



Depression: Tips to Help Yourself

As your doctors help treat your depression, you can also help yourself. Keep in mind that your illness affects you emotionally, physically, mentally, and socially. So full recovery will take time. Take care of your body and your soul. And be patient with yourself as you get better.

Self-care

- **Educate yourself.** Read about treatment and medicine choices. If you have the energy, go to local conferences or support groups. Keep a list of useful websites and helpful books and use them as needed. This illness is not your fault. Don't blame yourself for your depression.
- **Manage early symptoms.** If you notice symptoms returning, have triggers, or find other things that may lead to a depressive episode, get help as soon as possible. Ask trusted friends and family to watch your behavior. They can let you know if they see anything of concern.
- **Work with your doctor.** Find a doctor you can trust. Talk honestly with that person. Share information on your treatment for depression and your reaction to medicines. You may need to try different medicines before finding the right one.
- **Be prepared for a crisis.** Know what to do if you have a crisis. Keep the phone number of a crisis hotline handy, or save it in your cellphone. Know where your community's urgent care centers and the closest emergency department are.
- **Hold off on big decisions.** Depression can cloud your judgment. So wait until you feel better before making major life decisions. These include changing jobs, moving, making a big purchase, or getting married or divorced.
- **Be patient.** Recovering from depression is a process. Don't be discouraged if it takes some time to feel better.
- **Keep it simple.** Depression saps your energy and focus. So you won't be able to do all the things you used to do. Set small goals and do what you can.
- **Be with others.** Don't isolate yourself—you'll only feel worse. Try to be with other people. And take part in fun activities when you can. Go to a movie, ballgame, religious service, or social event. Talk openly with people you can trust. And accept help when it's offered.

If you are in distress or have thoughts or plans to harm yourself or others, **call or text 988**. You will be connected to trained crisis counselors at the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#). An online chat choice is also available at [Chat - 988 Lifeline](#). This service is free and available 24/7. Treatment can help you feel better. When depression is under control, your overall health may also improve.

Take care of your body



People with depression often lose the desire to take care of themselves. That only makes their problems worse. During treatment and after, make a point to:

- **Exercise.** It's a great way to take care of your body. And studies have shown that exercise helps fight depression. Aim for 30 minutes of moderate activity a day. Walking in small blocks of time (5 to 10 minutes) is a good way to start. But anything that gets you moving (gardening, house cleaning) counts.
- **Not use illicit (or recreational) drugs or drink alcohol.** These may ease the pain in the short term. But they'll only make your problems worse in the long run.
- **Get relief from stress.** Ask your doctor for relaxation exercises and methods to help ease stress. Consider things like meditation, yoga, progressive muscle relaxation, or tai chi.
- **Eat right.** A balanced and healthy diet helps keep your body healthy.
- **Get enough sleep.** Aim for 8 hours per night. Too much or too little sleep can cause other physical and emotional problems.

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