

Tips to deal with depression/a depressed state

What is a depressed state?

Many people experience symptoms of depression at some time during their life. Depression is often linked with acute stress, such as failures and disappointments, deadline pressure, financial problems, conflicts with others or physical problems and constraints. Symptoms can vary significantly. In such phases you often feel like a failure, more irritable, more exhausted or more restless than usual. Some people have the tendency to withdraw and spend some time alone, others reach out to close family members and friends and discuss their problems. In most cases, they will feel better soon. Being in a depressed state for a day or two does not necessarily mean you have a mental illness. Such days reflect your acute state of mind which is dependent on current events.

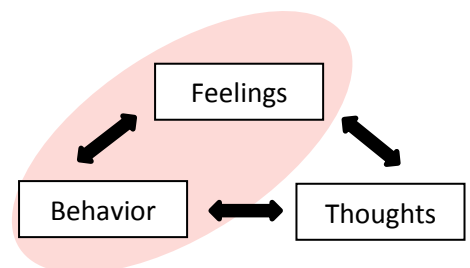
When does a depression need treatment?

If different stress factors come together and exceed the individual's coping capacities, a depressed state can develop into a serious depression. One person in five is affected by this at least once in their life. Depressive episodes are characterized by different symptoms such as lasting dejection, markedly diminished interest or pleasure in almost all activities, lethargy and constant fatigue. In addition, common symptoms are feelings of worthlessness, self-doubt, impaired concentration and attention, feelings of guilt, hopelessness, sleep disorder, decrease or increase in appetite or even suicidal ideation. If these symptoms are constantly present over the course of several weeks and affect the individual's daily life, we thoroughly recommend to seek help in the form of a psychotherapeutic or drug treatment (contact addresses can be found on our web site).

Ways to boost your mood:

Behavior

When you're in a depressed state of mind, the tendency is to withdraw and isolate and, as a result, to neglect positive activities. This behavior leads to a lack of positive experiences and makes it even more difficult to do what you need to feel better.



Establish (and maintain) a daily routine:

- Structure your day, e.g. with the help of a weekly scheduler.
- You have to accept that you may need more time for some tasks or that they appear to be more difficult than usual. Set subgoals - the key is to start small and build from there.
- Reward yourself after having accomplished a task.

Take positive steps day by day:

- Balance daily duties with positive activities
- Reactivate your hobbies. Make a list of things and activities that make you feel better or used to be fun in the past.

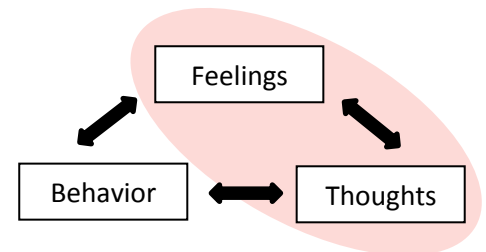
- Stay connected to your social contacts to get your mind off your problems or to talk about them.

Support your physical health:

- Don't skip meals, eat and drink healthy
- Move during the day or exercise regularly. Even if you feel tired: Physical exercise will boost your mood.

Thoughts

When being in a depressed state, your thoughts tend to be more hopeless, pessimistic and self-critical than usual. Your thoughts are focused on failure and negative experiences which fuels dejection.



Avoid negative ways of thinking:

- Find out when the negative thoughts occur and what they look like.
- Challenge these thoughts and develop alternative thoughts, which are more balanced and of more help:

Example:

Situation	Thoughts	Feelings	Alternative thoughts
<i>I have just learned that I got a bad grade on the exam.</i>	<i>I can't do anything right. I'm a total failure.</i>	<i>Grief Anxiety Anger</i>	<i>I have already passed a lot of exams and do well in my studies. Some of my fellow students also had problems with the exam. Maybe I can do better when preparing for the next exam.</i>

- Try to give more room to positive, alternative thoughts; write them down and read them again and again.
- Remind yourself of all the difficult situations you have already lived through in your life and try to remember what helped you in these phases.
- Exercise a constructive relation to yourself. Take some time each night to write down two things you did well during the day and praise yourself for each achievement.
- Some situations cannot be changed and need to be accepted. It makes no sense to think about them over and over again.

More information and helpful links can be found on the website of the Psychotherapeutic Counseling Center.