

COPING WITH DEPRESSION



While living with depression can be challenging, seeking treatment and maintaining a balanced lifestyle can help manage its symptoms and move you toward recovery. Many healthy lifestyle habits can improve your energy, mood, and both physical and mental health.

Understanding Depression

Depression is a serious condition that affects millions of people from every demographic. Depression is not just the feeling of being sad. It's a disorder that can be devastating for individuals and their families. It creates challenges in daily life by:

- Draining energy and motivation
- Escalating negative thoughts
- Creating difficulty with managing emotions
- Decreasing enjoyment of life
- Loss of interest in hobbies or other activities as well as general apathy
- Persistent feelings of sadness, guilt, hopelessness or worthlessness
- Fatigue or decreased energy
- Difficulty with memory, concentrating or making decisions
- Changes in sleep patterns, such as insomnia or oversleeping
- Suicidal thoughts or preoccupation with death
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Restlessness or irritability
- Headaches, aches and pains or digestive problems with no known physical cause
- Abuse of drugs or alcohol

Depressive disorders can be caused by trauma, genetics, changes in brain function, drug and alcohol abuse and other medical conditions or can occur spontaneously. While depression is a serious mental health condition, it is highly treatable and can be improved by self-care.

Recognizing Signs and Symptoms

Someone who is suffering from depression often shows many outward signs and symptoms. Everyone has times when they feel sad or down, but that does not necessarily equal a depressive disorder. If you or someone you love suffers from the following signs and symptoms most of every day for at least two weeks, the first step should be taken to be evaluated by a mental health professional.

The symptoms can vary from person to person or by gender, age and other factors. People suffering from depression might withdraw from others making it difficult for loved ones to spot the signs. You may need to recognize some of these symptoms in yourself or be prepared to start the discussion with a loved one and offer support and encouragement during their treatment.

Treatment and Self-Care

Stay connected and seek support. Try to stay in touch with family and friends, and take part in social activities to avoid isolating yourself. If you've sought treatment and your plan includes therapy, make sure to keep appointments and stay connected with your mental health professional. You can also reach out to friends and family members who make you feel safe and cared for or join a depression support group where you can share experiences and encourage each other.

Do things you enjoy and that are good for you. Even if you lost interest in activities you previously enjoyed, it's worth the effort to try them again. Taking part in a hobby or social activity can make you feel more energetic and upbeat.

You can also boost your energy level and mood by getting a good night's sleep, maintaining a healthy diet and exercise plan and getting outdoors for a dose of nature and sunshine. Focus on managing your stress level and fitting in daily relaxation techniques.

Identify and balance negative thinking. Depression can create a pattern of negative thoughts. When you have pessimistic, hopeless thoughts, try to recognize them as symptoms of depression that are irrational and inaccurate. Once you identify the pattern of negative thoughts, you can replace them with a more positive, balanced way of thinking.

If you have previously tried self-help steps and your depression has worsened, you should meet with a mental health professional for an evaluation. After diagnosis, depressive disorders may be treated with medications, psychotherapy or a combination of treatments.

References

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Resources for Locating Mental Health Services

National Institute of Mental Health.
[NIMH.NIH.gov/FindHelp](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/FindHelp)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
[FindTreatment.SAMHSA.gov](https://www.samhsa.gov/FindTreatment)

National Alliance on Mental Illness.
[NAMI.org/Find-Support](https://www.nami.org/Find-Support)

If you or someone you know is in crisis, get help immediately.

- Call your or your loved one's health professional
- Call 911 for emergency services
- Go to the nearest hospital emergency room
- Call the toll-free, 24-hour hotline of the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-TALK (8255); TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (4889)

— We are here for you —

For additional resources and assistance, visit **MutualofOmaha.com/eap** or call an Employee Assistance Program professional at **1-800-316-2796**