



THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY GROUP

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No-Cost Ways to Treat Depression Yourself

Although therapy and anti-depressant medication are the most effective treatments for depression, home treatment is also important. There are many things you can do to help yourself during a depressive episode and to prevent future episodes. Remember there are not always therapists to help you in your area.

- Make sure to get up out of bed and dress every day- even if you are not doing anything. It may sound simple but it is at least a step in the right direction, as staying in bed all day will make you feel even worse.
- Get adequate sleep. If you have problems sleeping:
 - Go to bed at the same time every night and, more importantly, get up at the same time every morning.
 - Keep your bedroom dark and free of noise
 - Don't exercise after 5:00 pm.
 - Avoid caffeinated beverages after 5:00 pm (e.g. coffee, coke, red bull, etc.)
 - Avoid the use of nonprescription sleeping pills or alcohol, because they can make your sleep restless and may interact with your depression medications
- Try to establish a routine that is easy to follow and not stressful. This will keep you engaged with reality, help you to cope and get through the days.
- Make sure you eat a balanced diet. If you lack an appetite, eat small snacks rather than large meals.
- Avoid drinking alcohol or using illegal drugs or medications that have not been prescribed to you. They may interfere with your medications or make your depression worse.
- Try to do the things you remember enjoying before the onset of your depression. Reading, listening to music, sewing, woodwork, painting, watching TV.

- Even if you don't feel motivated, try to participate in religious, social or other activities.
- Get regular exercise - Walking around the block or walking up and down the stairs a few times will have a benefit.
- Keep a journal and write your feelings down. This is cathartic and will help put things into perspective.
- Let your family and friends help you. Try to share your feelings with someone. It is usually better than being alone and secretive.
- Surround yourself with positive influences, avoid negativity.
- Set realistic goals for yourself and take on a reasonable amount of responsibility even around the home like cooking or shopping, or ironing.
- Break large tasks into small ones and set priorities. Do what you can when you are able.
- Postpone major life decisions such as changing jobs, moving or getting married or divorced when you are depressed.
- Read as much as you can about your illness, so you are fully aware of it, which can help you not let it take control of your life.
- Be patient and kind to yourself. Remember that depression is not your fault and is not something you can overcome with willpower alone. Treatment is necessary for depression, just like for any other illness.
- Remember that feeling better takes time, and your mood will improve little by little. Try and focus on the positive aspects in your life and do not dwell on the negative aspects. If you are always thinking about the negative aspects in your life it will make you more depressed.
- Don't necessarily live for the moment, think of the future and of things you would like to accomplish- Tomorrow - "Today" will be gone forever.
- Always keep yourself occupied so as not to allow yourself to think about negative and upsetting things. Remove yourself from places and people that don't bring out the best in you or make you feel good.