# Depression Brain Fog and How to Cope

by NATASHA DEVINE

## What Is Depression Brain Fog?

Poor concentration is a fairly common symptom of depression, but depression brain fog is so much more than that. While it may not be a proper medical term, it is beginning to be widely recognized. Brain fog is a term that loosely sums up:

- Poor concentration
- Feelings of confusion
- Forgetfulness (including difficulty finding the right word)
- Difficulty learning new things
- Overall lack of mental clarity

Combining these symptoms can leave you feeling helpless, like you're stumbling through the fog.

### What Causes Brain Fog?

Since brain fog is a general term for a number of symptoms combined, it could be caused by many different things. Temporary or minor brain fog could be a result of lack of sleep, hunger, dehydration or vitamin deficiencies. Brain fog can also be associated with menopause, certain medications, chemotherapy and substance abuse.

Brain fog — or a 'foggy head' — is common among many different chronic illnesses as well such as fibromyalgia, lupus, diabetes and multiple sclerosis, as well as mental illnesses such as ADHD and you guessed it… depression.

### My Experience With Brain Fog

The first time I experienced depression brain fog I wasn't sure what was happening. I had started sarcastically leaving notes for myself knowing I would forget to do something the second I'd left the room, I was stumbling over my words or would completely forget what I was saying altogether and just blamed it on being tired.

I was having trouble remembering little mundane or routine things and was finding myself overwhelmed by things that I would normally be able to manage. Day-to-day tasks that were a part of my regular routine, both personally and professionally, had started to slip through the cracks. Aside from the occasional trouble concentrating I had never experienced brain fog before this.

Frustrating is a common word to describe it; frightening, worrisome, and disconcerting are others, especially when you're unaware of what's happening or don't understand why. Infuriating sounds about right because I knew this wasn't me; the girl with the photographic memory who is organized and on the ball.

I believed I had my depression under control and thought there was no way these issues could have anything to

do with my mental health. But after taking my concerns to my doctor and doing some research I discovered that brain fog is commonly found in those with depression. Gotta love new symptoms!

The upside is that I've found something new to share with others and it forced me to become organized consistently rather than just when I felt was necessary because you never know when things can change!

**What You Can Do to Manage Depression Brain Fog**

There are several things that can help you cope with brain fog; it won't fix it unfortunately but it may help you to keep on track despite your symptoms.

**Take Notes**

Write down important conversation points, appointments or lists somewhere you'll see them. Try to make sure all your notes and lists are in one place so that you're not adding to the confusion. Keeping a little journal with you or making a note in your phone will help you keep track.

**Set Reminders**

Sometimes it's not enough to make a note, especially for appointments, events, or if something needs completely in a timely manner. Most smartphones allow you to set timers, reminders and events through a variety of apps just in case it slips your mind.

**Stay Organized**

Don't add to your brain fog and state of confusion by trying to sift through a disorganized space. Do what you can to keep things tidy, properly labeled, and in a sensible area. Not only will this save you time when you're trying to find a certain document or household item, but it will help ease some of your stress. A clean and organized space is much more calming than chaos.

*Next page: what you can do to avoid depression brain fog.*

**What You Can Do to Manage Depression Brain Fog**

**Avoid Stress**

When experiencing brain fog life can already seem overwhelming as it is, without any additional stress so do what you can to avoid high-pressure situations. Finding time to relax and clear your mind may help you to attain some mental clarity. It's important to give yourself extra time to complete tasks when possible as distractions and confusion could result in feeling flustered which quickly turns into a vicious cycle.

**Postpone or Switch Tasks**

If you know you have more clarity during a certain point of the day, it might be best to dedicate that time to key tasks or projects that have an approaching deadline. If you find your brain fog is causing you to be easily distracted, try switching to easier projects or tasks that don't require a lot of time so you are still able to be productive.

**What You Can Do to Avoid Depression Brain Fog**

There aren't any permanent cures or quick fixes for brain fog because it's usually a symptom of a larger issue, but keeping a healthy and active lifestyle might lessen the effects to help you manage.

**Find the Root Cause**

As mentioned, depression brain fog can be caused by many different things and is commonly a symptom or result of a more serious issue. In order to fully avoid future episodes, it's important to find the underlying cause of your brain fog so you have a better understanding of why it's happening and can accurately treat the condition.

If you know your brain fog is a result of your depression, perhaps it's time to change your medication or start medication if you're not already being prescribed something. In my experience, my brain fog only appears when my depression is getting out of hand and is a clear signal to me that I haven't been managing my symptoms appropriately.

It could be a sign that you need to find other methods of treatment or need to take some time away to allow yourself to regroup.

**Meditate**

Depending on the severity of your brain fog, it can leave you feeling overwhelmed, anxious, confused and stressed out. Mediation is recommended to help offset these symptoms by focusing (as much as you can) on your breath and giving yourself time to relax and decompress.

Meditation has many benefits, both physical and mental, for those who suffer from depression. It's especially helpful when trying to combat brain fog and moments of confusion because it allows you to catch your breath and take a moment to de-stress.

**Healthy Lifestyle**

So many times this seems to be the answer to everything, but there truly are countless benefits of an active lifestyle and healthy food choices. Feeding your body with whole foods will increase your intake of essential vitamins and nutrients which are important for brain function.

Be sure to include brain foods in your diet which contain omega-3s (like wild-caught fish and enriched eggs) and high levels of B12. A B12 deficiency can cause a multitude of issues so it's important to make sure you're getting enough. Your doctor can do a blood test if you want to be sure.

If healthy foods aren't always an option or your diet doesn't accommodate certain vitamins — like B12 that can't be found in a vegan diet — talk to your physician about supplements that may work for you.

Exercise plays a key role in maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Any form of exercise will help you cope with depression, but walking or jogging in nature, doing yoga, or even dancing helps depression and are great ways to help prevent brain fog because it's active movement while keeping you calm and relaxed at the same time.

**Be Aware**

The advice I give most often is to be aware of yourself and any changes you notice. Often times the earlier you catch yourself slipping into a depressive episode, the faster you can react and counteract it; the same goes for brain fog and other symptoms.

Have a plan in place or people you can reach out to during the rough patches and remember you're not alone.