.

Remember, you are not alone. And you've got this.

If you feel like you need extra help in your mental health journey, reach out to a therapist or trusted friend. We are not meant to go through life alone.

If you're in a crisis or emotional distress, there are options available to help you cope—dial 988 from anywhere in the US to get connected. It's just 3 numbers: 988.

SAMHSA, (Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration) is a website that can help you get started on your journey to wellness: <https://www.samhsa.gov/>

The Crisis Text Line is a volunteer-based service that provides 24/7 free support, with an online chat at [crisistextline.org](https://crisistextline.org) and a text number at 741741.

Mental Health Hotline is a free, 24-hour service established to provide resources for those seeking help and connect them with appropriate and local care. (866) 903-3787.

All these resources can be found in my podcast transcript, which is on my website, [www.lillystrong.com](http://www.lillystrong.com). That's 3 l's. Lilly. I also have a number of articles about depression, healing, and rising strong.

I hope you had a good Super Bowl weekend, and will have an even better week. Remember, you are awesome. You've got this!