

Getting the Most Out of Treatment



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ValueOptions Depression Series #

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Managing Your Medication

Although some of these points have been addressed in previous mailings, they are worth saying again. How you take your medication will be very important to helping you feel better as quickly as possible.

- Take the medication regularly - exactly as prescribed.
- Take the medication even as you are beginning to notice that your depression is lifting.
- Develop a reminder system for taking your medication, if it is difficult for you to remember to take medication. A pillbox makes it easy to remember which medications to take and when.
- Communicate with your physician
- Ask questions, note reactions to your medication, record side-effects so that you can describe to your doctor exactly how this medication makes you feel.

Taking Care of Your Health

Taking care of your basic health is very important. When depressed, you are at an increased risk of becoming physically ill. This can lead to a negative cycle, since physical illness can make you feel depressed.

1. Make sure you get enough sleep. Sleep during your normal, regular hours, going to sleep and waking at approximately the same time each day. Try to get about the same number of hours of sleep per day.
2. Eat a well-balanced diet, and eat at your regular times during the day (breakfast, lunch, and dinner). People with depression may lose their appetite and risk poor nutrition or weight loss. Make sure you get the right nutrition to keep your body healthy. Your primary care doctor can suggest a health nutrition plan for you.

3. Your doctor can recommend exercise that is appropriate to your state of health. Activities such as jogging, aerobics or riding a bicycle can help you focus your mind on a healthful activity rather than on depressing thoughts.

Getting Things Done

Even when you are depressed, as well as during your period of recovery, your life goes on and it is likely you will still experience demands on your time and effort. This may feel overwhelming. You can help yourself to manage these feelings by thinking about the following points:

1. Create a routine and simplify your daily life by:
 - Keeping a consistent daily schedule.
 - Setting small, realistic goals.
 - Rewarding yourself for each goal you reach.
 - Doing one thing at a time instead of trying to do everything at once.
2. Practice thinking positively.
 - When you are depressed, you are more likely to think negative thoughts (blaming yourself, feeling hopeless, expecting failure, and other such thoughts). This is part of depression and has little to do with your actual ability.
 - Start by writing down small things that you do well, or when other people say nice things to you.
 - Noticing positive things about yourself will help you see that the negative thoughts you have are not accurate.



3. Avoid making major life decisions when you feel depressed.
 - If you must make a decision about your life, ask your health care provider, family member, therapist, or someone you trust to help you think things through.
 - Once you start feeling better, resume your daily routine slowly and gradually.
4. Ask for help when you need it.
5. Don't get mad at yourself when things go wrong. Understand and accept that there may be setbacks.

Socializing

When you are depressed, it is often hard to be with other people. At the same time, close relationships can be a key to feeling better, feeling supported, and getting help in times of crisis.

1. Make sure that you are not alone for long periods. Even though you may not feel like being with people, getting out and being around them is helpful. It's all right to limit your contact with others but it's also important not to shut everyone out.
2. Work at forming and keeping close friendships and a group of people who support you. You do not need to confide in everyone, but having someone to talk to—whether a friend, family member, or therapist—is very important.
3. Ask friends and family members to help you figure out ways to decrease stress.

Additional Mental Health Treatments

Depression is a “biological” illness. But, frequently, stressful life events play a role in the start of a depression or in keeping you depressed. Medications will not make these stressful parts of your life go away. But talking about these problems with a therapist, or taking action to change

your thoughts, the way you act, or ways of being with others can help.

1. Consider therapy. Your doctor or health plan can give you a referral based on your situation. Talking to a therapist can be very helpful and can work together with antidepressant medication.
2. If you are already in therapy, we urge you to go to your appointments regularly, even if you are feeling better. Stopping therapy without talking about it with your therapist or doctor is not a good idea.
3. Stress management or “assertiveness” classes can teach you skills that may help you deal with those problems you may be having with other people that can lead you to become or stay depressed.
4. Think about joining a self-help group for people who have had trouble with depression.
5. If you or people who are close to you think you have a substance abuse problem in addition to depression, we urge you to talk to your doctor about what treatment may be appropriate. Common substance abuse treatment is very important in helping you get better from depression.