

Coping With Depression

Depression drains your energy, hope and drive, making it difficult to do whatever you need to do to feel better. Symptoms of depression include:

- Ongoing sadness, tearfulness or irritability
- Loss of interest or enjoyment in life
- A decrease or increase in appetite or weight
- Poor sleep or sleeping too much
- Feeling restless, anxious or worried
- Feeling tired or having little energy
- Trouble concentrating or making decisions
- Physical symptoms that don't respond to treatment
- Thoughts about death, including thoughts of suicide

You can take control.

While overcoming depression isn't quick or easy, it is far from impossible. You do have control, even if your depression is severe and persistent. There are several things you can do to help yourself. A first step is to honestly accept that your sadness or loneliness is overtaking your life and you need to make some changes. If you can do that, you are on your way to recovery.

Lifestyle changes can make a huge difference in battling depression. Things such as developing an exercise routine, avoiding the urge to isolate yourself, challenging the negative voices in your head, eating healthy foods and carving out time for rest and relaxation can help you towards regaining your life long term. Starting with "baby steps" is totally fine. Begin your recovery by identifying a few attainable things that can put you on the right path.

1. Reach out to a friend, relative or co-worker and engage in a conversation. You don't need to talk about your feelings. Sometimes just having a simple conversation about sports, travels or current events can help you to connect to what's going on in the world and help you to feel better.
2. Explore your faith and your beliefs. In many people, faith can help to accept the things we have no control over. Attend a local service, not so much to hear the sermon, but to be a part of a social community – even if it might be just one hour a week. Faith organizations can be very welcoming and embracing to all who enter.
3. Spend time with a pet. Dogs, cats and other animals give love, affection and companionship freely. If you don't have a pet of your own, visit a local shelter or offer to walk or care for a neighbor's pet. Chances are the extra attention will be appreciated by all.
4. Explore meditation. There are many free apps available that can walk you through a meditation process. Meditation can allow you to relax, clear your mind and help you to identify and release negative thoughts.
5. Be in sunlight for at least 15 minutes a day. Get outside and go for a walk. Explore a local park or your garden. If the weather isn't cooperating, sit near a window that has some natural light and gaze at the world outside. If you live in a particularly sunlight shortened area, consider a light therapy box.

And, consider professional counseling and therapy as an option. At Lutheran Counseling and Family Services we offer assistance for individuals struggling with depression, anxiety and mood disorders. Our

therapists can work with you to help you to realize the source of your depression and provide the best tools for moving forward.

Call us at 414-536-8333 or email us at lcfs@lcfswi.org for ways we may be able to help you or a loved one through the challenge of depression.