

# COPING WITH DEPRESSION

Depression drains your energy, hope, and drive, making it difficult to take the steps that will help you to feel better. But while overcoming depression isn't quick or easy, it's far from impossible.



## How do you deal with depression?

Dealing with depression requires action, but taking action when you're depressed can be hard. Taking the first step is always the hardest, but going for a walk or doing some light exercise is something you can do right now. And it can substantially boost your mood and energy for several hours.

By taking the following small but positive steps day by day, you'll soon lift the heavy fog of depression and find yourself feeling happier, healthier, and more hopeful again.

### 1. Reach out and stay connected

Getting support plays an essential role in overcoming depression. On your own, it can be difficult to maintain a healthy perspective and sustain the effort required to beat depression.



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## How to reach out for depression support

- Look for support from people who make you feel safe and cared for.
- Make face-time a priority. The simple act of talking to someone face to face about how you feel can play a big role in relieving depression and keeping it away.
- Try to keep up with social activities even if you don't feel like it.
- Find ways to support others.
- Care for a pet.
- Join a support group for depression.

## 2. Do things that make you feel good

In order to overcome depression, you have to do things that relax and energize you. Pick up a former hobby or a sport you used to like. Express yourself creatively through music, art, or writing. Go out with friends. Take a day trip to a museum, nature, or a sports event. Play with your pet, visit friends, or listen to your favourite music. These things will help you to feel more positive and will energise you.

## 3. Get moving

When you're depressed, just getting out of bed can seem like a daunting task, let alone working out! But exercise is a powerful depression fighter—and one of the most important tools in your recovery arsenal. Research shows that regular exercise can be as effective as medication for relieving depression symptoms. It also helps prevent relapse once you're well.



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## Exercise is something you can do right now to boost your mood

- Your fatigue will improve if you stick with it.
- Find exercises that are continuous and rhythmic—where you move both your arms and legs.
- Add a mindfulness element. Focus on how your body feels as you move—such as the sensation of your feet hitting the ground, or the feeling of the wind on your skin, or the rhythm of your breathing.
- Pair up with an exercise partner for moral support and motivation

### 4. Eat a healthy, depression-fighting diet

What you eat has a direct impact on the way you feel. Reduce your intake of foods that can adversely affect your brain and mood, such as caffeine, alcohol, trans fats, and foods with high levels of chemical preservatives or hormones (such as certain meats).

- Don't skip meals.
- Minimise sugar and refined carbs.
- Boost your B vitamins. Deficiencies in B vitamins such as folic acid and B-12 can trigger depression.
- Boost your mood with foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids. Omega-3 fatty acids play an essential role in stabilising mood

### 5. Get a daily dose of sunlight

Sunlight can help boost serotonin levels and improve your mood. Whenever possible, get outside during daylight hours and expose yourself to the sun for at least 15 minutes a day. Remove sunglasses (but never stare directly at the sun) and use sunscreen as needed.



## 6. Challenge negative thinking

Do you feel like you're powerless or weak? That bad things happen and there's not much you can do about it? That your situation is hopeless? Depression puts a negative spin on everything, including the way you see yourself and your expectations for the future.

When these types of thoughts overwhelm you, it's important to remember that this is a symptom of your depression and these irrational, pessimistic attitudes —known as cognitive distortions —aren't realistic. When you really examine them, they don't hold up. Rather, the trick is to identify the type of negative thoughts that are fueling your depression and replace them with a more balanced way of thinking.

### Put your thoughts on the witness stand

Once you identify the destructive thoughts patterns that contribute to your depression, you can start to challenge them with questions such as:

**“What's the evidence that your worry will not come true?”**

**“If the worry does not come true, what will probably happen in stead?”**

**“If your worry does come true, how will you handle it? Will you eventually be OK?”**



As you cross-examine your negative thoughts, you may be surprised at how quickly they crumble. In the process, you'll develop a more balanced perspective that will help to relieve your depression and negative thinking patterns.

**If you feel you need help with dealing with depression, Platinum Health is here to support you.**

**EAP Counselors (010 133 0525) are available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, to offer counselling and support. You are also welcome to book an appointment with PH's Mental Health Services (014 590 1700 or 080 000 6942).**



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