6 Coping Skills for Living Alone With Depression

by SCOTT STE MARIE

Living Alone With Depression

I live alone and suffer from depression, so I would like to make this a personal account of what has helped me over the past few years and why I truly love living alone.

Living alone is far more common than it used to be, so I think it is important to do our best to view this in the most positive light possible and come up with strategies to maintain and improve our mental health short and long-term.

1. Have a Plan and Stay Busy

Living alone with depression requires a schedule, so you do not have too much time to ruminate and spiral into negative thinking. A daily plan and set of rituals will assist you in creating structure throughout the day but will also give you a sense of accomplishment by living by this plan.

Staying busy does not mean you do not take a break but simply means having your days planned, and you can look forward to certain tasks or events, which may help with your depression.

Here's a quick example of how you can plan a day:

- 8:00 a.m.: Wake up.
- 8:30 a.m. to 8:45 a.m.: Meditate.
- 8:45 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.: Make breakfast and watch television.
- 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.: Work.
- 5:30 p.m .to 5:45 p.m.: Relax.
- 5:45 p.m. to 7:00 p.m: Dinner.
- 7:00 p.m. t0 7:30 pm: Call a friend.
- 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.: Basketball league.
- 9:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.: Journal.
- 9:30 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.: Read.
- 10:00 p.m.: Bedtime.

On the weekend this schedule will change significantly but remember that it is flexible and can be changed at any time. Sometimes just the thought of having structure gives us comfort, even if we do not follow it completely.

2. Join Social Groups

I've joined three sports teams so I can stay busy throughout the year but also have a good excuse to leave my condo and socialize. Having commitments forces us to make decisions even if we do not feel like it because we know people are counting on us.

In times of deep depression, we cannot always keep these commitments, which is completely fine, and you should not feel guilty for it. However, there are also times where we can push ourselves, and these social groups give us a perfect nudge out the door.

3. Space Into Place

I have four beautiful plants in my condo, an oil diffuser, comfy couch and freshly painted white walls. When I moved into the condo, it was simply four walls mixed with the unpleasant smell of the previous tenant. I turned what was previously a space into my own place.

How can you make your home more comfortable and personal to you? Living alone gives you the freedom to do whatever you want to your home, no matter what anyone else thinks or says. Embrace this freedom and express yourself in a way that makes you proud to live where you do.

4. The Radio or Music is Your Friend

It's important to be mindful and embrace silence in our daily routine. However, when living alone, there is no one else there making noise or creating an ambiance you may enjoy during those quiet times. That being said, I have made the radio my friend and use this when the silence becomes too loud.

Switching to talk radio or listening to your favorite music or podcast helps fill that emptiness or quietness with something. It can feel like a connection to the outside world, and if you are currently struggling with finding a social circle, a familiar voice in your condo can bring you calm and comfort.

5. Alone Isn't Lonely

The words sound similar but hold completely different meaning. Alone is a physical state while lonely is a feeling. Some people can feel lonely even among their best friends, and others may be alone but feel completely content.

I used to think that because I lived alone that there is an automatic connection to loneliness and isolation. I felt that because I lived alone I had to spend my time with others at all costs somehow even though I truly enjoy being alone.

If you enjoy being alone, there is no one forcing you to be social and extroverted. This means that even though you love being alone, this does not mean the feeling of loneliness should be expected.

6. Pay Attention

When I am alone for too long, it becomes easier for depressive thoughts to stick and for me to ruinate and overthink the past and future. It's very important to pay attention to when you may be slipping into negative thought patterns and need to either invite a friend over, go to a coffee shop or open up your mental health toolbox.

Paying attention means being mindful of your thoughts and recognizing depressive symptoms before they become too serious. I understand this is not possible all of the time, but when living alone, we need to pay extra close attention because we do not have anyone with us who may notice us slipping before we do.

Mindfulness practice and meditation helps us notice our thoughts and trains the brain to be more self-aware. Paying attention will make your experience living alone so much better!