



CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS: DEPRESSION & EATING DISORDERS

Eating disorders often go hand-in-hand with other mental health disorders. One such disorder is depression. Although the field continues to evolve, there are current treatments and tools that bring hope to individuals each and every day. Understanding the landscape of depression and your role as a caregiver may open the door to opportunity: an opportunity to be the support person your loved one needs.

COMMON SYMPTOMS

- Feelings of hopelessness, guilt or worthlessness
- Anxiety
- Intense sadness
- Irritability or anger
- Loss of energy or increased fatigue
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating or making decisions

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Those struggling with depression are not alone. An estimated 50-70% of patients with eating disorders have depression. For some individuals, depression is a one-time experience that eventually goes away, whereas for others the depression is recurrent. While it may take time to find the right fit, there are treatments and tools available. Countless people have benefited from such treatments and gone on to live full, vibrant lives.

PSYCHOTHERAPY MODALITIES

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Acceptance and Commitment (ACT)
- Dialectic Behavioral Therapy (DBT)

MEDICATIONS

- Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors
- Serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors
- Norepinephrine and dopamine reuptake inhibitors
- Atypical antidepressants

PROCEDURES

- Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)
- Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS)
- Ketamine infusion therapy

Learn more at <https://nami.org/Home>

EMOTION COACHING

Having a support person to lean on and to serve as a co-pilot when depression is present is what your loved one needs. However, depression has a way of isolating individuals. As caregivers, we can bring the energy and guidance to break your loved one away from their thoughts and help them act. By putting emotion coaching into practice, you can validate your loved one's experience while offering emotional and practical support.

“ It makes sense that you are feeling discouraged because you anticipated getting up this morning and heading out with your friends, and because you had looked forward to a full day of fun. I know your energy level held you back from making that happen. I'm here for you. How can I support you through this?

For additional scripts, go to <https://www.mentalhealthfoundations.ca>

A Menu of Tools

Taking action can be a brave and bold step for someone experiencing depression and a necessary step in the recovery process. With understanding and tools, caregivers are in a unique position to help their loved ones move toward achieving what matters most to them.

Read. Discuss. Consider the possibilities.

Rephrase It

Take the first step to get where you want to be. Change your self-talk from "I can't do this." to "How can I do this?"

Practice Radical Acceptance

Accept situations outside of your control without judgement by reminding yourself that, "What I do in this moment is all I have control over."

Develop Self-Compassion

Give yourself the same kindness and care that you would give to a good friend. Practice with Dr. Kristin Neff at <https://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/>

Challenge Your Thought

Hit the pause button. Ask yourself, "What would I tell a friend who had this thought?"

Shift Your Expression

Shift the way you express your feelings by keeping them independent, outside of yourself. This allows for those feelings to come and go. Shift from "I am sad." to "I am experiencing sadness."

Jump Start Yourself

Create some energy by engaging in an activity such as a one-minute dance off or by visualizing yourself doing something that takes your breath away like skydiving. Seize this energy to jump start a particular project.

Practice Gratitude

Reap the benefits of gratitude by periodically, throughout the day, focusing your attention on positive experiences. Eventually, your brain will automatically seek out these encounters.

Stay Energized

Keep yourself moving forward mentally and physically each day by engaging in laughter, getting sunlight and, occasionally, splashing some water on your face.

**Join the Pathlight Mood & Anxiety Family and Caregiver Support Group for additional ideas, resources and support.*

For additional resources, visit EatingRecovery.com/FamilyFriendsSeries
For more information or if you have questions, please email Resources@ERCPATHLIGHT.COM