Q: My depression is starting to affect my work and personal life. How can I cope better?
A: If you are noticing that depression is affecting your home and work life, it is time to take it seriously. It is important to look at stressors impacting your mood and find healthy ways to cope.

Here are some suggestions on how you may be able to cope with and overcome depression.

1. **Exercise** helps boost mood, increases self-esteem and energy, improves sleep, and positively affects mental health. It is important to find ways to exercise that will keep you motivated. A run on the treadmill may seem dreadful to someone who prefers yoga or weightlifting.

2. **Diet** goes hand-in-hand with exercise. Food is fuel for our bodies. Swapping sweets and fatty foods for more healthy options will give you more energy and focus throughout the day. Make sure you hit all the main food groups, and eat regular meals throughout the day.

3. **Sleep** also influences mood. Oftentimes, individuals with depression also notice they are getting too much or too little sleep. Make your bedroom a sleep-only area. Do not associate your bed with electronics, and try to establish a sleep/wake routine that gives you 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night.

4. **Increasing your social support** is another important way to cope with depression. Depression makes people want to isolate themselves. Doing the exact opposite and connecting with others will be beneficial in increasing mood. You

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**Depression Symptoms and Warning Signs**

By HelpGuide.org

Feeling down from time to time is a normal part of life, but when emotions such as hopelessness and despair take hold and just won’t go away, you may have depression. Depression makes it tough to function and enjoy life like you once did. Just trying to get through the day can be overwhelming. But no matter how hopeless you feel, you can get better.

By recognizing the different symptoms and causes of depression, you can take the first step to feeling better and overcoming the problem.

**WHAT IS DEPRESSION?**

Depression is a common and debilitating mood disorder. More than just sadness in response to life’s struggles and setbacks, depression changes how you think, feel, and function in daily activities. It can interfere with your ability to work, study, eat, sleep, and enjoy life. The feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and worthlessness can be intense and unrelenting, with little, if any, relief.

Depression, on Back
Depression, from Front

Depression varies from person to person, but there are some common signs and symptoms. It’s important to remember that these symptoms can be part of life’s normal lows. But the more symptoms you have, the stronger they are, and the longer they’ve lasted – the more likely it is that you’re dealing with depression.

• Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. A bleak outlook – nothing will ever get better and there’s nothing you can do to improve your situation.
• Loss of interest in daily activities. You don’t care anymore about former hobbies, pastimes, social activities, or sex. You’ve lost your ability to feel joy and pleasure.
• Appetite or weight changes. Significant weight loss or weight gain – a change of more than 5% of body weight in a month.
• Sleep changes. Either insomnia, especially waking in the early hours of the morning, or oversleeping.
• Anger or irritability. Feeling agitated, restless, or even violent. Your tolerance level is low, your temper short, and everything and everyone gets on your nerves.
• Loss of energy. Feeling fatigued, sluggish, and physically drained. Your whole body may feel heavy, and even small tasks are exhausting or take longer to complete.
• Self-loathing. Strong feelings of worthlessness or guilt. You harshly criticize yourself for perceived faults and mistakes.
• Reckless behavior. You engage in escapist behavior such as substance abuse, compulsive gambling, reckless driving, or dangerous sports.
• Concentration problems. Trouble focusing, making decisions, or remembering things.
• Unexplained aches and pains. An increase in physical complaints such as headaches, back pain, aching muscles, and stomach pain.

CAUSES AND TREATMENT

While some illnesses have a specific medical cause, making treatment straightforward, depression is more complicated. It is not just the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain that can be simply cured with medication. It’s caused by a combination of biological, psychological, and social factors.

Some risk factors may make you more vulnerable to depression, including a lack of social support, recent stressful life experiences, a family history of depression, financial strain, and relationship or health problems. Understanding the underlying cause of your depression may help you overcome the problem.

Start by seeking support from family and friends and by making positive lifestyle changes. If those steps aren’t enough to help you feel better, it may be time to seek help from a mental health professional.

Effective treatment for depression often includes consulting a therapist who can offer tools to treat depression from a variety of angles and motivate you to take the action necessary. Therapy can also offer you the skills and insight to prevent depression from coming back.

Medication may be imperative if you’re feeling suicidal or violent. But while it can help relieve symptoms of depression in some people, it isn’t a cure and is not usually a long-term solution. It also comes with side effects and other drawbacks so it’s important to learn all the facts to make an informed decision.

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Counselor Corner, from Front

matter to your friends and family. Make it a priority to spend some time with them regularly.

5. Work can be stressful. Sometimes people think they have to work through their lunch or shift breaks to get caught up. However, doing so will eventually lead to burnout. It is important to use your breaks for their intended purpose. Using your break to go for a walk or socialize with coworkers can help reduce stress and improve focus throughout your work day. If your workload is overwhelming, it is important you share your concerns with your supervisor.

6. Self-care is another essential coping skill. Self-care can be anything you enjoy, such as reading a book, watching an episode of a TV series you like, taking a warm bath, or learning a new skill. Self-care is a necessary component of emotional wellness. If you are not spending enough time on your self-care, try dedicating 15 to 30 minutes each night doing something that makes you happy.

7. Faith and spirituality can be helpful in coping. If you have been struggling connecting with your faith lately, now may be a good time to reconnect. Additionally, spending a few minutes each day engaging in mindfulness exercises has been shown to improve mood and focus throughout the day.

8. Your mental health is important. If you are having trouble implementing these coping skills, it is a good idea to get extra support. A therapist at The Village can work with you to accomplish your goals and build coping skills. There is strength in numbers. You don’t have to fight depression alone. Call 1-800-627-8220 to schedule an appointment with an EAP counselor.