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5 Ways to Fight Depression

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If you feel depressed, it's best to do something about it — depression doesn't just go away on its own. In addition to getting help from a doctor or therapist, here are 5 things you can do to feel better.

1. **Exercise.** Take a 15- to 30-minute brisk walk every day — or dance, jog, or bike if you prefer. People who are depressed may not feel much like being active. But make yourself do it anyway (ask a friend to exercise with you if you need to be motivated). Once you get in the exercise habit, it won't take long to notice a difference in your mood.

In addition to getting aerobic exercise, some yoga poses can help relieve feelings of depression. Try downward-facing dog or legs-up-the-wall pose (you can find these poses on yoga websites). Two other aspects of yoga — breathing exercises and meditation — can also help people with depression feel better.

2. **Nurture yourself with good nutrition.** Depression can affect appetite. One person may not feel like eating at all, but another might overeat. If depression has affected your eating, you'll need to be extra mindful of getting the right nourishment. Proper nutrition can influence a person's mood and energy. So eat plenty of fruits and vegetables and get regular meals (even if you don't feel hungry, try to eat something light, like a piece of fruit, to keep you going).
3. **Identify troubles, but don't dwell on them.** Try to identify any situations that have contributed to your depression. When you know what's got you feeling blue and why, talk about it with a caring friend. Talking is a way to release the feelings and to receive some understanding. If there's no one to tell, pouring your heart out to a journal works just as well.

Once you air out these thoughts and feelings, turn your attention to something positive. Take action to solve problems. Ask for help if you need it. Feeling connected to friends and family can help relieve depression. (It may also help them feel there's something they can do instead of just watching you hurt.)

4. **Express yourself.** With depression, a person's creativity and sense of fun may seem blocked.

Exercise your imagination (painting, drawing, doodling, sewing, writing, dancing, composing music, etc.) and you not only get those creative juices flowing, you also loosen up some positive emotions. Take time to play with a friend or a pet, or do something fun for yourself. Find something to laugh about — a funny movie, perhaps. Laughter helps lighten your mood.

5. **Look on the bright side.** Depression affects a person's thoughts, making everything seem dismal, negative, and hopeless. If depression has you noticing only the negative, make an effort to notice the good things in life. Try to notice one thing, then try to think of one more. Consider your strengths, gifts, or blessings. Most of all, don't forget to be patient with yourself. Depression takes time to heal.

Reviewed by: D'Arcy Lyness, PhD

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