

# How to Deal with Depression

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## What is Depression?

Depression is a feeling that nothing matters that is so strong it interferes with one's ability to function in the world. School? Work? Social life? Depression can make getting out of bed every morning like climbing Mount Everest. The good news is that you don't have to climb the mountain alone. Asking for help could help you unlock the tools to make the climb easier. It's okay – you've got this.

## Symptoms:

There are a few key symptoms that could indicate that you are experiencing far more than just feeling a bit sad.

According to the American Psychological Association, symptoms of depression could include:

- Depressed mood. All day. Every day. For days.
- Unintentional, significant weight loss
- Not having any energy even after you've slept well
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Having a hard time concentrating or making decisions
- Thoughts of death or ending your life

## How to Deal with Depression:

Depression is likely to make you feel isolated and alone. We're here for you. Nobody should have to go through dark times on their own. Together, we've got this.

Here are a few ways to start working through the sadness.

- Ask for help. Connecting with a real human could help you work through the sadness in the moment and find ways to get out of the dark place in the long term.
- Self-care. If you're feeling depressed, taking care of yourself can feel like a feat. Pick one thing to focus on, like eating a meal, getting dressed or having a shower. Did you pick one? Okay, great. Let's do this.

- Let someone in. When you're depressed, probably the last thing you want to do is spend time with other humans. In reality, science says maintaining key aspects of your social life can be a powerful way to manage your depression. Try letting even one friend in and telling them what's going on. Need a place to start? Try sending them a text like this: "Hey, I'm having a hard time and could use some company. Fancy meeting up?"
- Talk to a pro. Mental health is health. So, sometimes it needs a doctor to help you work out the best plan for you. It's never too early to ask for help. Getting help from a pro could help you unlock the tools to get out of the dark place.

## Types:

Common types of depression include:

- **Major Depression:** According to the National Institute of Mental Health, Major Depression is the most common type of depression. Usually, it is two or more weeks of depression symptoms, such as feelings of worthlessness, feelings of guilt, and a lack of interest in things you used to love.
- **Bipolar Disorder:** Bipolar Disorder is not the same as depression. However, it often includes symptoms of depression – your mood will swing from the highest of highs to the lowest of lows.
- **Postpartum Depression:** Having a baby can change the hormones in your body. Sometimes, this hormonal change can trigger symptoms of depression.
- **Premenstrual Dysmorphic Disorder (PMDD):** Hormonal changes can be a scary ride for your brain and your body. PMDD is a type of depression that affects women during their period. It includes symptoms that are more severe than your usual PMS.
- **Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD):** Sometimes, people can experience depression around major changes in seasons. Usually, people experience SAD during the winter when the weather is cold and the days are shorter. Often, SAD improves with the next change in seasons. That doesn't mean you need to wait it out to get help. Ask your doctor.

## Risk Factors and Causes:

Risk factors for depression include:

- Family or personal history
- Major life stresses, including trauma or life changes such as the end of a relationship, a family loss, moving or changing careers.
- Chronic disease or certain medications
- Drug and alcohol addiction
- Women in their late teens to early 30s are at increased risk

## How to Treat Depression:

Even the most severe cases of depression can be treated. And, the sooner you seek help, the better. Treatment for depression typically consists of therapy and medication. Other things to consider if you are managing depression:

- Engaging in regular physical activity and exercise
- Maintaining healthy and regular sleep patterns
- Spending time with friends and loved ones and accepting help when offered
- Understanding that your mood will improve gradually, not immediately
- Continuing to learn more about your depression and maintaining awareness of what works, and what doesn't, as you and your doctor try out different treatment options
- Talking to your doctor is a great first step to learning more about how you're feeling and the options around managing your mental wellbeing that will be most effective for you.