



DEPRESSION - SELF HELP GUIDE

Everyone experiences feeling down at some point in their lives. If things go wrong at work, they suffer a bereavement or lose a close relationship, it's natural to feel sad and lethargic for quite some time. That's not necessarily depression, just the natural grieving process at work, but if feeling low tips over into depression, it can be hard for people to work their way out of it on their own.

The good news is that depression is treatable, and there are plenty of things to do to aid your own recovery.

This guide will talk you through the symptoms of depression, the treatments available and what you can do to help yourself.

What is depression and how can it affect you?

Depression is a disorder which affects your mood, causing you to feel very low and giving a wide range of other symptoms which can vary from person to person, such as difficulty sleeping, low energy, low self-confidence, low appetite, poor concentration and an irritable and weepy feeling.

People who are depressed tend to feel that there's no hope for anything, that they are stupid or not worth anything, and their negative thoughts can become a vicious circle, leading them to feel worse. They might stop doing all the things they usually enjoy and stay out of contact with family and friends, which might be partly because they are embarrassed to admit they've got depression, and partly because they don't want to feel like they are bothering their family.

The worst thing about depression is that its very nature makes it more difficult to persuade yourself to do the things that will make you feel better. If you're already feeling fatigued and lacking in energy, who wants to exercise, for example? But exercise is an excellent way to battle depression.

Treatment methods

If you are suffering from depression, and particularly if you are having any thoughts of suicide or self-harm, please see your doctor. There's no need to try and cope with this on your own, and treatment can be highly successful.

Antidepressants are the obvious treatment, but your doctor will treat you individually and may well recommend talking therapies instead, such as psychotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) or counselling.

Talking can be a fantastic way to combat depression and boost your mood. Sometimes just getting out how you feel and having someone else understand can make a difference. Not only that, but hearing yourself say all those negative thoughts and letting someone else hear them can bring them into the light of day and show you just how unreal and ridiculous they are.

Your doctor might also recommend solution based clinical hypnotherapy.

Hypnotherapy can be therapeutic for a number of conditions, and is particularly effective for depression, with a much lower chance of you having a relapse compared to taking antidepressants. Your therapist will start with a relaxing hypnosis session to reduce any tension and anxiety and then move on to helping you put the depression behind you and live your life.

Your sessions might take up to three months, but you should feel much better by then, more able to cope with whatever life might throw at you, and definitely more relaxed.

Self help

Many things can help alleviate depression, and it's worth considering which items on the list feel good to you, and which you think will work for you. Depression is such an individual illness, and the way to relieve it can be equally individual:

1. Know your worth

Depression is a pernicious illness which can take away any sense of achievement, leaving it all too easy to believe all the bad things anyone has ever said about you.

One way to combat this is to start a journal and list all of your skills, achievements and good qualities. If you have any trouble with this, ask your support network, whether that's friends, family or both. Spend quite a bit of time and list everything you can think of.

Keep adding to this list over time and it will become a wonderful resource you can look back on when you're having a bad day and need a boost.

2. Focus on the good

Depression makes it far too easy to only see the bad in your days, to focus on what's gone wrong, on what you haven't done or on what you failed at.

Turn that around by writing down all the good things that happen to you every day. What did you accomplish, who did you help, who helped you? Did anyone give you a compliment today? What went way better than you expected? What did you do with the people that love you?

Writing these things down can lift your mood as you write, give you absolute proof that that negative voice is wrong, and give you something else you can revisit on those less happy days.

3. Take pleasure in good experiences

You might feel like staying at home and hibernating, but one of the best things you can do for depression is to get out there and see your friends and do all the things you normally do.

What do you love doing? What really excites you? Don't let depression rob you of having these experiences.

Eat out and savour each and every bite of your favourite meal, treat yourself to a box of your favourite chocolates. Buy fresh flowers or scented candles to brighten up your home. Book tickets for a football match with your friends. Whatever it is that will give you something bright in your day, do that.

Relive the experience over again by writing it in your journal. Again, it's proof that life isn't grey and dark and that you do have good things and people in your life.

After trying different things, you'll also find yourself with a list of things that you know will boost your mood and relieve your depression. That can be an incredibly handy checklist to keep around if you need it.

4. Learn to relax

Take up meditation and learn some relaxation and breathing techniques. When people are tense, they tend to breathe more quickly, and taking in deep, slow breaths can help you relax and bring any anxiety levels down.

Deep breathing can ease your depression by slowing down your heart rate and calming your nervous system.

5. Exercise

Exercise might sound boring, but it's a great treatment for depression, making you feel better from the endorphins and making you feel a lot less tired.

You'll feel in control of your own body and you'll also be getting fitter. One of the side effects of depression can sometimes be weight gain which can make you feel even worse, but if you exercise you'll prevent that from happening.

Rather than getting stuck in a routine which might not help, if you're up to it, try new things, go to a different class than you normally do, take some friends and kick a ball in the park. Get yourself moving and both your body and mind will feel the benefit.

Conclusion

Depression can be treated with great success, whether you go down the route of medication, take counselling sessions or do what you can do at home, so there's no need to suffer and feel like you'll never dig yourself out.

For more information on solution based clinical hypnotherapy, feel free to give me a call and talk through what a session is like. You can also book an appointment for my practice in the beautiful town of Falmouth in Cornwall on the website or by phone.

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