Four Ways to Actively Fight Back Against Depression

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Activities for Depression

Dealing with depression is overwhelming and frustrating because it affects every aspect of your life. However, keeping busy with activities can distract you and may help to improve your mood.

Distraction and Depression

Distraction with any activity can do wonders for changing your mood. The key, however, is to find activities that keep you busy and are interesting, so you are motivated to keep doing them.

Negative moods cause people to ruminate about problems and worries over and over, and each time you stress, depression further takes hold of you. Distracting yourself works by interrupting ruminating and forcing you to shift away from what is bringing you down.

Distraction is a temporary reprieve from negative feelings. It will not permanently fix depression, but it will help you to get breaks from depressive feelings.

It is important to find a balance between dealing with negative moods and escaping them, so you work towards healing. Participating in meaningful activities is much better than inactivity and musing over things you may not have any control over.

Four Activities to Help Manage Depression

As you already know, depression cuts you off from the world, drains your energy, and takes away your motivation to participate. However, you should still try to engage in activities to help you manage depressive symptoms and incorporate as part of your depression treatment.

Here are four types of activities that can help you manage your moods and keep you distracted.

1. Using Physical Exercises to Promote Positivity

Physical activity is one of the best ways to manage depression. Research from *The International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine* finds physical activity can promote positive mental health benefits, and even ease symptoms of depression.

Being physically active also improves your physical health, cognitive function and makes life more satisfying. This is because exercise promotes the release of brain chemicals to boost mood and ease depression.

Also, being active doesn’t have to be that complicated either. Simple things, like a short walk or riding a bike can easily improve your mood.

2. Therapeutic Activities for Depression

Treatment for depression doesn't always involve medicine. Some therapeutic activities exist to help manage depression, with talk therapy being the most effective and popular.

Research studies have shown talk therapy is as effective as antidepressants for managing depression.

Contrary to what you might think, talk therapy does not just consist of talking about problems; it is also about finding solutions. Talk therapy teaches you to cope with your feelings, solve problems, and change behaviors that are contributing to depressive symptoms.

Your therapist will encourage you to track your moods, write about feelings, and participate in activities that previously caused you anxiety and worry. You will also be prompted to look at things differently and train yourself to respond better to people and events in your life.

Therapists will also look at your past to explain why you are struggling currently, and how you can change thoughts, feelings, and issues in the present and into the future.

Your appointments with your therapist are frequent at first, but as you progress, you will need to meet with your therapist less.

3. Practicing Mindfulness Exercises for Depression

Mindfulness is a pretty straightforward idea, suggesting the mind is aware of what is happening. And no matter how far you drift away, due to factors such as stress, worry, anxiety or depression – mindfulness can help you snap back to reality.

Mindfulness practices include meditation, yoga, stress reduction, relaxation breathing, and mindfulness-based interventions used in therapy practices, such as mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) and acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT). Therapy interventions are aimed at managing stress, mental health and physical pain.

Many people are utilizing mindfulness meditation to manage depression to help interrupt negative thoughts. One review of 47 studies reported in *JAMA Internal Medicine* finds mediation can help with managing anxiety, depression and pain.

Another study reported in the journal *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* finds that yoga offers emotional, psychological, behavioral and biological benefits. Practicing stretching, balancing, and breathing exercises help reduce feelings of sadness, anger, anxiety, and frustration.

In clinical settings, therapists guide people with mindfulness in breathing exercises, body meditations, and guided imagery, so that they can eventually practice these on their own. These practices can be helpful when dealing with overwhelming situations you encounter in your daily life.

4. Creative Activities for Depression

Research from the *American Journal of Public Health* shows engaging in creative activities can improve mood, anxiety, stress, and depression.

There are so many ways you can be creative – playing an instrument, dancing, gardening, painting, drawing, writing, or cooking. All these types of activities offer healthy outlets for expression.

You may not think of yourself as a creative person, but the truth is, you are probably more creative than you give yourself credit for. After all, we are good at something, and express creativity in our own ways.

The Bottom Line

We are all different in how we respond to treatment and how and if distraction and activity help us to reduce symptoms of depression.

Therefore, the most important thing is to find healthy outlets for managing emotions, worries, and anxieties so your treatments – both medicinal and therapeutic – can be more effective in ridding you of depression and keeping it away.

Remember, every little bit helps. Even if one activity doesn’t help you to manage your depressed moods, you should keep trying until you find something that does.