

## ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO WITH OTHERS TO AVOID OR REDUCE DEPRESSION

- Strike up conversations with strangers—in line at the market, walking in your neighbourhood, at the local park, etc.
- Pet the animals or volunteer to walk the dogs at a local animal shelter.
- Having lunch with friends.
- Ask your friends to turn off their mobile phones when they are with you, and do the same for them.
- Volunteer at a soup kitchen.
- Set up at least three dates with friends or acquaintances at the beginning of each week.
- Take acting, singing, or dancing classes—even if you have no talent whatsoever!
- Avoid people that make you feel bad.
- Improve your intimate relationships.

## IMPROVE YOUR ENVIRONMENT TO AVOID OR REDUCE DEPRESSION

- Cut and arrange flowers or bring a live plant into your office or living space.
- Clean up your room (or start with one small shelf, drawer, or corner).
- Wash your clothes.
- Paint your walls a shade of yellow or another colour that cheers you up.
- Try different kinds of music in your home—peppy, mellow, country, opera, pop, etc.
- Try aromatherapy—use different scents of candles, incense, or oils. Choose fragrances that remind you of a happy place or time or those that are known for their uplifting qualities.
- Move the furniture around to create a different feeling in a room.
- Change the lighting—try opening windows or curtains; if necessary, get full-spectrum light tubes.



### Resources

**Irish Association of Suicidology** [www.ias.ie](http://www.ias.ie)

**Samaritans** [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

**Aware** [www.aware.ie](http://www.aware.ie)

**Mental Health Ireland** [www.mentalhealthireland.ie](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie)

**GROW** [www.grow.ie](http://www.grow.ie)

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# Depression Self-Help

Living with Depression in **Yourself**



## Introduction

We all go through ups and downs in our mood. Sadness is a normal reaction to life's struggles, setbacks, and disappointments. We may feel "down in the dumps" for a short period of time, but gradually the painful feelings dissipate and we move on with our lives—often the wiser for the experience. But if these feelings of sadness don't go away, if they last for over two weeks or if they are so intense that they interfere with your ability to work, study, eat, lose more than 7 pounds weight, sleep, and enjoy life, you may be suffering from depression.

## Depression Self-Help

Depression self-help include aerobic exercise; taking classes that involve interaction and creativity; and spending time with people who make you feel better, rather than those who make you feel worse.

Depression has been called a "Catch 22" because the steps that a depressed person must take to recover are made difficult by the very symptoms of depression, which include loss of energy and feelings of hopelessness. However, while recovery from depression is certainly *difficult*, it is by no means *impossible*—and it is essential for the depressed person to remember this distinction.

Recovery from depression, involves a series of hard choices over a long period of time—five months, on average. To recover from depression, these choices must include:

- choosing to get out of bed
- choosing to eat breakfast
- choosing to shift attention from negative thoughts to at least neutral ones
- choosing to stop ruminating
- choosing to be with people who make you feel cared for and supported

Clearly, if you are feeling so depressed that you cannot function or if you are feeling suicidal, you need to get professional assistance *as soon as possible*.

Depression can make you feel exhausted, worthless, helpless, and hopeless. Such negative thoughts and feelings make some people feel like giving up. It is important to realize the actual circumstances. Negative thinking fades as treatment begins to take effect. In the meantime, there are many things you can do to help yourself avoid or reduce the occurrence of depression.

Try several of the following and see which work best for you. Some may work better than others at different times, so be sure to try a variety of approaches. Use these as starting points. Then let yourself be creative in developing other ideas.

- Set realistic goals in light of the depression and assume a reasonable amount of responsibility.
- Set priorities and do what you can when you can.
- Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately. Feeling better takes time.
- People rarely "snap out of" a depression. But they can feel a little better day-by-day.
- As you recover you may continue to have occasional bad days, do not be disappointed by this
- If your depression continues or gets worse remember that the sooner you get help the better will be your response to treatment
- Positive thinking will replace the negative thinking that is part of the depression and will disappear as your depression responds to treatment.
- Let others help you.

## ACTIVITIES YOU CAN DO ALONE TO AVOID OR REDUCE DEPRESSION

- Sweat exercise: Do any form of aerobic exercise—such as brisk walking, biking, or running in place—until you work up a healthy sweat.
- Turn on your favourite music and dance, dance, dance—until you work up a sweat.
- Sing in the shower.
- Instead of listening to the radio or talking on your cell phone, roll up the car windows and sing loudly.
- Get a dog or other pet—or simply visit a pet store to boost your spirits.
- Plant and tend a garden—a herb garden takes up very little space.
- If you are really upset, take a brisk walk and focus exclusively on the physical and emotional sensations you experience in your body. Stay out of your head—no thoughts allowed!
- Rent funny videos or see funny movies and plays.
- Go to the store and read all the humorous greeting cards.
- Treat your self to a great cup of coffee—if you take half-decaf and half regular, you can have two cups a day (too much caffeine can bring you down, but one cup is safe enough).
- Let nature bring you up—walk by the ocean or other waterways, hike the hills and forests.
- Draw, paint, or write.
- Avoid foods that zap your energy—for most people, sugar and pasta can be downers.
- Give yourself a hand or foot massage, or go get a back rub or body massage.
- Take a hot bubble bath with candles and music in the room.

