



# Coping Skills for Depression

## Behavioral Commitment

Depression drains one’s energy to do just about anything—showing up to work or even activities they enjoy. Due to this, people with depression tend to become less active, which cycles the depression to worsen. However, even a little bit of activity can help break this cycle.

1. Highlight or circle activities you are likely to complete.

<b>Exercise</b>	walk, go for a bike ride, stretch, swim, weightlift, follow an exercise video, swim, practice yoga,
<b>Socialize</b>	call or text a friend, organize a group activity, visit family, join a club or group, have a BBQ or dinner with family and/or friends
<b>Responsibilities</b>	housework, pay bills, professional development, homework
<b>Hobbies</b>	Sports, gardening, drawing, gaming, playing with a pet, cooking, playing music, hiking, scenic drives, yoga,
<b>Personal Care</b>	get a haircut, prepare a healthy meal, dress up for yourself, tend to spiritual needs, go for a scenic drive, smell something nice

2. Practice your chosen activities. Use the following tips to improve consistency.

<b>Start Small</b>	If needed, break activities into smaller pieces. Some activity is better than none.
<b>Make A Plan</b>	Set an alarm as a reminder, or tie an activity to something you already do. For example, practice a hobby immediately after dinner every day.
<b>Bring A Friend</b>	Including a friend will increase your commitment and make things more fun.

3. When and how will you complete one of the activities above?

<b>When:</b>	<b>How:</b>
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## Three Goods

Negative thinking is a defining feature of depression. Positive experiences are often minimized, while negative experiences are magnified. It has been said that a negative experience has an impact five times as great as a positive one; in fact, positive experiences often have such little impact on us that they are hardly noticed. Practicing gratitude helps combat this tendency by shifting focus toward positive experiences, rather than negative ones.

Write about three positive experiences, specifically from your day. These experiences can be small, such as “I did not have to stop at a red light the whole way to work” or “The weather was perfect when I walked my dog today”. They can also be big, such as “I won the lottery!” or “I got a promotion at work”. Be sure to focus on experiences specific to your day. Do not list things such as “I have AC and heat” unless you did not have AC or heat the day prior or on a regular basis.

*What are three good things you have noticed from today?*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

**Choose one of the following questions to answer about each of the three good things:**

Why did this happen?

Why was this good thing meaningful?

How can I experience more of this good thing?

**\*\*Repeat this exercise every day for 1 week\*\***

*After one week*

What have you noticed about your thinking?

What have you noticed about yourself?

# Mindfulness

Mindfulness is the act of paying attention to the present moment; taking a step back and noticing one's surroundings, one's thoughts and one's feelings - without judgment. Mindfulness helps reduce the rumination and worry that often accompany depression.

One way to practice mindfulness is through meditation. During mindfulness meditation, you will simply sit and focus your attention on the sensation of breathing. By focusing on your breathing, you will put yourself in the here-and-now. If you find yourself distracted, refocus to your breath. If you find yourself struggling, don't hesitate to search for guided meditations to start. Below are five elements of meditation and mindfulness to help you have a solid start OR to serve as a positive reminder before you begin.

## *Time and Place*

Find a quiet, comfortable place where you can practice mindfulness for 15 to 30 minutes every day. Frequent and consistent practice leads to the best results, but some practice is better than none.

## *Posture*

Sit in a chair or lie down in a comfortable position. Soften your gaze, lose focus or even close your eyes. Let your head, shoulders, arms, and legs relax. Adjust your posture whenever you feel uncomfortable.

## *Awareness of Breath*

Focus on your breathing. Breaths should be 5.5 seconds in and 5.5 seconds out. Notice the sensation of the air as it travels in through your nose and out through your mouth. Notice the gentle rise and fall of your belly.

## *Wandering Mind*

During meditation, it's normal for the mind to wander. When this happens, gently turn your attention back to your breathing. You may need to do this frequently throughout your practice.

## *Be Kind*

Be kind and gentle with yourself, this does not always come easy to everyone. If you find yourself distracted, refocus on your breath. If you find yourself struggling, don't hesitate to search for guided meditations to start. Remember, be kind and gentle with yourself as this takes practice, practice, practice.



## Social Support

Isolation is a common symptom of depression. Further issues such as fatigue, lowered self-esteem, and anxiety are related to this and exacerbate this problem. Depression often causes social isolation by choice, which then causes more depression – it is a vicious cycle. Resisting social isolation and instead leaning on social support can improve overall resilience to stress and depression.

Think of your existing relationships – use them! Make it a priority to socialize with friends or family *EVERY DAY*. If this is proving difficult or if no one is nearby, plan times to interact virtually. Another long-distance idea is to try an activity together such as cooking together on a video call, playing a game together, or sharing a coffee over the phone.

Say “yes” to socializing. Depression makes it tempting to stay home, isolated from friends and family. In fact, it often will allow one to justify reasons to stay home that seem legitimate at the time, though are in reality invalid. Challenge yourself to saying “yes” to social opportunities, even when you’re tempted to stay in.

Need further help doing this? Join a support group. Support groups let you connect with others who are dealing with issues similar to yours. You’ll benefit from sharing and receiving advice and support.

List 3 people in your support system

1. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact (email or phone): \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact (email or phone): \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact (email or phone): \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to you: \_\_\_\_\_

List two social activities you have committed to this week.

1.

2.