



Managing Depression

Depression can happen to anyone - and does happen to one in four of us over our lifetimes. Different factors that make depression more likely include biological make-up, upbringing, or life events. Depression is often accompanied by other feelings such as guilt, shame, anger and anxiety. The length and severity of depression can be affected by the way we think, what we do and how we deal with life events.



What You Can Do to Help Yourself

1. **Participate in your treatment.** You are the expert about yourself. Be actively involved in setting your individual goals and your treatment plan. Your treatment should be based on your needs and goals.
2. **Treat suicidal thoughts seriously.** Talk openly about any suicidal thoughts you are having with your therapist, provider, care coordinator or a nurse. If needed, get immediate help by calling 911 or going to the nearest hospital emergency room. Develop a safety plan with your therapist. If you don't have a therapist, talk with your provider about finding one.
3. **Ask questions.** Ask your therapist or medication prescriber to explain your diagnosis, treatment alternatives and his/her recommendations. If you don't understand something ask again. Or ask a friend or family member to attend a session with you. Write down questions ahead of time and bring them to the session. Be sure to talk to your primary care physician about your symptoms and medications.
4. **Be alert to early symptoms.** Symptoms of depression can return. Sometimes your depression can feel like anger or irritability as opposed to sadness. Seek treatment as soon as possible. Ask your therapist about your developing a Recovery Plan or Crisis Plan and share these with family and friends.
5. **Cultivate supportive relationships** with family, friends and peer support groups. Ask The Office of Member and Family Affairs or your clinician for information about peer support groups in the community. Limit your time alone. Keep up with social activities, even if you don't feel like it at the time.

6. **Care about yourself.** Establish a healthy lifestyle. Try to get some natural sunlight for a few minutes every day, especially in the fall and winter. Physical activity can help your mood. Establish an exercise routine and eat a healthy, well-balanced diet. Try to do some things you enjoy with other people. Remember that alcohol and illegal drugs can worsen depressive symptoms. If you use alcohol, use in moderation. Try to get 8 hours of sleep per night.
7. **Keep your appointments.** This is your time so use it effectively. If you take an antidepressant medication, take it regularly, even if you are feeling better. Talk with your provider before changing or stopping any anti-depressant medication. Call your medication prescriber if you have any questions, or if you have uncomfortable side effects. Ask about medications which may have fewer side effects. Be open with your therapist and remain willing to consider new perspectives.
8. **Practice skills you learn.** Often therapy for depression involves learning new ways to think about events and experiences in your life. Complete homework you are given. Practice helps when learning these new skills. Avoid being too critical of yourself and challenge negative thinking.
9. **Try to be hopeful.** Remember that you are not alone. People who feel depressed can and do get better and live full and productive lives. Develop a skill or hobby. Try to do some things that you enjoy with other people.
10. **Learn how people recover from depression.** Ask your provider and read written materials.

Resources

Websites

Three internet sites to start with:

- National Institute of Mental Health (1.800.421.4211 or www.nimh.nih.gov)
- NBHP www.nbhpartnership.com
- www.achievesolutions.net

Books

- *Real Happiness* by J. Paquette
- *Feeling good: the new mood therapy (revised edition)* by D. Burns
- *Control Your Depression* by P. Lewinsohn, R. Munoz, M. Youngren and A. Zeiss

Resources and Apps

- Connections: offers coordinated information, referrals and assistance for mental health and substance abuse in Larimer County. (970) 221-5551
- Apps: Happify (Apple app), Moodtune and Intellicare (Android app)