

20 WAYS OF COPING WITH DEPRESSION

1. CHALLENGING NEGATIVE THINKING

Being able to recognize when depression is pulling you down is the first step toward recovery. When depressed, all sorts of negative thoughts can get stuck in our heads, so it's important to be able to keep these in check.

2. SHIFT YOUR ATTENTION

If your mood is weighing you down to the point where it feels impossible to challenge your thoughts, then try taking a step back to concentrate on something else. This can be especially helpful when trying to deal with and overcome suicidal thoughts. Mindfulness exercises can be helpful in shifting attention away from negative thoughts

3. SET SMALL GOALS

Depression can make the simplest tasks seem daunting, so you're going to have to work on breaking things down into small and concrete tasks. For example, instead of getting stuck thinking 'how am I going to get to work everyday this week', think about getting to work today, then break it down even further.

1. Get out of bed.
2. Have a shower and shave.
3. Get dressed.
4. Eat breakfast.
5. Head to work.

Each time you complete a step, give yourself credit. Simply getting out of bed when fighting depression is an accomplishment and if that's all you can do one day, that's okay. Push yourself but don't beat yourself up if you can't keep up to your usual pace.

4. FOCUS ON THE BASICS

Sleep, food, physical activity – do your best to keep on top of these as they can make a huge impact on your ability to successfully manage depression.

Make sure to think ‘physical activity’ and not ‘exercise’ Going for a short walk, doing household chores, or anything that gets you up and moving counts. Getting outside and into the sun can also help. Here are five simple tips on keeping active.

5. KEEP DOING THINGS

This might seem hard at first, because you probably won’t have the same amount of energy you normally do, but part of fighting depression is simply giving your mind something else to think about (and a rest from depressed thoughts).

Try concentrating your attention anywhere else – go for a walk, work on a hobby, meet a friend for coffee. The main thing here is that you want to avoid lying about and stewing in misery all day. Once you get going, you’ll also usually find you have more energy than you thought you would.

6. REACH OUT TO FRIENDS AND FAMILY

A lot of people hide feeling depressed from the very people that could help the most.

Talking about what’s causing you stress or bringing you down can help lessen the intensity of these thoughts. Give those closest to you a chance to help. Here are some tips on talking to a friend or family member.

7. TALK TO A THERAPIST

Talking to a therapist about depression is like seeing a physical therapist after a serious leg injury. If you want to get the best advice possible, you need to talk to an expert.

Remember, therapy isn’t about crying or pointless complaining; it’s about learning what’s underlying your depression, developing new skills for managing the stuff that life throws at us, and working toward improving and enjoying your life. When it comes to depression, there is no substitute for seeking professional help – if you’re feeling depressed, connect with a therapist as soon as you can. Here is a link to a telehealth group practice. www.icounseling.net

8. KEEP SOME HUMOUR IN YOUR LIFE

Finding ways to make yourself laugh provides your mind with a break from all the negative thoughts depression brings.

Whether this involves talking a friend, watching a funny show or movie, or following a humorous account on social media, it can all help.

9. AVOID OR LIMIT ALCOHOL AND OTHER SUBSTANCE USE

Some of the tips above are about coping with depression by distracting ourselves. Drinking and other substance use may feel like a way to distract, distance, or numb yourself from the pains of depression, but it isn't a healthy way to do it and will always turn into a bigger problem.

10. GIVE YOURSELF CREDIT

We know how hard it is to fight depression, so we cannot stress this enough – be proud of any steps and progress you make, even if it takes longer than you hoped.

Recovering from depression takes time. The new habits and skills you learn now will you help throughout your life.

11. GO FOR A WALK AROUND THE BLOCK

On days when you feel as if you can't get out of bed, exercise may seem like the last thing you'd want to do. However, exercise and physical activity can help to lower symptoms of depression and boost energy levels.

Research suggests that, for some people, exercise can be as effective as medication at relieving depression symptoms.

12. KNOW THAT TODAY ISN'T INDICATIVE OF TOMORROW

Internal emotions and thoughts can change from day to day. Tracking experiences through journaling or keeping a mood diary can help to remember this.

If you were unsuccessful at getting out of bed or accomplishing your goals today, remember that you haven't lost tomorrow's opportunity to try again.

Give yourself the grace to accept that while some days will be difficult, some days will also be less difficult. Try to look forward to tomorrow's fresh start.

13. ASSESS THE PARTS INSTEAD OF GENERALIZING THE WHOLE

Depression can tinge recollections with difficult emotions. You may find yourself focusing on things that are unhelpful or perceived as difficult.

Try to stop this overgeneralization. Push yourself to recognize the good. If it helps, write down what was meaningful about the event or day. You can track what you achieved that day, and which activities were enjoyable.

Seeing the weight, you're giving to one thing may help you direct your thoughts away from the whole and to the individual pieces that were helpful.

14. REWARD YOUR EFFORTS

All goals are worthy of recognition, and all successes are worthy of celebration. When you achieve a goal, do your best to recognize it.

You may not feel like celebrating with a cake and confetti, but recognizing your own successes can be a very powerful weapon against depression's negative weight.

The memory of a job well-done may be especially powerful against unhelpful talk and overgeneralization.

15. ASSESS YOUR DIET

There's no magic diet that will treat depression. But what you put into your body can have a real and significant impact on the way you feel.

Some people also feel better and have more energy when they avoid sugar, preservatives, and processed foods.

If you have the means, consider meeting with a doctor or registered dietitian for guidance.

16. INCORPORATING MEDITATION MAY HELP GROUND YOUR THOUGHTS

Stress and anxiety can prolong your depression symptoms. Finding relaxation techniques can help you lower stress and invite more joy and balance into your day

Research suggests activities such as meditation, yoga, deep breathing, may help you improve your sense of well-being and feel more connected to what's happening around you.

17. PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Recent studies show gratitude can have lasting positive effects on your overall mental health. Try finding a few things to be grateful for daily. When you said gratitude statements, even small things you have, it shifts your mind into what you have instead of lack, it shifts your mind into positive thinking and helps your overall mood.

What is more, writing down your gratitude — including writing notes to others — can be particularly meaningful.

18. TRY SOMETHING ENTIRELY NEW

When you do the same thing day after day, you use the same parts of your brain.

Research shows doing new things can feel rewarding improve your overall well-being and strengthen your social relationships.

To reap these benefits, consider trying a new sport, taking a creative class, or learning a new cooking technique.

19. USE WRITING OR JOURNALING TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Consider writing or journaling about what you're experiencing. Then, when the feelings lift, write about that, too.

Writing down your thoughts can help you express what you're feeling more clearly. It can also help you keep track of what symptoms you're having each day and identify what causes them.

You can make a goal to write for a few minutes each day or week. Most importantly, what you want to write about is completely up to you.

20. SPEND TIME IN NATURE

Spending time in nature can have a powerful influence on a person's mood. Studies have shown that walks in nature may improve depressive symptoms in people with clinical depression.

Time in natural spaces may improve mood and cognition, and lower the risk of mental health disorders. Consider taking a walk at lunch among the trees or spending some time in your local park. Or plan a weekend hike. These activities can help you reconnect with nature and soak in some rays at the same time.