

# Coping Skills for Depression

Evidence-based strategies to help you feel better, one step at a time

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## Behavioral Activation

Depression saps a person's energy to do just about anything — even activities they enjoy. People with depression tend to become less active, which causes depression to worsen. However, even a little bit of activity can help stop this cycle.

### 1. Choose activities you are likely to complete.

#### EXERCISE

Walk, go for a bike ride, weightlift, follow an exercise video, swim, or practice yoga

#### SOCIALIZE

Call or text a friend, organize a group dinner, visit family, join a club or group

#### RESPONSIBILITIES

Cleaning / housework, pay bills, professional development, homework

#### HOBBIES

Sports, gardening, drawing, playing music, hiking, playing with a pet, cooking

#### PERSONAL CARE

Dress up, get a haircut, prepare a healthy meal, tend to spiritual needs

### 2. Practice your chosen activities. Use the following tips to improve consistency.

#### start small

If needed, break activities into smaller pieces. Some activity is better than none.

#### make a plan

Set an alarm as a reminder, or tie an activity to something you already do. For example, practice a hobby immediately after dinner every day.

#### bring a friend

Including a friend will increase your commitment and make things more fun.



## Social Support

Social isolation is a common symptom of depression. Related issues — such as fatigue, lowered self-esteem, and anxiety — make this worse. Leaning on social support can improve resilience to stress and depression.

- Lean on your existing relationships. Make it a priority to socialize with friends or family every day. If this is proving difficult, plan times to interact remotely — try cooking together on a video call, playing a game, or sharing a coffee over the phone.
- Say "yes" to socializing. Depression makes it tempting to stay home, isolated. Make a habit of saying "yes" to social opportunities, even when you're tempted to stay in.
- Join a support group. Support groups let you connect with others dealing with similar issues. You'll benefit from sharing and receiving advice and support.



## Three Good Things

Negative thinking is a defining feature of depression. Positive experiences are minimized while negative ones are magnified. Gratitude helps shift focus toward positive experiences.

- 1 Write about three positive experiences from your day. These can be small ("The weather was perfect when I walked to work") or big ("I got a promotion at work").
- 2 Choose one question to answer about each good thing: Why did this happen? Why was this meaningful? How can I experience more of this good thing?
- 3 Repeat this exercise every day for one week.



## Mindfulness

Mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment – noticing the world and one's thoughts and feelings without judgment. The goal is to simply observe. Mindfulness helps reduce the rumination and worry that often accompany depression. One way to practice is through meditation: sit quietly and focus on the sensation of breathing.

### ● Time and Place

Find a quiet, comfortable place where you can practice mindfulness for 15 to 30 minutes every day. Frequent, consistent practice leads to the best results – but some practice is better than none.

### ● Posture

Sit in a chair or lie down comfortably. Close your eyes or let your gaze soften. Let your head, shoulders, arms, and legs relax. Adjust whenever you feel uncomfortable.

### ● Awareness of Breath

Focus on your breathing. Notice the sensation of the air as it travels in through your nose and out through your mouth. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your belly.

### ● Wandering Mind

During meditation, it's normal for the mind to wander. When this happens, gently turn your attention back to your breathing. You may need to do this many times – and that's perfectly okay.



## Reaching Out for Professional Help

While these strategies are genuinely helpful, you don't have to face depression alone. Reaching out to a mental health professional – whether a therapist, counsellor, or your family doctor – is a sign of strength, not weakness. A professional can offer personalised support, help you understand what you're experiencing, and work with you on a plan that truly fits your life.

Not sure where to start? Try talking to your doctor, searching for therapists in your area, or contacting a mental health helpline. Many therapists now offer online sessions, making support more accessible than ever. You deserve to feel better – and help is out there.