What to Do on Your Depression Good Days

by ERIC PATTERSON

Depression Good Days: Can You Have Good Days With Depression?

There is no getting around it: depression is a menace. It will impact your life in so many negative ways that it becomes a challenge to imagine yourself without depression. Your mood is lower, your sleep and diet are shifted drastically, and your outlook on life is more pessimistic as feelings of guilt and worthlessness rise.

To be diagnosed with a major depressive episode, the symptoms only need to last for a two-week stretch of time. Many people with depression will tell you their symptoms far exceed the 14-day threshold and go on for a month or even longer. Some people report feeling depressed most of the time for years.

Even the longest rainstorm eventually stops. The harshest heat wave comes to an end. Winters turn to spring, and clouds part to allow for sunshine. The point is that nothing lasts forever, including depression.

When the rain ends and the clouds part, there is prospect for a good day to emerge. Good days may be few due to the level of depression you experience, but they will come.

The focus is on what to do with depression good days when they arrive. A good day marks an opportunity; one that shouldn't go to waste. Do you want to capitalize on your depression good days? Here's how:

Recognize the Signs

Some of the most important work in this area is gaining the ability to monitor your depression symptoms. Especially if your depression seems to be prevalent, you might wake up each day fully expecting to be depressed.

This expectation can influence your ability to gauge your mental health accurately. The chances are good that some good days have slipped by you because you were so certain you were depressed.

If you can't remember the last good day you had, you may want to speak to your treatment team to shift your thinking and ensure you don't have persistent depressive disorder, which is a low-grade, long-lasting form of depression.

Several times during the day, take a moment to gather an inventory of your functioning. How are you feeling? What is your energy level? Is your self-esteem higher or lower?

Asking these questions can give information about where you are, and when you track this information, you can track trends regarding where you were and where you might be going. The information might show that tomorrow is likely to be a better day than today, allowing you to prepare for the best.

Set Your Goals

Goal setting is hard for most people. For people with depression, it can seem like an exercise in frustration. Why set goals if you have no chance to complete them?

The truth is that a good day will come, but if you are caught without a plan, your added motivation and energy will be wasted on your regular behaviors. Sure, resting and watching TV makes sense if you aren't feeling your best, but when you are feeling good, these actions will only lead to future guilt and regret.

Next page: caring for your body and mind on your good days

Set Your Goals

Instead, start writing down simple, specific plans of what you would like to do when symptoms are lower. You could benefit by having different goals for when you are feeling mildly better, moderately better, and much better.

Go to the People

Depression tends to force a desire for isolation. Many people experience depression and introversion, or they fear to be around others during periods of high depression because they feel inadequate, or believe more negativity will build from others. This cuts you off from potential support and leaves you without the opportunity for positive feedback.

When you are feeling good, go to where the people are. Rather than hoping that someone calls you or invites you to a gathering, take the initiative to lead the way.

If you have family and friends that depression has made you neglect, get to them. Let them know what has been going on and what you plan to do about it.

If you lack social relationships, seize the chance to make new connections while symptoms are manageable. New relationships can limit symptoms next time depression strikes.

Care for Your Body

Another facet of your life often neglected during depression is your physical health. Poor mental health contributes to worsening physical health, while poor physical health makes mental health worse.

A good day is a chance to break the nasty cycle. By eating good foods and exercising, you put yourself in a position to further reduce depressive symptoms and add a level of prevention to future symptoms.

Avoid the desire to use a good day to catch up on sleep. If you eat well and increase your physical activity, the sleep will come. There are more valuable uses of your time on a good day.

Care for Your Mind

Depression wears you down, and it is your task to build yourself back up on good days. Luckily, there are countless ways to accomplish this.

While you are feeling better, you may want to start or restart your therapy. You may be surprised by this, but times, when depression is lower, are the best times for therapy.

When depression is too high, you and your therapist will have to spend more time addressing current needs instead of overriding patterns and trends. Less depression means increased awareness and objectivity, resulting in improved benefits.

During your good day, take time to give yourself compliments, reflect on what you have been through and where you are now. Observe the beauty of the world around you that you have missed. Allow yourself to be fully aware of how good you feel while being realistic about depression returning.

Your ability to completely control depression is limited. Even with the best treatments, it will come and go. What you can control is how you respond when it does go.

Taking steps to ensure you get all that you can when symptoms are low will have an incredibly positive impact on your life. With hard work and your share of luck, more good days might be here to stay.