

Self Help Tips for Depression

Overcoming depression is possible and deciding to take an active part in your recovery is an important step. However, it does require action which can be difficult when you're depressed. There are many suggestions here - you will need to experiment and find out what works for you, start with small goals and stay focussed.

Exercise | Although you may feel low in energy, exercise can actually make you feel less tired and has been shown to be a powerful tool for dealing with depression. The feel good hormone serotonin is boosted by exercise and even as little as 10 minutes a day can have an effect. Any exercise like walking, gardening, or more vigorous activities, or team sports helps to improve your mood. Research has shown that exercising outdoors in a green, natural environment is particularly effective.

Relax | If you can build the time into your day, then a regular relaxation practice can reduce stress and boost feelings of wellbeing. Learning a technique like deep breathing, meditation, yoga or tai chi can be especially helpful. It is also good to take time to un-wind, for example, listening to music, having a bath or reading a book.

Do something you enjoy | Doing things you enjoy, perhaps something creative, a former hobby, playing with a pet, or going on a daytrip often helps lift your spirits.

Connect with people | You may have close family or friends and find it difficult to reach out to them, but you might well find that they care about you and want to help. Talking to someone about your feelings is the mind's natural way of healing.

Eat well | What you eat affects the way you feel. If possible aim to eat 3 healthy meals a day at regular times. Oily fish, bananas, eggs and chocolate have all been shown to increase serotonin levels and may help improve your mood.

Get enough sleep | Healthy sleep habits including creating a relaxing bedtime routine and going to bed and getting up at the same time each day can really help, whether or not you are able to sleep.

Socialise | If you feel up to attending social events, being with other people can often help improve mood. If you can't manage seeing people you could try a short phone call, email or text message.

Join a support group | Joining a support group can be useful, as being around other people who are experiencing depression can reduce feelings of isolation. They can also help you learn about how other people cope.

Manage your time | Keeping reasonably well occupied can prevent you from ruminating on your problems. Tackling a small task that you've been putting off can also help you feel better about yourself.

Be aware of your thoughts | Challenge any self-critical thoughts and don't be too hard on yourself. If you don't achieve what you wanted to, accept that you don't have to get things right every time. Congratulate yourself regularly - if you are very depressed even getting dressed is an achievement.

If your depression doesn't seem to be getting any better, it is important to make an appointment with your G.P. They are used to seeing people with your difficulties and will be able to conduct a thorough assessment and explain the treatment options available to you.