

# Ten strategies for coping with depression



## 1. Look after your health

**Take regular moderate exercise** - 30 minutes every day can help you feel calmer and increase your energy. Find something you enjoy like swimming, yoga, dancing or a team sport.

**Eat well** - eat a balanced and nutritious diet with lots of fresh vegetables. Make sure your body has the right vitamins and nutrients and try to avoid eating sugary or fried foods.

**Cut down on caffeine, smoking and drinking alcohol** - don't use them to try to feel better.

**Get a good night's sleep** - it can help you feel stronger and cope better.



## 2. Keep to a routine

**Keep to the same schedule** - get up at the same time each day and eat breakfast.

**Shower and get dressed** - this will make you feel better and help you leave the house and do some tasks and activities.

**Keep your house clean and tidy** - wash up each day and keep your house clean and tidy.

**Keep to a regular bedtime** - don't sit up watching television.



## 3. Get active again

**Start small** - try not to feel overwhelmed by too many tasks at first. Choose one small task and make a start.

**Make a list of things you would like to do** - introduce a mix of tasks into your week:

**Some tasks you enjoy** like reading a book, cooking a healthy meal, meeting a friend or craft activities.

**Some routine everyday tasks** like going to the supermarket, taking the kids to school or doing the washing.

**Some necessary tasks** like paying some bills or finding a plumber.

**Don't try to do too much too soon** - build up activities gradually.

**Divide big tasks into smaller chunks** and include some exercise, relaxation techniques and social activities.

**Try something new** - volunteer or join a group.

**Be mindful** - try to live in the moment and not in your thoughts.

**Give yourself credit for what you achieve.**



## 4. Connect with others

**The support of a good social network is important** - take time to develop your relationships with family, friends and colleagues. Be open with them about how you are feeling.

**Being active and make new friends** – join a sports or hobby group or a social group like Men in Sheds.

**Try talking to a friend about how you are feeling** - sharing a problem which is troubling you with a trusted friend can relieve some of the pressure and help you feel more supported. A friend can also see the problem in a different way and suggest new solutions you may not have thought of. Don't keep problems to yourself.



## 5. Learn to relax

**Practise relaxation and breathing techniques every day** - to help you feel calmer, combat the symptoms of depression and improve sleep. Try different ways to relax such as yoga, aromatherapy or meditation.

**Mindfulness** is a very effective technique in helping to combat depression. It works by re-focusing thoughts back to the present moment. Practise mindfulness when doing everyday tasks – ask yourself what you can hear, feel, smell, see and taste. Or, you could look for a course.



## 6. Try to be positive

**Challenge any negative or unhelpful thinking:**

- Don't use words like 'never,' 'always' or 'everyone' to make unfounded over-generalisations like 'It never happens for me'. If something bad happens once it doesn't mean that it will happen again.
- Don't say things like 'I should have done that already' or 'I must paint the kitchen today' - it will only put unnecessary pressure on yourself. Using words like 'should', 'must', 'have to' and 'ought to' can allow guilt to build up and make you feel like you are failing.
- Be positive - take time to be thankful for the good things, laugh a little, and don't take the small things too seriously.



## 7. Get creative

Painting, drawing, photography, craft and creative writing are relaxing and calming and can help re-focus thoughts away from everyday worries and concerns. Try adult colouring books as well.



## 8. Spend time in nature

Spending some time each day in a green space can help to calm the mind and boost your sense of wellbeing. Breathe the fresh air, listen to the birds, be mindful.



## 9. Create a toolbox of positive thoughts

**Create a toolbox** which can help boost your mood whenever you find yourself feeling low: Make lists of things you like about yourself, successes, things you are grateful for, good experiences and compliments.

**Come up with a list** of things that you can do for a quick mood boost - a walk in nature, playing with a pet, a craft activity.

**Include** some upbeat music, a funny movie, a favourite book and photographs that make you feel happy.

**Write a note** to remind yourself that how you are feeling now will pass.



## 10. Be kind to yourself

**Don't be too hard on yourself** - work on your weaknesses but accept them (we all have some) and learn to let go of things you can't change in the past or problems you can't control. Think how you would talk to a friend who was in the same situation.