Self-Help & Support Basics

ONE-PAGE QUICK REFERENCE • Small, sustainable steps alongside appropriate care

FIVE GENTLE DAILY ANCHORS

- Rest: aim for a consistent sleep and wake window, allowing flexibility when symptoms are severe.
- Move: choose manageable activity - a short walk or stretching counts.
- Connect: send one message or spend a little time with a supportive person.
- Nourish: eat regularly and drink water when possible.
- Simplify: pick one small, concrete task instead of a long to-do list.

OTHER IMPORTANT STEPS

- If symptoms persist or interfere with life, ask a health professional about evaluation and treatment.
- Take prescribed medications only as directed; discuss concerns and side effects with the prescriber.
- Reduce alcohol and nonprescribed drug use; they can worsen mood, judgment or sleep.

WHEN IT IS URGENT

- For suicidal thoughts or a crisis, call/text 988 in the U.S.; call 911 for immediate danger. Self-help does not replace emergency support.

Important: General educational information only; not diagnosis, treatment, or individualized safety planning. U.S. crisis support: call or text 988. For immediate danger or medical emergencies, call 911.

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WHY SMALL ACTIONS MATTER

Depression can diminish energy, motivation, pleasure, memory and concentration. Demanding an elaborate routine may create more discouragement. Tiny, repeatable actions offer structure while recovery and treatment proceed.

Try a “minimum viable day”: take medication as prescribed, eat something, wash up, and contact one person. Adjust expectations to health, disability, and circumstances.

SLEEP, FOOD, AND MOVEMENT

Regular sleep timing can support circadian rhythms; severe sleep disturbance deserves clinical assessment. Gentle activity and regular food can support overall health, but neither is a stand-alone cure for significant depression.

Choose activities you can repeat. A five-minute walk may be more useful than a demanding plan that is abandoned.

SOCIAL CONNECTION WITHOUT PRESSURE

Ask for a specific type of help: company, an errand, a ride, or quiet listening. When initiating feels difficult, use a short message: “I have been having a hard week. Could we talk?”

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MAKING CARE ACCESSIBLE

Write down symptoms and questions before an appointment. Ask about cost, sliding-scale services, telehealth, support groups, and what to do if symptoms worsen.

Psychotherapy and medication are evidence-based treatment options; treatment can be adapted. Do not stop medication abruptly without medical guidance.

WHAT IF A STRATEGY IS NOT HELPING?

Treat it as information, not a personal failure. Make the goal smaller, ask for support, or try a different approach. A professional can help adjust treatment if symptoms are persistent.

Use a simple tracking note for sleep, mood, energy, functioning, and any changes in medication; share it with your clinician if useful.

REMINDERS FOR DIFFICULT DAYS

Progress need not be linear. Needing help is not weakness. A loved one can help with practical necessities even when talking feels too demanding.

If you have thoughts of suicide, reach out now to 988 or emergency services as appropriate. You do not have to wait until a situation becomes unbearable.

RELIABLE SOURCES AND FURTHER READING

https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression

https://www.samhsa.gov/find-support/how-to-cope/how-to-ask-for-help

https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/psychotherapies

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