

TAKE CARE AND BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Be mild and gentle and "go with the flow" – don't be hard on yourself if things don't go as planned or you don't reach your goals. When this happens, lower your goals and give yourself a second chance.

Start today with a first step, and remember that different things work for different people at different times.

▮▮ Taking care of myself and helping myself was crucial."
Helen*

"At a certain point in time, I realized that being depressed is only a condition. Just to accept it for what is and think "let it simply be and don't worry, it is only a temporary condition" helped me to survive.

Paul*

Do not change or stop your treatment without advice from a healthcare professional, such as your referring doctor.

If your symptoms worsen, please consult a healthcare professional, such as your referring doctor.



This document has been co-created by GAMIAN-Europe and Servier.

* Quotes shared by the patients reflect their own experiences and do not necessarily reflect medical and scientific evidence or practice.

TAKE CARE AND BE KIND TO YOURSELF



REFLECTIONS FROM PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEPRESSION

This booklet has been developed specifically for and with people living with depression. It has been co-created by people suffering from depression or who have suffered from depression and who are members of GAMIAN-Europe (an umbrella group involving patient organizations in different European countries) and by Servier.

Quotes shared in this booklet by the patients reflect their own experiences and do not necessarily reflect medical and scientific evidence or practice.

All names attributed to quotes have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

Clinically recommended treatments for depression are not discussed here. For further information regarding treatments for depression, please refer to the accompanying booklet **A guide to depression and its treatment.**

This brochure has been created thanks to:

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**We would like to extend our
warmest thanks to all of them.**

TAKE CARE AND BE KIND TO YOURSELF:

BUILDING A ROUTINE

Even though it was hard to get the energy or interest sometimes, it helped me to have a routine and put a plan in place on the good days.”

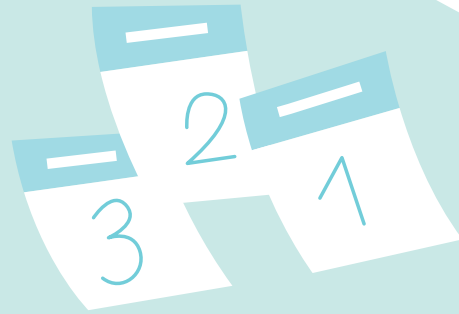
Helen*

“I’ve always felt frustrated with my messy house. But I began to think like this: “I surely can clean for 5 minutes a day, and slowly work towards longer periods.” Soon I started feeling excited about improving my living space!”

Maria*

“When my depression was at its worst, nothing gave me any pleasure, even things that had mattered earlier. So, I had to force myself to eat, to exercise, to sleep, and so on. Then I made a schedule of things that were good for me and as it became a routine it was a bit easier. After a while I started to enjoy things again.

Lauri*



This section is related to the benefits of setting a routine which may have an impact in people with depression.

KEY POINTS

Having a routine can help you feel safer because you know what to expect¹

Having a routine can reduce stress and can have a positive impact on your mood²

Having a routine can promote health and wellness²

Because depression can stop you feeling in control, you may find that setting up a regular routine can help. The science behind this is, that when we organize ourselves and know what to expect, we have more personal resources that can be used to look after our mental and emotional health. This is not surprising because

routines protect and help people feel safer because they know what to expect.¹

Not having a routine can negatively affect your stress levels, sleeping, and eating.²

Scientists believe that having a routine can promote health and wellness through structure and organization.² Having a routine can help reduce stress and have a positive impact on mood.^{1,2} Not only can it improve your mental health, a routine can also improve your overall health and well-being.²

* Quotes shared by the patients reflect their own experiences and do not necessarily reflect medical and scientific evidence or practice.

1. Heintzelman SJ, King LA. Routines and meaning in life. *Pers Soc Psychol Bull.* 2019;45(5):688-699.
2. Northwestern Medicine. Health benefits of having a routine. Available from: <https://www.nm.org/healthbeat/healthy-tips/health-benefits-of-having-a-routine>. Accessed on: December 9, 2019.

TAKE CARE AND BE KIND TO YOURSELF:

MANAGING STRESS

When internal stress overwhelms me, I decide to take a warm bath whilst listening to relaxing music.”

Paul*

“When I was depressed I was also tired all the time. Even very little disappointments were emotionally hard and stressful. I had to learn again to manage stressful things. I had to repeat it to myself that this isn’t such a big deal.”

Lauri*

“I take time also for being by myself and relaxing the way I like. That is equally as important as getting things done.”

Alma*

KEY POINTS

Stress is a normal reaction¹

Stress can impact your emotional and mental health¹

Relaxing in the way you like can help you managing stress

Scientists recognize that stress is a normal reaction that occurs in response to threats or difficulties. This is sometimes called the “fight or flight response” and is a natural reaction to danger.¹

Scientists and doctors understand that stress causes physical changes which are designed to help you take on threats or difficulties.

You may notice that your heart pounds, your breathing quickens, your muscles tense, and you start to sweat.¹ Once the threat or difficulty is over, the physical effects usually fade. But, stress can lead to over-activity of the body’s stress-response mechanisms. It can impact your emotional, mental, and even physical health.¹

Relaxing in the way you like can help you managing stress.

This section is related to the benefits of managing stress which may have an impact in people with depression.

* Quotes shared by the patients reflect their own experiences and do not necessarily reflect medical and scientific evidence or practice.

1. NHS. Stress. Available from: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/understanding-stress/>. Accessed on: December 9, 2019.

TAKE CARE AND BE KIND TO YOURSELF:

SLEEPING

When my sleep routine was disturbed, I forced myself to drink a herbal tea in order to move into a sleepy mood.”

Paul*

“I found that being in a warm, comfortable place and having a regular routine helped when I had sleep problems.”

Helen*

“When thoughts are keeping me awake during the night I know I have too much stress on me. I need to cut something out.”

Alma*

This section is related to the benefits of sleep which may have an impact in people with depression.

KEY POINTS

Sleep issues are common in depression^{1,2}

Sleep disturbance is both a symptom of, and also a risk factor for depression^{1,3}

Most people need 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night⁴

Insomnia and sleep disruption are common symptoms of depression and around 90% of people with depression experience sleep problems.^{1,2}

Scientists and doctors know that sleep disruption and insomnia are risk factors for depression.³ And, when people feel depressed they can get into poor sleeping patterns; difficulty falling asleep, waking up during the night and being unable to

return to sleep or, conversely, they might experience prolonged sleep episodes at night or increased daytime sleep.¹

Think about how much sleep you get on a daily basis. Most people need 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night.⁴ If you experience sleep problems, it is important that you discuss these with your doctor who can offer help and advice on how to overcome them.

* Quotes shared by the patients reflect their own experiences and do not necessarily reflect medical and scientific evidence or practice.

1. American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-5. 5 ed. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press 2013.
2. Tsuno N, Besset A, Ritchie K. Sleep and depression. *J Clin Psychiatry*. 2005;66(10):1254-1269.
3. Franzen PL, Buysse DJ. Sleep disturbances and depression: Risk relationships for subsequent depression and therapeutic implications. *Dialogues Clin Neurosci*. 2008;10(4):473-481.
4. Hirshkowitz M, Whitton K, Albert SM, et al. National Sleep Foundation's updated sleep duration recommendations: Final report. *Sleep Health*. 2015;1(4):233-243.

TAKE CARE AND BE KIND TO YOURSELF:

EATING HEALTHILY

The hardest thing for me is healthy eating and when I'm depressed, sugar is my "go to". So, when I'm well I remove "quick-fix sugar" items such as bars of chocolate but leave the tea and biscuits because making a cup of tea means I'm out of bed and doing something.

I try to drink as much water as possible and keep microwave meals in the freezer that are quite healthy."

Thomas*

"In a depression, it is so tempting and easy to eat chocolates and sweets, but I looked for more healthy "easy to eat" food and found bananas and yogurt to be soft and creamy.

Paul*



This section is related to the benefits of a healthy diet which may have an impact in people with depression.

KEY POINTS

People with depression can be at risk of becoming overweight or underweight¹

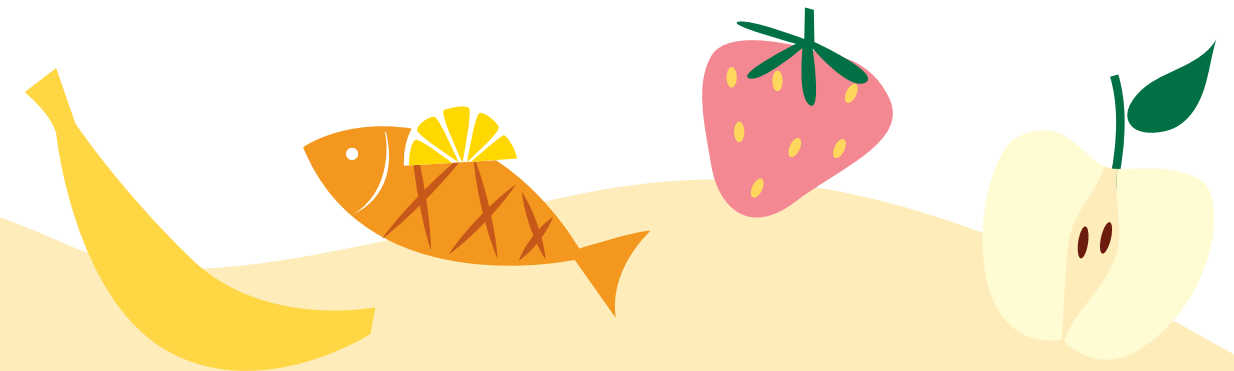
Your symptoms of depression may improve with a healthier diet²

Experts recommend regular diets include plant-based foods, such as vegetables, fruits, and wholegrains, and lean proteins, including oily fish^{2,3}

Healthy eating and good nutrition are important for your physical and mental health. However, some people don't feel like eating when they're depressed and are at risk of becoming underweight, whilst others find comfort in food and are at risk of becoming overweight.¹

Research has shown that symptoms of depression can improve when people eat a healthier diet compared with their usual one. There is no specific diet to treat depression, but experts suggest that eating a regular, well-balanced diet could help people suffering from depression.³

- Eat vegetables, fruits, and wholegrains such as whole wheat bread/pasta and brown rice³
- Cut down on processed/packaged foods³
- Eat foods containing lean protein and "healthy fats", including oily fish³
- Drink plenty of nonalcoholic and non-caffeinated liquids (eg, water)³



* Quotes shared by the patients reflect their own experiences and do not necessarily reflect medical and scientific evidence or practice.

1. American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-5. 5 ed. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press 2013.

2. Jacka FN, O'Neil A, Opie R, et al. A randomised controlled trial of dietary improvement for adults with major depression (the 'SMILES' trial). *BMC Med.* 2017;15(1):23.

3. British Dietetic Association. Food Fact Sheet: Depression and diet. Available from: https://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts/Diet_Depression.pdf. Accessed on: December 9, 2019.

TAKE CARE AND BE KIND TO YOURSELF:

BEING IN NATURE

I take in all the sights, sounds and smells of nature at the beach whilst surfing. I breathe and I think about my breathing and although it's not always easy, it's always worth it."

Thomas*

"Even in the city you can find places that allow you to connect with nature, for instance, all the gardens and parks in/or around the center of the city."

Maria*

"Although energy levels might be low and I might be disinterested in my surroundings, I have found that even a short walk in a park helped."

Helen*

"The beauty of nature helped me to think about other things than my condition – it gave me freedom from always thinking about my depression."

Lauri*

This section is related to the benefits of spending time in nature which may have an impact in people with depression.

KEY POINTS

There can be a positive relationship between time spent in nature and reduced risk of depression^{1,2}

Natural environments and nature can lead to happiness and pleasure²

Nature can be defined differently by each person, and can include different places.

In recent years, people have been spending less and less time interacting with nature. But according to researchers, natural environments and nature might be associated with improvements in symptoms of depression.^{1,2}

Scientists have suggested that natural environments can lead to feelings of happiness and pleasure.² What's more, there can be a positive relationship between time spent in nature and a reduced risk of depression.^{1,2}

Nature can be different for different people and might include different places and spaces. Nature is often considered as something that exists far away from cities. But in reality, there is nature all around us and flowers and plants can bring nature closer to you within your home.

Taking the time to be mindful of, experience, and appreciate natural environments is important.^{1,2}

* Quotes shared by the patients reflect their own experiences and do not necessarily reflect medical and scientific evidence or practice.

1. van den Bosch M, Meyer-Lindenberg A. Environmental exposures and depression: Biological mechanisms and epidemiological evidence. *Annu Rev Public Health*. 2019;40:239-259.

2. Pearson DG, Craig T. The great outdoors? Exploring the mental health benefits of natural environments. *Front Psychol*. 2014;5:1178.

TAKE CARE AND BE KIND TO YOURSELF:

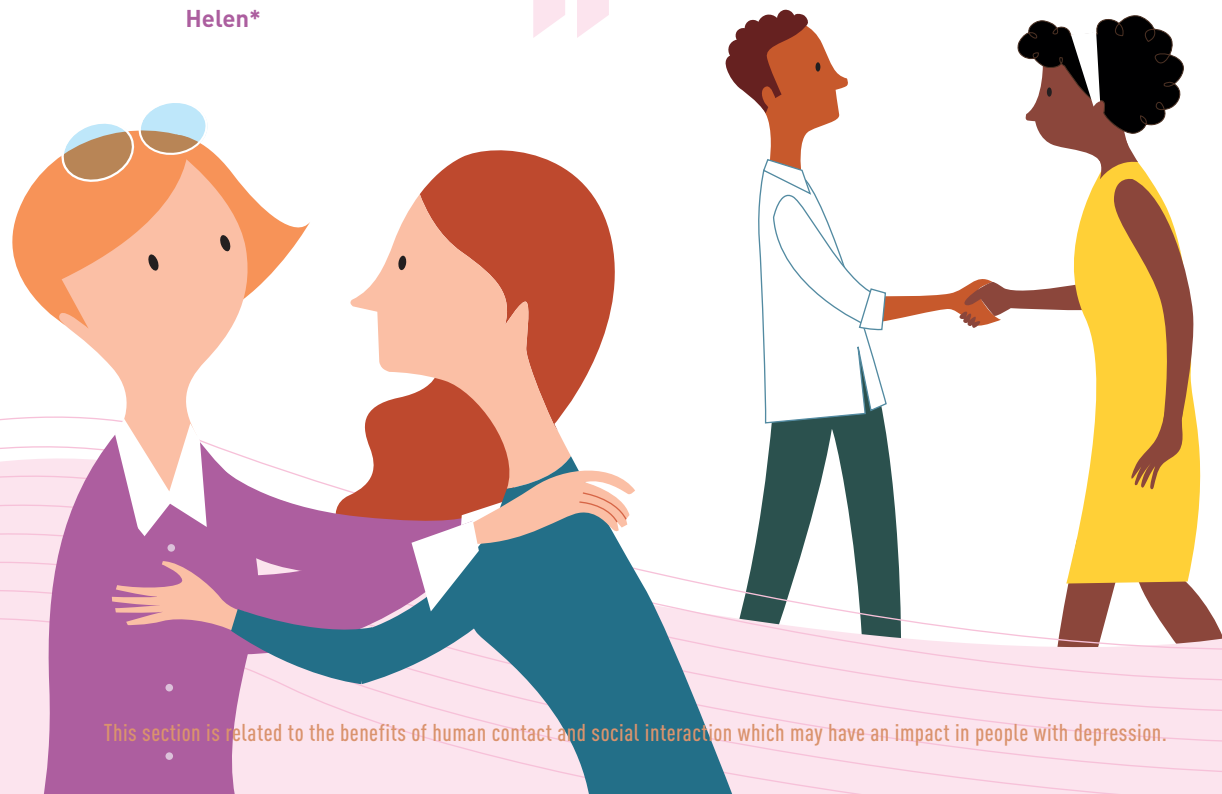
SEEKING HUMAN CONTACT AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

At first it was very hard to meet people after my depression. But then I realized that I don't have to be funny, happy or positive all the time when meeting people. I found new people who understood what I was going through at that moment in time and I also started to enjoy my time alone."

Lauri*

"Even if you don't feel like talking, being with other people, family and friends, is still connecting with the outside world.

Helen*



This section is related to the benefits of human contact and social interaction which may have an impact in people with depression.

KEY POINTS

People with depression frequently withdraw from human contact and social interactions¹⁻³

Isolation can make you feel more depressed^{2,3}

Social interactions can have a positive effect on your symptoms^{2,3}

People with depression frequently withdraw from social interactions, but research suggests that the risk of depression could be doubled in people with low levels of human contact.^{1,2} The likelihood of having depression and the severity of symptoms may increase as the frequency of human contact and social interaction decreases.²

When you're depressed you might feel like you want to be alone.^{1,3} It's sometimes good to have personal space and some alone time, but experts tell us that isolating yourself can make you feel more depressed, whereas social interaction can have a positive influence on your symptoms.^{2,3}

Although it might be difficult, maintaining social interactions can be an effective way of dealing with depression. The benefits of staying socially active and maintaining relationships with friends and family who know and understand you can have a positive effect.³ However, make sure that you are comfortable with the amount of social interactions undertaken.



* Quotes shared by the patients reflect their own experiences and do not necessarily reflect medical and scientific evidence or practice.

1. American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-5. 5 ed. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press 2013.
2. Teo AR, Choi H, Valenstein M. Social relationships and depression: ten-year follow-up from a nationally representative study. *PLoS One*. 2013;8(4):e62396.
3. Steger MF, Kashdan TB. Depression and everyday social activity, belonging, and well-being. *J Couns Psychol*. 2009; 56(2):289-300.

TAKE CARE AND BE KIND TO YOURSELF:

BEING ACTIVE

I've started climbing, even though I don't like heights because I like to push myself and now I can do it in a safe environment with friends. I'm part of a club and meet new people or can climb on my own if I need to. I try not to be hard on myself if I fail and make sure I celebrate when I climb well."

Thomas*

"Walking to the bus stop may be enough for some days. On others I walk to the one further away. It is enough, I am enough."

Alma*

Being depressed can leave you lacking in energy, which might put you off being physically active.^{1,2} But, it is really important to stay physically active if you're feeling depressed. There is a large amount of scientific evidence that demonstrates physical activity can help to lift your mood.^{3,4}

Physical activity has been associated with improved physical health, life satisfaction, mental functioning, and psychological well-being. It can also decrease the symptoms of depression.³

KEY POINTS

Being depressed can make you feel tired and might put you off physical activity^{1,2}

Physical activity can be associated with improved physical health and psychological well-being³

Physical activity can decrease the symptoms of depression³

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1. NHS. Clinical depression. Available from: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/clinical-depression/>. Accessed on: December 9, 2019.

2. American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-5. 5 ed. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press 2013.

3. Mikkelsen K et al. Exercise and mental health. *Maturitas*. 2017;106:48-56.

4. Carek PJ, Laibstain SE, Carek SM. Exercise for the treatment of depression and anxiety. *Int J Psychiatry Med*. 2011;41(1):15-28.

This section is related to the benefits of physical activity which may have an impact in people with depression.

TAKE CARE AND BE KIND TO YOURSELF:

COPING WITH EXTREMES AND EXTREME BEHAVIORS

When feeling blue, I don't need to harm myself in any more ways for I'm already hurting. I deserve to feel as good as possible, I deserve to be kind towards myself.
Alma*

KEY POINTS

Some people experience a downward spiral of depression¹

Extremes of social behaviors and mood can be experienced by people with depression²

It can be helpful to recognize and look out for warning signs of extreme behavior and seek appropriate help and support

People sometimes talk about a downward spiral of events that leads to depression. Being depressed, you may stop sleeping, eating, and socializing. Some try to cope by using drugs or drinking too much alcohol. All of this can make you feel worse and can result in a downward spiral of depression.¹

Although some triggers will be beyond your control, it is possible to avoid extremes and it is important to ask for help and support when you need it.

It can be helpful to recognize and look out for warning signs of extreme behaviors and when extremes of moods occur, have an action plan ready that includes external help and support.

* Quotes shared by the patients reflect their own experiences and do not necessarily reflect medical and scientific evidence or practice.

1. NHS. Causes. Clinical depression. Available from: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/clinical-depression/causes/>. Accessed on: December 9, 2019.
2. American Psychiatric Association. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders DSM-5. 5 ed. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press 2013.

This section is related to coping with extremes and extreme behaviors which may have an impact in people with depression.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

Information and knowledge can help you manage daily life with depression. Follow these links to useful websites and resources for further information and support.

GAMIAN-EUROPE

- www.gamian.eu

WHO

- www.who.int/mental_health/management/depression/en/

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