**Self-Help Strategies**

There are some things you can do on your own to help yourself cope with depression. However, this doesn’t work for everyone. Depression isn’t typically something you can pull yourself up by your bootstraps to cure. But try these things to help yourself.

* **Sleep Control** – There are some studies that show that sleep control can help improve depression - specifically sleep deprivation, which we mentioned earlier. This is not a good thing for people with bipolar disorder to do, though.  
    
  Basically, the way it works is you limit sleep to six or seven hours a night and do not allow yourself to nap or sleep between your specific sleep time. It’s called wake therapy and you can read more about this on [Wikipedia.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wake_therapy)
* **Exercise** – You know the deal. Exercise releases endorphins that make you feel good. You may not feel that great while you’re doing it, but almost without exception, people feel better when it’s over. Try to at least get out and walk for 20 to 30 minutes a day. You’ll get the added benefit of more vitamin D, which can also help.
* **Diet** – If you are eating poorly, just improving your diet can help. But, consider that the brain uses glucose to work. If you aren’t eating enough vegetables and fruit, you may not be getting enough glucose. Some people on low-carb diets who aren’t eating vegetables can experience signs of depression when it’s just their diet.
* **Vitamins** – It’s a good idea to ask your doctor to do a blood test to test for vitamin levels. Vitamins like B12, B3, and B6 can be missing from your diet. In addition, many people who suffer from depression have vitamin D deficiencies.
* **Journal** – It’s helpful to write down your feelings each day, but you also want to write down good thoughts. The brain tends to focus on anything you think about, so if you think about the positives in your life while keeping a gratitude journal, you may find that you feel better.
* **Meditate** – Starting a meditation practice can help you in many ways. It’s good to try to focus on nothing for a short period of time each day and only focus on breathing. You can learn about how to meditate by reading books and looking for videos on YouTube.
* **Light Therapy** – For some people who have seasonal depression, light therapy can help. The key is to do it in the morning before 10 or 11 am, only for about 10 to 15 minutes, and to never do it at night.   
    
  Some people only need to do it occasionally, but you want to do it prior to the symptoms developing rather than after they’ve already started.
* **Reduce Alcohol Consumption** – While you may love your nightly glass of wine, for some people it can make them more depressed. You may feel temporarily lighter when you feel that buzz from the alcohol, but it can cause problems the next day.
* **Avoid Self-Mediation** – Any type of self-medication, whether from legal or illegal drugs, is a bad idea for depression. Many drugs that people choose (such as alcohol, cannabis and so forth) tend to be depressants and can cause your symptoms to get worse.
* **Do Things You Used to Enjoy** – Even though you don’t feel like doing things, the worst thing you can do is isolate yourself. You don’t have to be as active as you were, but try to do something you used to love at least weekly. It’ll make you feel part of the process of life.
* **Try Something New** – As we age, we change. Maybe you don’t like the things you used to do, but you’re stuck. Why not find something new to try? You may find a whole new love for something you never considered before.
* **Talk to People You Trust** – Hopefully, you have some people in your life that you can trust to talk to about what you’re going through. You don’t have to spill all the beans all the time, but if you have just one person to confide in, it can make life feel better.
* **Get into Nature** – The best thing anyone can do for their mood and overall health is to get back to nature. If you live in a city, it can be hard. But, often there are zoos and atriums and other ways to get into nature such as parks. Try to get outside at least once a day for just 20 to 30 minutes.
* **Find Support** – Sometimes you need support outside of your friends and family. Thankfully, today there are Facebook groups, Meetups.com, and other ways to find support groups for almost any type of condition.   
    
  Try out a few different groups so that you can find the right one for you.

The best way to approach self-help is to make goals for yourself that you can accomplish within a short period of time. The more you experience success, the more you’ll stick to your plan. But, if you do these things on your own and you are getting worse (be honest), please seek professional help.