



RECOVERING FROM DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

There is no one proven way to recover from depression, anxiety and related illnesses. But with appropriate treatments and the right support, you will recover. There are also many things you can do to help yourself, including managing stress and being aware of situations or events that might set you back in your recovery.

SUPPORT AND TREATMENT

The way to recovery from depression and anxiety usually involves getting support from other people. Your family and friends can play an important role by offering help and understanding. A doctor or counsellor can help you to work out the best ways to cope with how you're feeling and make a plan to get through it. Usually this will involve psychological therapy, which is the main treatment for depression and anxiety in young people. Other ways to tackle depression and anxiety, such as stress management and tips to improve your sleep patterns, can also be useful.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

While support and treatment will help you to recover from depression and anxiety, there are also simple things that you can do to get yourself through the tough times. For example, you might like to keep a diary of feelings – take time every now and then to look through it and think about the progress you have made.

Developing a weekly plan can help you make sure you get everything done that's important, while avoiding overdoing things and becoming stressed. It's a good idea to make sure there's enough time for regular meals, going to appointments with your doctor or counsellor, and doing things that you enjoy. Learning how to relax using breathing and exercises can also be very helpful in reducing your stress levels.

Maybe the most important thing is to keep talking to people about how you are feeling. You should also try to eat healthily, exercise regularly, get enough sleep and avoid alcohol and other drugs.

COMMON FEELINGS

Recovering from depression and anxiety is different for everyone. It takes longer for some people than others. But there are some common feelings that people go through on the way to recovery.

- **Shock** at having to deal with something difficult and scary that you've never experienced before.
- **Denial** or difficulty in accepting that you have a health problem, particularly one that many people find hard to understand.
- **Despair and anger** that this has happened to you and you have to deal with it while other people seem to have normal lives.
- **Acceptance** that you have a health problem that will change your life, how others see you and how you see yourself.
- **Coping** with new ways to live with depression and anxiety, and tackling the changes and challenges that this may bring.

MANAGING TRIGGERS

Everybody has situations or events that can make them more likely to have another episode of depression – often called ‘relapsing’. These situations or events are called ‘triggers’.

Common triggers include family problems, financial difficulties, changing living arrangements, changing jobs or losing a job, having other health problems, losing someone close to you, changing treatment and using alcohol and other drugs.

Trying to avoid these triggers can be an important part of recovering, as well as learning to manage triggers that can't be avoided.

RELAPSE OR BECOMING UNWELL AGAIN

While recovering from depression, anxiety and related disorders can involve stages, the recovery process is not something that necessarily has a clear beginning, middle and end. Some people will only experience one episode of depression, anxiety or a related disorder in their lives. But many people who experience one episode will go on to have another episode, or at least experience some symptoms.



GETTING TO KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS

Warning signs are signals that you may be more likely to experience depression or anxiety again. You may realise that you are changing in how you think, act or feel. Some common warning signs include wanting to stay in bed longer, skipping meals, finding it hard to concentrate, eating unhealthily, having trouble sleeping, feeling irritable or stressed, wanting to spend a lot of time alone or feeling tearful.

You can learn to identify your warning signs by thinking about the signs and symptoms you experienced when you became unwell in the past.

If you experience these warning signs, it's important to seek help early.



KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Overcoming setbacks can be difficult. If you have a relapse, it can be easy to fall into the trap of thinking that you will never feel well again. But there are ways to move through this stage and back to recovery.
- If you do have a setback, try not to blame yourself. Setbacks are bound to happen and feeling disappointed can make moving on difficult.
- Learning how to manage anything new can be about trial and error. Keep trying!
- Feeling depressed and anxious can make it hard to see the good side of things. Focusing on what you have achieved can help you to keep making progress.
- A relapse can help you to think about your situation and, with the help of a health professional, find new ways to manage – this can make you more able to cope with feeling unwell and may help prevent further setbacks.



MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

You can speak to trained counsellors by phoning these 24-hour telephone counselling services:

Lifeline 13 11 14 (cost of a local call)

Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800 (freecall)

Information and support is also available from the following websites:

beyondblue www.youthbeyondblue.com
or www.beyondblue.org.au
info line 1300 22 4636

Information on depression, anxiety and how to help a friend

headspace www.headspace.org.au
Information, support and help near you

ReachOut.com www.reachout.com
Information and support for young people going through tough times

National LGBT Health Alliance
www.lgbthealth.org.au Information and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other sexuality, sex and gender diverse people (LGBT)

The websites below can help you to find health services in your area. They list services that are either free of charge or low cost:

Kids Help Line www.kidshelp.com.au

Lifeline Service Finder
www.lifeline.org.au/service_finder

If you or a friend want to communicate with someone via email or online, Kids Help Line offers confidential, non-judgemental, emotional support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

SOURCES

This fact sheet is based on the following sources:

- Mental Illness Fellowship of Victoria www.mifellowship.org
- **beyondblue** www.youthbeyondblue.com and www.beyondblue.org.au
- **headspace** www.headspace.org.au
- **ReachOut.com** www.reachout.com

Visit: **www.youthbeyondblue.com**

Info line: **1300 22 4636**

beyondblue: the national depression initiative

