

Tips for Combatting Depression & Anxiety

1. Take care of your physical well-being

- Sleeping:** Make sure you're sleeping enough and nap where you can if sleeping at night is difficult. Keep your sleep at a consistent schedule and try not to over sleep.
- Eating:** Eat on a consistent schedule and regulate the amount of food you eat, trying not to over or under eat. If appetite is gone, try eating small snacks throughout the day. Stay away from fried, sugary, and processed foods. Fresh, healthy alternatives will help your body absorb serotonin more effectively in the gut.
- Exercise:** Even a daily 10-15 minute walk can help increase the flow of serotonin in the brain. This can help improve mood and decrease anxiety.
- Illness:** Take time to rest when ill. Take medications as prescribed. Make yearly medical checkups, as physical problems can impact mental health!
- Substance Use:** Alcohol and drugs often have an exacerbating long-term effect on mental health struggles. Limit or avoid substances altogether, *especially* when depression is accompanied by suicidal thoughts.



2. Reflect on Mental & Emotional States

- What is draining your mental and emotional energy? Are there things you can cut out, delegate, cut back on, or take a break from?
- What are you doing to recharge that energy? If you're losing energy faster than you're recharging, this can cause fatigue and leave you vulnerable to mental health struggles. What do you enjoy doing? What do you do to rest? What makes you feel nurtured or fulfilled? Do more of *that*.
- What are the ways in which you are coping, in both healthy and unhealthy ways? Counseling can help you gain strategies to cope with your struggles.
- For some, spiritual or religious practices can be helpful for coping with difficulties and even relieving stress.
- Feeling anxious? It can be helpful to reflect on why you may be anxious and what about a specific situation is anxiety provoking. Parse out what is rational and what is not. What is the most likely scenario? How could you cope with it?

3. Take care of your social well-being

- Isolation and lack of connection often play a significant role in depression. Reach out to loved ones in different ways.
- Develop and maintain relationship(s) with whom you can confide in and share your struggles.



- c. Lack of energy and motivation that often come with depression can contribute to isolation. You may have to push yourself to accept invitations or attend social gatherings/events. However...
- d. Be mindful of your social energy levels. Too much socializing can be draining for some people. You may also opt for deeper, quality connections instead of quantity or socializing with acquaintances.
- e. Avoidance of social settings (or anything that creates anxiety) ≠ effective anxiety management! Talk with a counselor to help you develop more effective ways of treating and coping with anxiety.
- f. Try engaging in hobbies or clubs related to your interests. This will help engage you in something you're interested in, provide an opportunity for connection, and decrease isolation.

4. Reflect on Environmental Factors

- a. If you are experiencing depression, are there any situations that may be contributing? Overworked? Feeling stuck or trapped? Unhealthy relationships? Focus on small steps to change what can be changed. Seek help in coping with what cannot be changed.
- b. How do experiences of oppression contribute to your anxiety and depression? Find spaces and people that help you feel safe and affirmed. Are there advocates or organizations in your community that can help meet basic needs or help navigate various systems (e.g., healthcare, financial aid, housing)?
- c. Are there any events, groups, or organizations that work to fight various systems of oppression? Joining these movements can help create a sense of empowerment and provide a platform for your voice to be heard.
- d. Take time to heal and recharge. Experiences that have a harmful impact may require you to heal before continuing on. Take time and space to do so where you are able to.
- e. Taking a break from social media and the news can also be helpful in healing and recharging.



5. When to seek professional help

- a. If struggles are getting in the way of day-to-day life or completing tasks
- b. If your relationships are being impacted
- c. It becomes difficult to “hold it all in”
- d. You notice major changes in functioning (eating, sleep, mood, concentration)
- e. You notice thoughts of suicide or being okay with dying
- f. You notice unhealthy ways of coping such as drug or alcohol use, self-injurious behavior (cutting, scratching, burning, etc.), food, etc.

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