

Coping with Depression

Why is dealing with depression so difficult?

It is estimated that one in five Americans will be impacted by depression during their lifetime. One study revealed depression is the leading cause of disability among those between ages 15-44. Many will try interventions to get them “snapped back” into being normal again but efforts are often unsuccessful due to using unproven techniques or not getting professional help when needed. This article attempts to provide an understanding of depression as well as suggest ways for you to overcome depression.

The symptoms of depression exhibit a loss of energy, hope, and drive, making it difficult for you to take the steps that will help you to feel better. Sometimes, just thinking about the things you should do to feel better, like exercising or spending time with friends, can seem exhausting or impossible to put into action. So how can we move forward?

Using cognitive/behavioral therapy, I have helped my clients share they do not want to remain in the state of depression but lack the energy to do anything on their own. My goal is to help my clients provide a path to recovery through interventions that are listed in this article. While recovering from depression is not easy or quick, most everyone can make progress even if they feel their situation is overwhelming.

Bringing hope and trying to do something different is the start towards recovery. The key is to start small and build from there. You may not have much energy, but by drawing on your reserves, you should have enough energy to take a walk, call a friend or loved one, or use one of the suggested interventions.

Think about this process as planning a trip using a road map. You can start at your present location but there are many ways that can get you to where you wish to be. Some may seem to take longer but that is okay as long as you are striving to move forward and towards your goal to recovery. You may even experience some setbacks (detours) that trigger past feelings of depression, but the key is to keep moving or trying. You will be glad you did!

Taking the first step is always the hardest. But going for a walk, getting up, or dancing to your favorite music, for example, is something you can do right now. And it can substantially boost your mood and energy for several hours—long enough to put a second recovery step into action, such as preparing a mood-boosting meal or arranging to meet an old friend. By taking the following small but positive steps day by day, you will soon lift the heavy fog of depression and find yourself feeling happier, healthier, and more hopeful again.

Challenge your negative thinking

This is the ultimate goal for any person or therapist. When a person is overwhelmed with negative thinking or feelings, they are consumed by this. They are pessimistic, often using

irrational thoughts or extremes to every situation, often feeling powerless or too weak to do anything.

By challenging these thoughts, you can identify truth from feelings, focus on what we do well and what can help us get out of the state of depression. Positive thoughts and interventions will overcome depression, negative thoughts will only keep us mired in depression.

Take away words such as “always” or “never” because they are wrong in the first place. It may seem that it is “always” or “never” but use real terms to real truths and feelings.

Stop jumping to conclusions or give into thoughts that nothing will help. Without a sense of hope and trying to move forward, one has difficulty improving. It is like someone who thinks it is a good idea to get out of bed but does nothing. About it. All the thoughts in the world will not help us get out of bed. It takes effort and doing something physical.

Reach out and stay connected

Getting support plays an essential role in overcoming depression. It is often hard for you to maintain a healthy perspective and energy on your own. At the same time, the very nature of depression makes it difficult to reach out to others for help. When you are depressed, the tendency is to withdraw and isolate yourself. Even reaching out to close family members and friends can be tough. The key is to stay connected.

You may feel too exhausted to talk, ashamed of your situation, or guilty for neglecting certain relationships. But this is just the depression talking. Staying connected to other people and taking part in social activities will make a world of difference in your mood and outlook. Reaching out is not a sign of weakness and it will not mean you are a burden to others. Please understand that your loved ones care about you and want to help. You may not feel you have anyone to turn to for help, but one can look or develop a new support network, such as a co-worker, church, or a counselor.

Looking for Depression Support

Look for support from people who make you feel safe and cared for. The person you talk to does not have to be able to fix you; they just need to be a good listener—someone who will listen attentively and compassionately without being distracted or judging you.

Get away from being isolated by making facetime with others. I believe this is a priority. Phone calls, social media, and texting are great ways to stay in touch, but they do not replace good old-fashioned in-person quality time. The simple act of talking to someone face to face about how you feel can play a big role in relieving depression and keeping it away. It also provides a way for you to see their expressions and genuine concern to help you.

Studies have shown getting out will also make you feel less depressed. Keeping up with social activities or being around people will usually keep our thoughts and feelings off ourselves and onto activities and others. Another suggestion is to volunteer to do something for others, such as

volunteering to a non-profit organization or doing something nice for someone. By doing something good or helping others can bring a positive outlook in your life and give you purpose.

You can also join a support group for depression. Being with others dealing with depression can go a long way in reducing your sense of isolation or feelings you are the only one experiencing something like this. The support group provides a way for you to give and receive advice on coping as well as hearing testimonies of successes.

10 tips for staying connected:

- Talk to one person about your feelings.
- Help someone else by volunteering.
- Have lunch or coffee with a friend.
- Ask a loved one to check in with you regularly.
- Accompany someone to the movies, a concert, or a small get-together.
- Call or email an old friend.
- Go for a walk with a workout buddy.
- Schedule a weekly dinner date.
- Meet new people by taking a class or joining a club.
- Confide in a clergy member, teacher, or sports coach.

Do things that make you feel good

Another important step to overcome depression is doing the things that make you feel good. This could mean exercise, play golf, go fishing, cooking, play or take care of your pet, listen to music, watch a funny movie, pick up an old or new hobby, take a drive, or explore something new like a new restaurant, store, or city.

While you cannot force yourself to have fun or experience pleasure, you can push yourself to do things, even when you do not feel like it. You might be surprised at how much better you feel once you are out in the world. Even if your depression does not lift immediately, you will gradually feel more upbeat and energetic as you make time for fun activities.

My clients have told me they have found comfort and purpose in taking care of their pet. It is sometimes very therapeutic in loving a pet and them loving you back. They can bring companionship, love, and help us to feel less isolated.

Plan your day ahead of time

Most people who experience depression seem to let their day, emotions, isolation, and feelings of helplessness to linger or stay in place day after day without changing their environment or implementing a plan to remove these.

Planning your day before it gets started allows you to be on offensive and proactive to bringing a solution to your situation. Whether it is to use any of the prior interventions listed above or taking a trip, visiting a museum, or doing anything positive, it takes planning. Those who do not

have a plan...plan to fail. Take a few moments to make a list of things you can do for the day prior to that day, such as the night before. It will allow you to look and follow a list (plan) instead of reverting back to your feelings and from staying in bed.

Guard your health

Here are a few things you might target:

I would suggest maintaining 8 hours of sleep---no more!!! Depression typically involves sleep problems; whether you are sleeping too little or too much, your mood suffers. Get on a better sleep schedule by learning healthy sleep habits.

Maintain good eating habits. Stay away from junk food and eat healthy. Eat more vegetables and fruit. Do not skip meals. May want to use vitamins to help.

Learn ways to reduce stress. Use deep breathing techniques when you feel stress rising. Maintain adequate work schedules and to limit money or relationship frustrations. Try to do what you do well and prioritize anything difficult by doing the easiest first. Practice relaxation techniques.

Exercise regularly by walking or going to the gym. If you cannot exercise regularly, take a walk during your lunch break. Walking keeps our mind focused on other things such as your surroundings, where you walk, etc., than being controlled by our feelings. Exercise also helps us to breathe and focus on what we are doing.

Pair up with an exercise partner. Not only does working out with others enable you to spend time socializing. This can also help to keep you motivated. Try joining a running club, taking a water aerobics or dance class, seeking out tennis partners, or enrolling in a soccer or volleyball league.

Take a dog for a walk. If do not own a dog, you can volunteer to walk homeless dogs for an animal shelter or rescue group. You will not only be helping yourself but also be helping to socialize and exercise the dogs, making them more adoptable.

Get plenty of sunlight. Sunlight helps most people from the indoor-blues and can help boost serotonin levels. If you cannot go outdoors for some reason, bring the sunlight inside by opening blinds or curtains in your home. Do some activity close to a window so you can also look out to see nature.

Only focus on interventions that work

I have listed many interventions and ideas that can help you improve your mental and physical state of depression. Do not give up because one of the interventions may not work for you. Each one of us are different people. One thing that may work for someone else may not work for you as well. Only use what works and keep using it!!!

Seek professional help

If you need help improving or staying on track, seek a professional. Your life, health, and well-

being are at stake. A mental health professional can provide more in-depth help, bring objective support, and provide accountability for us trying new and existing techniques. Do not allow yourself to take a step back and get further depressed. Depression is treatable and you can get better. The real key is for you to be honest with yourself where you are and hope to be. It is hard to overcome depression my yourself. You either need a strong support system or seek a professional.

DISCLAIMER: The helps listed in this article is not intended to take the place of a mental help professional nor bring training to any lay person. This is intended to provide suggestions, ideas, and help to those who may be searching to overcome depression.

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