

## **How to Manage Depression and Stay Productive**

Depression affects millions of people every year. This disease affects every individual differently. Symptoms can be mild: from feeling sad with loss of appetite and increased feelings of fatigue; to severe with total loss of interest in pleasurable activities, severe impairment in cognitive function, a complete lack of motivation, intrusive negative thought patterns and no productivity at all. According to the Centers for Disease Control Workplace Health Promotion website, "Depression is a major cause of disability, absenteeism, presenteeism (physically at work while performing one's job while distracted and preoccupied) and productivity loss among working adults. In any given year, 18.8 million American adults or 9.5 percent of the adult population will suffer from a depressive illness. Approximately 80 percent of people with depression reported some level of functional impairment because of their illness and 27 percent reported serious difficulties in work and home life."<sup>1</sup> Here are several ways to improve your productivity when coping with a depressive episode.

### **1. Get plenty of restorative sleep.**

Adequate sleep of seven to eight hours a night for adults decreases stress, anxiety and improves mood. It is important to establish both a nighttime and morning routine. When you go to sleep at the same time every night and wake up the same time every morning, it sets your internal circadian clock. This routine will aid in achieving adequate rest. Limit exposure to noise and light.<sup>2</sup> Sleep deprivation affects several areas of brain function including processing speed, verbal skills and memory.

### **2. Reduce Stress.**

There are several relaxation techniques available that can relieve and reduce stress. Meditation is a good way to achieve calmness and balance. It includes any repetitive action activity which keeps your attention calmly focused in the present moment. Activities like crocheting, knitting and painting can be a source of meditating. Yoga is a great stress-reliever. It helps you focus your breathing in certain poses which also stretch your muscles. Practice deep breathing. Picture yourself in a tropical location relaxing on the beach. Day dreams can alleviate stress and tension.

### **3. Get plenty exercise.**

Research studies have shown that moderate exercise such as biking, swimming, jogging, even yard work will help your body release endorphins. These are hormones released when you exercise that trigger positive feelings in the body. Endorphins act like pain relievers: They help

alleviate the perception of pain. Get plenty of sunlight and fresh air. Exercise also helps self-esteem and improves sleep.

**4. Eat a nutritious diet.**

Avoid fried foods and refined carbs like sugar and bleached white flour. Foods rich in vitamins and minerals like fruits, nuts and vegetables will help you feel better. Complex carbohydrates such as whole wheat pasta, brown rice, and quinoa will help keep your blood glucose balanced. Refined carbs cause blood sugar to spike. High glucose levels in the brain interfere with concentration, focus and attention.

**5. Take a multi- vitamin with iron, extra B-12 and an omega-3 supplement.**

Vitamin deficiencies contribute to mood disorders. There are studies that indicate diets rich in omega 3-fatty acids, consumed as fish or by fish oil supplement, improve mood, sleep and brain function.

**6. Drink water.**

Dehydration makes you feel more sluggish, fatigued and, in severe forms, can impair memory, information processing and concentration.

**7. Add extra natural lighting.**

Bright natural light helps produce Vitamin D in the brain. A deficiency in this nutrient has been linked to depression. There are a number of natural light lamps which mimic sunlight that are sold in office supply stores and retailers on the Web.

**Ways To Stay Productive**

**1 Break down large tasks into smaller ones so they are not so overwhelming.**

When you struggling to get things done and lack motivation to do anything, tasks such as cleaning the house can be broken into individual steps: 1. Wash dishes 2. Sweep Kitchen floor 3. Wipe down counters, etc. Each small step on the list will eventually complete the large task; but, in smaller manageable pieces.

2. **Make a “To-Do” list for all tasks and mark off when completed.**

This will help give you a sense of accomplishment, boost self-esteem and lessen the feelings of being overwhelmed.

3. **Write a schedule and block time for work and breaks.**

If you’re struggling with motivation and concentration, schedule short work sessions with frequent breaks throughout the day; this will help keep you focused.

4. **Keep a positive attitude.**

When you think negative thoughts, not only does it make you feel worse, but it attracts more negativity. Have you ever noticed someone at work who’s constantly complaining and before you know it, there’s a group of people complaining with her?

5. **Laugh more.**

According to an article at Help Guide, a non-profit resource website, “Laughter is a powerful remedy to help fight depression, stress, pain and tension.” Laughter can help relax your whole body, relieve physical stress, boost your immune system, release endorphins, improve your mood and enhance your resilience to difficult situations. It’s contagious and can help strengthen your relationships. Sharing humor with others can change negative thought patterns, helps improve self-esteem and allows deep emotions to surface.

It is important to note that this article is meant to advise only. It is not meant to take the place of your doctor’s advice. Follow all treatment recommendations made by your physician. Medication, talk therapy and the suggestions mentioned above can all help to manage depression more effectively. The better you feel; the more productive you’ll be.

## References

1. Center s for Disease Control and Prevention; Workplace Health Promotion: Depression
2. American Academy of Family Practitioners; Fatigue: An Overview; Thomas C. Rosenthal, MD; Barbara A. Majeroni, MD et al.; November 15, 2008.

3. WebMD; Blissing Out: 10 Relaxation Techniques To Reduce Stress On-the Spot; Jenny Stamos Kovacs
4. Help Guide; Laughter Is the Best Medicine: The Health Benefits of Humor and Laughter

SAMPLE