



Live Purposefully. Love Fully. Grow with Us

The Family Guidance and Therapy Center

5 Things You can do Every Day to Help Battle Hopelessness

Depression is an endless cycle; constantly dumping feelings of shame, guilt and hopelessness into your head. Depression is also not something you can just “snap out of” and for many people, being told that by well-meaning friends and family only makes them feel more shame for being depressed in the first place.

If you've ever experienced depression, you know how frustrating and, at times, debilitating it can be. It may make you so tired you don't want to get out of bed — or so anxious you can't calm down. Whatever your symptoms are, it can be a challenge to pull yourself out of that dark hole. Seeing your doctor should be your first step in dealing with depression, of course, but there are some things you can do daily that will begin to lift the feelings of hopelessness. When we remember to take a few personal minutes, eat healthy meals, and get enough sleep, we can better handle anything life has to throw at us.

If you're thinking about suicide, please call Psychiatric Emergency Response Team of SD at 619-531-2000. Anywhere in the USA call 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or text CONNECT to 741741



STAY CONNECTED

Human beings are wired to need others and when we are depressed our relationships are often the first thing we retreat from. Often this comes from feeling like the depression is our fault, or a sense of shame that we are depressed (remember, this is not truth, it is the disease talking).

Nobody wants to feel as if others look down on them, and in today's society we are often taught that we are "bothering" people when we have emotional needs that need to be met. BUT, that is a feeling that is usually far from the truth. The friends and family of individuals struggling with depression will usually do anything they can to help. They do not want to see you hurting! If you feel like nobody cares (and no, this is not a cliché) usually it is because people don't know what to say or do, so they give you space.

- Find someone to talk to – about yourself. By doing so, you'll be able to get a better grasp on what you need right now and how to get it.
- Call someone who cares about you and isn't prone to being negative or making judgments.
- Push yourself to engage in your normal social activities.
- Try to limit the amount of time your engagements are electronic – Face to Face is best!
- Join a support group to meet new people and find connection.
- Don't eat meals in front of your desk. Step away for 30 minutes and engage with others, even if it is only ordering lunch.



GET OUT IN THE SUN

A recent study that looked into links between depression and weather, found that sunlight has a profound impact on your mental health! ([source](#))

Sunshine can help lift a funk in more ways than one. When our eyes make contact with the bright light of the great outdoors, the pineal gland in the brain kicks in to issue serotonin, a hormone that can lift our spirits on the darkest days. A bit of sunshine each day also ensures that we absorb essential vitamin D, which produces a great deal of health benefits.

Now, sunlight alone can not cure your depression, but making sure you go outside for 20 minutes every day can go a long way in helping to lift the feelings of hopelessness that keep us from ever seeking help. Even in today's busy lifestyle you can pull it off!

Here a few ideas:

- Take your lunch outside. The best time to get a little sun is when it is high in the sky! Not only will escaping your office get you right out in it, eating a meal in front of your computer (no matter how much you feel like you can't get away) does more harm than good to your mental health.
- Take a daily walk. Not only will this get you out in the sun but exercise plays a powerful role in fighting depression.
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- Hang out in the backyard. During the summer months, spend twenty minutes outside after you get home at night. Throw a steak on the grill, drink a glass of wine on your porch, watch your kids or dog run around the yard. You may be amazed at how this simple act can boost your spirits.
- If you live in an area that does not receive much sunlight, especially during the winter months, you can purchase sun boxes that are designed to help fight depression.

EXERCISE

Exercise may be the last thing on your mind, but it's one thing that can help you to start feeling more like yourself. It may seem impossible to get moving when you feel depressed and you may wonder, why bother? One reason is that you can get some immediate relief, even if you can only manage 10 or 15 minutes of exercise. Some studies have shown that exercise can improve your mood for up to 12 hours. The question is how can you overcome the inertia that often accompanies depression?

The problem with depression is that it drains your energy, making every task seem like a monumental effort. Part of moving past that draining fatigue is taking that first step, whether it's putting on your workout clothes or getting out the dog's leash for a walk. Keeping it simple and doable will make it easier to get started.

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- Set simple goals. It doesn't take much exercise to lift your mood, so you don't have to train for a marathon. Set a goal to walk around the block. Promise yourself you'll walk around the block at least 3 times that day. The next day, do more. Try to improve just a little bit each day.
- Go easy on yourself. You might not be able to handle a lot of exercise, so try to feel good about what you can do. Whether you get out and work in the yard, take the dog for a walk or go up and down the stairs a few times, it all counts. Now is not the time to kick yourself.
- Do what you usually enjoy. When you're depressed, it's hard to enjoy anything, but think about what activities you normally like when you're not depressed. If yoga feels good to you, spend a few minutes going through a few simple poses. If you like fresh air, go for a walk or a bike ride. You may not enjoy it in the moment, but even a small change in your mood can make a difference.
- Make it social. Try to find a friend to walk with. Talking to people can help raise your energy and remind you that you're not alone.
- Go outside. Even a little sunshine can help boost your mood and remind you that there's a world out there. You can participate in it as much as you can handle.
- Work with your doctor. Be sure to talk to your doctor about your treatment options and your plans to exercise. He or she may be able to refer you to someone who can help you set up an exercise program.



WATCH WHAT YOU EAT

The last thing you need in these stressful times is a bunch of sugar and processed foods. You want to make sure your body is getting what it needs to stay healthy and energized. If you wait until the last moment to grab some much-needed calories, you may end up scarfing down a box of cake rolls and feeling even more stressed out.

- Whatever you do, don't forget to eat!
- Always eat breakfast, it really is the most important meal of the day.
- Skip the sugary meal substitutes.
- Make sure you are not over-indulging on alcohol to feel better. Not only is this not a healthy coping skill but it can physically dehydrate and harm your body if used in excess.
- Pack a few healthy snacks on your way to work – think apples and peanut butter, carrot sticks, yogurt drinks, and roasted cashews – and steer clear of any vending machines.

Did you know that drinking enough water can boost your mood? Make sure you are drinking 6-8 glasses daily!



DO WHAT YOU WANT TO DO

Make it a PRIORITY to take care of yourself and in case you think you don't have the time, think small not big. If that means staying in bed with Jane Eyre, do it. If that means shelling out the cash for a 50 minute massage, by all means, make the effort. If all you need is an hour of me-time to feel completely rejuvenated, make sure you get it.

- Turn up the music! Create a playlist of your top three favorite songs that boost your spirits and play them every morning while getting ready for work.
- Cuddle up with your favorite pet. Even if you feel pretty good, petting your cat or dog can make you feel more relaxed. Studies have shown that spending a little time with a beloved pet, or merely pondering the way your goldfish meander about their tank, can lower blood pressure.
- Indulging in mindless television. Bravo Network, Hallmark Channel, who cares if your partner doesn't like it, sometimes it is ok to watch what you want!
- Read an inspiring blog. Looking for inspirational light reading?

Try this

- Set your alarm 10 minutes earlier and drink your coffee outside. Not only will it help you focus and start your day relaxed, it can help you get in a few minutes of sunlight!
- Do Nothing – A totally foreign concept to our goal-oriented society, isn't it? But sitting completely still in silence for a few minutes a day is a wonderful way to de-stress & re-energize.



TALK TO A THERAPIST

Many people benefit from speaking to a therapist when life is not going as expected. The reasons for seeking individual therapy varies. Some people come with a specific problem in mind to solve. Others recognize the presence of troubling symptoms in their life like anxiety, sadness, moodiness, low energy, concentration difficulties, changes in libido, sleep issues, increased use of drugs or alcohol, body image concerns, changes in motivation and productivity, relationship issues, or just not feeling like yourself.

Some people benefit from using solution-focused, strength based problem solving. Others benefit from spending time working in-depth to uncover and discover better ways to live with a sense of purpose and fulfillment. Together, we'll discover the best ways to work towards wellness.

At the Family Guidance & Therapy Center, we collaborate with you on your specific treatment goals. With the understanding that creating time for therapy can be difficult you now have the option of online therapy. To schedule an appointment online [go here](#). You can also schedule by text **619-607-1230** or phone **619-600-0683**.

Whatever you do, remember that you're not alone and that there is hope.