Changing Your Lifestyle to Make Living with Depression Easier

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Making Lifestyle Changes While Living with Depression

The cause of depression is likely due to a combination of family history, biology, past environmental stresses, and current environmental stresses. Unfortunately, you cannot change your family history, and you cannot change your past stresses and traumas, so seeking out other solutions is necessary.

You can improve your biology and change your environment through a number of methods. Some will require professional treatment options, like medication, and mental health therapy will help modify the way you think and your behaviors. Professional treatment creates marked improvements in the symptoms and signs of depression for many.

Another option to improve your depression is simple, yet can be difficult for many: change your lifestyle.

Lifestyle changes are actions that can be done in collaboration with professional treatments, or separate steps you take to improve your symptoms of depression.

These are not quick fixes. In actuality, many lifestyle changes will produce short-term feelings of unease or stress. This is because your body and mind have become accustomed to engaging in negative activities.

Change can be uncomfortable, even when it is ultimately good for you.

Here are a few lifestyle changes you can make while living with depression.

Remove Substances that Contribute to Depression

The first step is to remove substances that are a major contributor to depression. Illicit drugs, like cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, hallucinogens, and others, are associated with depression.

These drugs are known to cause depression, but people who are depressed also use them as a form of self-medication. Drugs are used as a way to avoid reality and escape from the current issues and stressors in life.

Those difficulties do not vanish with the use of drugs. Instead, they manage to grow and fester, becoming more damaging and more complex.

Illicit drugs are not the only substances that impact your depression; alcohol, nicotine, marijuana, and even caffeine can change your mood and affect your overall mental health.

Something that is viewed as relatively safe and harmless, like caffeine, can create problems while in your system, but more so when it leaves. As your body processes caffeine, you can be left with feelings of irritability and anger that can intensify depression.

Include Healthier Foods into Your Diet

On another level, the foods you eat can fuel your depression or act as natural antidepressants depending on what you consume. Sugar, fats, and carbohydrates in your body can mirror the effects of other drugs, leading to levels of addiction and physical dependence.

For thousands of years, people knew that what you ate affected how you felt. If you eat foods of terrible quality with no nutritional value, it is going to be challenging to feel well.

The lifestyle change with diet needs to start with the inclusion of healthier foods. Adding fresh fruits and vegetables to your daily routine will be simpler than cutting out fast food or sugary drinks.

Incorporate more water into your day to curb hunger and maintain hydration. In time you can shift your eating towards lean meats and healthy grains that provide lasting energy and stabilize blood sugar.

A healthier diet will lead to improved energy, motivation levels, and the possibility of decreased depression.

Get Up and Get Moving

It would be silly to waste your improved energy and motivation by sitting on the couch re-watching past seasons of a TV show you didn't really like in the first place. Get out and exercise!

Just like with diet changes, you do not have to make radically different exercise changes immediately. No one expects you to suddenly complete triathlons or 10-mile mud runs.

In the beginning, a trip to the mailbox or down the street will suffice. Many small changes lead to big results.

Another reason to start small with exercise is your body is going to resist this change. You'll be sore and fatigued the day after, and you may have headaches during your transition to a healthier diet. Be patient with your body and it will reward you handsomely.

Walking at a quick pace for 30 minutes a few times per week is all it takes. In fact, walking is such a helpful activity research has shown it can have the same level of antidepressant effects as medications or therapy. This is a lifestyle change with a far reach, as the adjustments will improve your mental health physical health drastically.

Improve the Quality and Quantity of Sleep

Sleep concludes the interrelated trifecta of lifestyle changes since they each impact and are impacted by the others. When it comes to sleep, the focus has to be on improving the quality and quantity of sleep. Depression will negatively influence both.

If sleep has been an issue, seek an evaluation for a sleep disorder like sleep apnea. If the problems are solely connected to depression, experiment with different foods and levels of exercise to adjust your daily energy cycles.

Be sure your bed is only used for sleeping, and turn off TVs and phones an hour before you plan to sleep to target your sleep hygiene.

Remove Negative Friends and Add More Positive Ones

The people you surround yourself with have an unmatched effect on your lifestyle. The effect can be positive or negative, though, as good supports can help you fight back against depression, while a poor social network can increase the intensity and duration of your condition.

To begin, identify people who create a negative force in your life. How can you work to reduce the contact you have with these people?

More importantly, who are the positives in your life? Can you find ways to spend more time with them? Are their additional positive supports you can add to your team?

The great benefit of making new friends is that you become connected to their network. You can tap into their interests, hobbies, and activities. These further expand and improve your lifestyle in a more desirable, optimistic, and fun direction.

The Bottom Line...

Living with depression requires long-term changes to your lifestyle. The task of overhauling the way you live is not easy, but the advantages will outweigh the drawbacks.

Simple changes paired with patience and consistency is the formula. It’s time to change your lifestyle to change your life.