

If you have been diagnosed by your GP as having depression, you have already taken the first step to recovery.

Depression is a serious illness. It is not a normal part of getting older. It is not “something you should expect at your age”.

There is a range of treatments available from talking therapies to medication and things you can do for yourself to help ease the symptoms you may be feeling.

It may seem difficult at first, particularly if you are low on energy, but even the smallest steps can help to lift your mood and make you feel a little better.

Here are some helpful tips for coping with depression. But do remember that it will take time before it lifts fully, so be patient and gentle on yourself.



Even the smallest steps can help

Contact us

Many Age Concerns provide a range of services that support older people such as:

- ◆ Information and advice
- ◆ Day centres and lunch clubs
- ◆ Befriending schemes
- ◆ Bereavement support
- ◆ Transport to activities
- ◆ Exercise programmes
- ◆ A benefits check

For more information please contact our free National Information Line on 0800 00 99 66, or your local Age Concern.

Your local Age Concern

AGE
Concern

“Down, but not out” campaign
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Coping with depression



AGE
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Coping with depression

Depression can be treated successfully and there are a range of therapies that can help. Your GP can tell you which treatments will suit you best.

Medication

Your doctor may prescribe you an antidepressant. They can help to reduce anxiety and improve your mood, sleep, appetite and concentration.

Talking therapies

Talking to a trained therapist about your depression, or an event that may have triggered it like bereavement, can be enormously rewarding. There are different types of therapies you can try either one-on-one or as part of a group.

Examples include:

- ◆ **Cognitive behavioural therapy:** helps you develop more positive ways of thinking.
- ◆ **Interpersonal therapy:** helps you think about your relationships with others and new ways to get along better.



Exercise

Exercise, however gentle, will help you feel better and more positive. It will keep you physically fit as well as help you sleep. Walking, yoga, swimming, dancing and aerobics are all good examples.

Healthy eating

Eating a balanced diet with lots of fruit and vegetables will stop you getting run down and feeling more depressed. Cut down on alcohol or, better still, cut it out altogether.

Staying social

It is important to get out and about. Staying at home all the time can make you brood on things. Ask us about lunch clubs, day centres, evening classes and support groups you can join and transport that might get you there. There is a wide range of adult education classes you could take too. University of the Third Age offer everything from creative writing to pottery.

Volunteer work

Perhaps a few hours one afternoon in a charity shop, or whatever you can manage. It is a great way to keep yourself busy and meet new people.

Alternative therapies

Some alternative therapies are thought to be useful in alleviating depressive symptoms such as:

- ◆ Meditation
- ◆ Acupuncture
- ◆ Aromatherapy and massage
- ◆ Herbal medicine, but check with your GP or pharmacist first.

Relaxation methods

It is important to reduce stress and anxiety by doing things that help you to relax. This will be personal to you, but could include:

- ◆ Slow-breathing exercises
- ◆ Listening to calming music
- ◆ Cooking or baking
- ◆ Crafts
- ◆ Writing
- ◆ Gardening



Set yourself a daily goal

It might be a spot of housework, paying a bill, calling a friend or going for a walk.

Keep a mood diary

Note down what triggers an episode of depression and what makes you feel better. It will help you think of ways to cope.

Share your feelings

Try not to keep your feelings to yourself as this can make you more depressed. Talk to your GP or practice nurse but also include family and friends and ask for their support and understanding.