

Coping with Depression

When you're depressed, you can't just will yourself to "snap out of it." But these tips can help.

Understanding the Cycle of Depression - Depression reduces your energy, hope, and drive, making it difficult to take the steps that will help you to feel better. That's the dilemma...The things that help the most are the things that are the most difficult to do. It is difficult, but it is not impossible. Identify one thing that you can do, and take one small step. Start small and build from there.

DAILY ROUTINES – Stick to (or establish) a healthy, daily routine. Include self-cares and a positive goal for the day.

_____ Stick to normal sleep and wake times.

_____ Get dressed and cleaned up for the day.

_____ Eat healthy foods.

_____ Take medicines as prescribed.

_____ At least one social contact or 15 minutes outside.

_____ One positive goal for the day. _____

CONNECT WITH OTHERS – Staying connected with others and/or participating in social activities is important. Consider the following ideas, especially when going through a difficult time:

- Call or email someone. - Help someone else by volunteering.
- Have lunch/coffee with a friend or family member. - Care for a pet.
- Go for a walk with someone or go to the gym. - Take a class, join a club, or attend church.

A good social connection and goal for me is: _____

DO THINGS YOU ENJOY – Although depression may make you feel like you don't care about things or can't enjoy things, you might be surprised to find how you feel better

- Do things you enjoy (or used to enjoy). Consider hobbies, social activities, sports, cultural events, creative arts, or exercise.
- Spend time in nature.
- Read a good book or watch a funny movie or television show.

Things I enjoy: _____

GET ACTIVE – It is common to feel "too tired" to exercise when depressed. Nudge yourself past this. Exercise is one of the best natural antidepressants. It is something you can do right now to boost your mood. It does not have to be strenuous. Start as small as you need to start (e.g., walk to the mailbox or stretches in your chair).

- Aerobic (walking, swimming), stretching, balance exercises at home, at the gym, or outside...with or without others.

My exercise goal: _____

CHALLENGE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS – Depression has a powerful effect on our thoughts! It tends to put a negative spin on everything, including how we view ourselves and our expectations for the future. These negative thoughts are a symptom of depression. Although the thoughts are typically NOT realistic, our belief in them further fuels the depression.

The key is to become more aware of our errors in thinking and replace them with more rational, balanced thoughts.

When you are feeling bad about yourself, your situation, or your future. What are you thinking? Are you making any of the following errors?

All-or-nothing thinking – Looking at things in black-or-white categories, with no middle ground (“My kids *never* call me.”)

The mental filter – Ignoring positive events and focusing on the negative. Noticing the one thing that went wrong, rather than all the things that went right. (“I forgot my password again. I can’t learn anything.”)

Jumping to conclusions – Making negative interpretations without actual evidence. You act like a mind reader (“He must think I’m pathetic”) or a fortune teller (“Things are only going to get worse.”)

Those thoughts are not doing you any good, AND they are inaccurate. Challenge these thoughts with questions such as:

- “What’s the evidence that this thought is true? Not true?”
- “What would I tell a friend who had this thought?”
- “Is there another way of looking at the situation or an alternate explanation?”
- “How might I look at this situation if I didn’t have depression?”

Can you come up with a more balanced, accurate thought?

If this seems difficult, consider one of the following simple counter statements:

- “No, that’s not right.”
- “It doesn’t matter.”

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

How to Cope with a Depressive Episode (Jayne Leonard, Medical News Today, July 2018)

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/322495#twelve-tips>

Coping with Depression (Smith, M.A., Robinson, L., & Segal, J., HelpGuide, October 2019)

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/depression/coping-with-depression.htm>

APP FOR THAT:

Happify



With its psychologist-approved mood-training program, the Happify app is your fast-track to a good mood. Try various engaging games, activity suggestions, gratitude prompts and more to train your brain as if it were a muscle, to overcome negative thoughts. The best part? Its free!

Mood Kit



MoodKit uses the foundation of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and provides users with over 200 different mood improvement activities. MoodKit helps you learn how to change how you think, and develop self-awareness and healthy attitudes. The journal feature is a great way to practice self-care. (\$4.99 download)

Virtual Hope Box



The Virtual Hope Box (VHB) contains simple tools to help patients with coping, relaxation, distraction, and positive thinking. It can be personalized with content that users find important, such as family photos, inspirational quotes, and music they find soothing.