



connect

wellbeing, ability, recovery

Depression | Strategies for Self- Care through Depression

Depression - Symptoms

The symptoms of depression may vary from person to person, and also depend on the severity of the depression. Depression causes changes in thinking, feeling, behaviour, and physical wellbeing. An important thing to accept is that there are usually no instant solutions to problems in life. Solving problems involves time, energy and work. When you are feeling depressed, you may not be feeling energetic or motivated to work.

Thinking Strategies

One of the most effective approaches to help yourself through depression is to start to recognise how it is changing your thinking patterns. Once you can recognise this, then you are half way there in trying to counter these thinking patterns with healthier approaches.

Break the cycle of negativity

If you are starting to feel depressed it can be very easy to get into a cycle of automatic negative thoughts that then become difficult for you to challenge: you get depressed and then you get more depressed about being depressed. Being in a state of depression can then become a bigger problem than the actual difficulties that caused it in the first place. You need to make a conscious effort to break the hold that the depression has on you.

Common Patterns of 'depressed thinking'

- Self-evaluation - In depression, self- evaluation is generally negative and critical. When someone is depressed, he/she tends to take responsibility for everything that goes wrong.
- Identification of Skill Deficits - When depressed, a person is more likely to identify negative characteristics of self, and less likely to see the positive.
- Evaluation of Life Experiences - When depressed, a person will focus on minor negative aspects of what was otherwise a positive life experience. Cognitive distortions are a way of describing the distortion of reality by the way we evaluate a situation. The concept of cognitive distortion highlights the importance of perceptions, assumptions and judgements in coping with the world.
- Self-talk - Self-talk is a way of describing all the things we say to ourselves all day long as we confront obstacles, make decisions, and resolve problems. We all engage in self-talk, but negative self-talk prevents us from solving problems, and can contribute to a variety of psychological problems, including depression.
- Automatic thoughts - Automatic thoughts are repetitive, automatic self-statements that we always say to ourselves in certain situations. They can be positive or negative. Problems can develop when our automatic thoughts are consistently negative.

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- Irrational Ideas and Beliefs – What makes these ideas irrational, or maladaptive, is the belief that they are always correct. The result is a loss of self-esteem, and sometimes depression.
- Over-generalising or Catastrophising – Catastrophising is a negative overgeneralisation. It is "making a mountain out of a mole hill!" If you over-generalise one, or even a few mistakes, to the conclusion that you are bad, incompetent, or useless, you might become depressed.
- Pessimistic Thinking – Pessimistic thinking does not cause depression, but it appears to be easier to become depressed if you tend to view the world with considerable pessimism. Pessimism feeds the negative cognitive distortions and self-talk.

Physical Strategies:

There are many things that can help prevent or treat depression. These include:

- Talking to a family member or friend about any upsetting experiences.
- Connect with other people – Although you may not feel like it, keeping in touch with people can help you feel a bit more grounded and sometimes get things more in perspective. Try a short phone call to a close friend or relative, or if you can't manage it, just an email or text message. When you feel ready, you may find it helpful to do something to help other people, as this may help overcome any feelings of isolation you have, take your mind off your own problems and make you feel better about yourself.
- Allow yourself positive experiences and treats that reinforce the idea that you deserve good things. e.g. a long bath, a day out with a friend. Set yourself goals that you can achieve and that will give you a sense of satisfaction. If you find it hard to remember things, you may want to write them down on sticky notes, in a diary or set reminders on your mobile phone.
- Pay attention to your personal appearance
- Diet – Look after yourself by eating healthily, as much as possible. Oily fish, in particular, and a balanced diet, including plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables may help reduce depression.
- Be cautious with tobacco, alcohol or other drugs, which make depression worse, and a lot of caffeine which may make you a bit jittery.
- Joining a local support group
- Keep active





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