

What is Depression?

Symptoms of a Depressive Episode

depressed mood	loss of interest or pleasure	significant weight change	diminished concentration
sleep difficulties	fatigue nearly every day	feelings of worthlessness	recurring thoughts of death
Symptoms must cause significant distress.			
Symptoms must last for at least two weeks.			

Demographics

- Women are 2x more likely to develop depression.
- About 1 in 10 people will experience depression during their lifetime.
- Most people experience their first depressive episode between ages 20 and 30.

Risks for Depression

- Family history of depression or similar disorders.
- Poverty, unemployment, social isolation, and other stressful life events.
- Regular drug and alcohol use.

Psychotherapy

(Cognitive Behavioral Therapy)

CBT works by changing self-defeating thoughts and behaviors.

CBT has been found to be equally, if not more effective than medicine in many cases.

CBT is the most researched form of psychotherapy for depression.

Medication

(Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors)

SSRIs increase the level of serotonin (a chemical related to depression) in the brain.

Studies suggest that SSRIs are the most effective when used to treat severe depression.

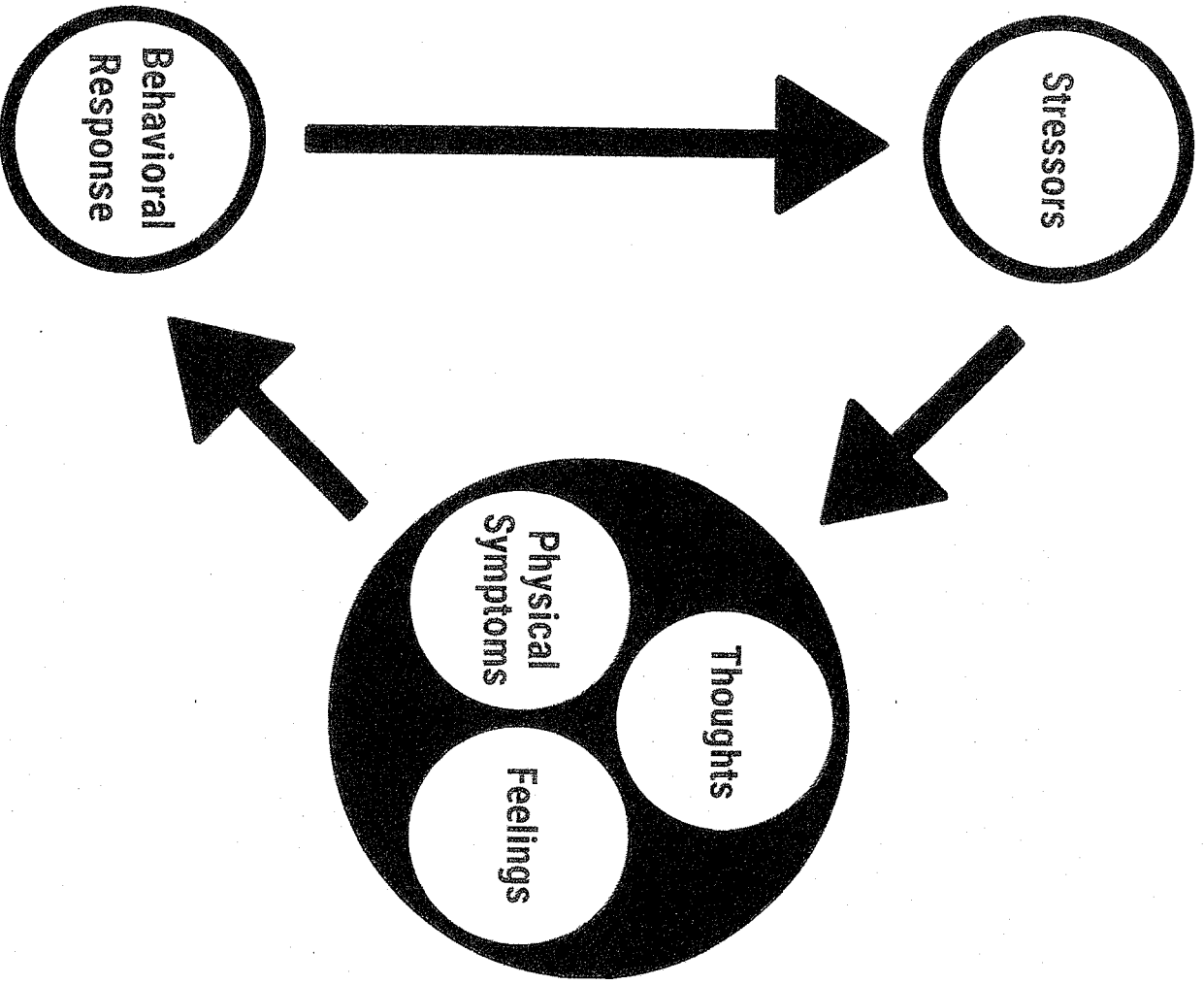
SSRIs don't work overnight—it might take up to 6 weeks before they reach their full effect.

A combination of both psychotherapy and medication has been found to be the most effective treatment for depression.

Other Facts

- Over 1/2 of those diagnosed with depression also suffer from anxiety.
- 60% of those who die by suicide suffer from depression or a related mood disorder.
- Physical exercise has been found to have a significant antidepressant effect.
- Depressive episodes also occur during bipolar disorder alongside manic episodes.

The Cycle of Depression



Stressors

A stressor is any situation that causes strain or hardship. These may be short-term or long-term.

Thoughts

Stressors often lead to negative thoughts, which may be irrational, or exaggerated.

- "I need to be perfect."
- "Nobody likes me."
- "I'm not good at anything."

Feelings

The way a person thinks about something has a major impact on how they will feel, and vice versa.

- sadness
- anger
- hopelessness
- loneliness

Physical Symptoms

The body responds to stressors, and negative thoughts and feelings, with physical symptoms.

- fatigue
- sleep problems
- poor concentration
- loss of motivation

Behavioral Response

The way a person acts in response to thoughts, feelings, and symptoms may worsen stressors, or create new stressors.

- social isolation
- neglecting daily tasks
- abusing drugs / alcohol

Coping Skills

Depression

Behavioral Activation

Depression saps a person's energy to do just about anything—even activities they enjoy. As a result, people with depression tend to become less active, which causes the depression to worsen. However, even a little bit of activity can help stop this cycle.

1. Choose activities you are likely to complete.




- exercise** walk, go for a bike ride, weightlift, follow an exercise video, swim, practice yoga
- socialize** call or text a friend, organize a group dinner, visit family, join a club / group
- responsibilities** cleaning / housework, pay bills, professional development, homework
- hobbies** sports, gardening, drawing, playing music, hiking, playing with a pet, cooking
- personal care** dress up, get a haircut, prepare a healthy meal, tend to spiritual needs

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

- start small** If needed, break activities into smaller pieces. Some activity is better than none.
- make a plan** 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.
- bring a friend** Including a friend will increase your commitment and make things more fun.

Social Support

Social isolation is a common symptom of depression. Related issues—such as fatigue, lowered self-esteem, and anxiety—exacerbate this problem. Resisting social isolation, and instead leaning on social support, can improve resilience to stress and depression.

-  **Lean on your existing relationships.** 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 remotely. Try 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. Make a habit of saying "yes" to social opportunities, even when you're tempted to stay in.
-  **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.

Coping Skills

Depression

Three Good Things

Negative thinking is a defining feature of depression. Positive experiences are minimized, while negative experiences are magnified. Gratitude helps combat this tendency by shifting focus toward *positive* experiences, rather than negative ones.

1 Write about three positive experiences from your day. These experiences can be small ("The weather was perfect when I walked to work") or big ("I got a promotion at work").

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

- 2 Why did this happen?
- Why was this good thing meaningful?
- How can I experience more of this good thing?

3 Repeat this exercise every day for 1 week.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness means paying attention to the present moment. It means taking a step back and noticing the world, and one's thoughts and feelings, without judgment. The goal of mindfulness is to simply observe. 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.

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. Close your eyes or let your gaze soften. Let your head, shoulders, arms, and legs relax. Adjust your posture whenever you feel uncomfortable.

Awareness of Breath

Focus on your breathing. 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.

The Mental Health Benefits of Exercise

Research has shown us that people who exercise regularly tend to be more resistant to many mental illnesses. Exercise can help treat current symptoms, and prevent future episodes.

What problems can exercise help with?

<p>Mental Illness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depression Anxiety Substance Abuse Bulimia Alzheimer's Disease 	<p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sleep Difficulties Stress Physical Health Low Energy Self-Esteem
---	--

Beginning an exercise plan doesn't have to be difficult. Walking for as little as 30 minutes, 3 times a week, has been found to be beneficial. Don't worry too much about what exercise you choose. Aerobic and anaerobic exercises are both effective at improving mental health.

Anaerobic Exercises



- Weightlifting
- Sprinting (running, biking, etc.)
- Interval training
- Climbing

Aerobic Exercises



- Walking, jogging, or biking
- Elliptical or ski machines
- Swimming
- Dancing

If you're crunched for time, you might still be able to squeeze some exercise into your day. Two 15 minute walks work just as well as one 30 minute walk! Here are some tips to help:



- Need to make a phone call? Walk and talk.
- Do an activity you enjoy, and it won't be a chore.
- Get an exercise partner to hold you accountable.
- Skip the elevator and take the stairs.
- Park at the back of the parking lot and walk.
- Head outside for 10 minutes during lunch.

The Mental Health Benefits of Exercise

What days of the week can you find time to exercise? Choose a minimum of three days per week to exercise. You should exercise for at least 30 minutes, but the time can be split up throughout the day.

Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.

List three types of exercise you would like to try.

The best exercises are activities that you'll genuinely enjoy, without having too many obstacles to get started.

1

2

3

What strategies can you use to make sure you remember to exercise?
 It's easy to put off exercise, prioritize other things, or simply forget about your plan. Circle the ideas that might help you stick to your plan.

- ❖ Plan to exercise with a friend so you can both hold one another responsible.
- ❖ Set an alarm to remind you when to exercise. If you're using your phone alarm, set it to automatically repeat every day at the same time!
- ❖ Get into a routine by exercising at the same time every day. Try attaching exercise to a particular part of your day, such as walking every evening right after dinner.
- ❖ Reward yourself for a job well done. Treat yourself to something you enjoy when you exercise. However, you have to be honest! No exercise, no reward.