

An introduction to dealing with

Depression



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What is Depression?

We often use the expression “I’m feeling depressed” when we are feeling sad, blue, unhappy, or down in the dumps. Most of us feel this way at one time or another for short periods of time and then they usually pass. But, if the feelings are interfering with your life and don’t go away after a couple of weeks, or if they come back,

over and over again it could be a sign that you’re depressed in the medical sense of the term.

In its mildest form, depression can mean just being in low spirits. It doesn’t stop you from leading a normal life, but makes everything harder to do and seem less worthwhile. At its most severe, clinical depression has

a disabling effect upon the person, interfering with everyday life e.g. ability to work, look after the family, have fun for a prolonged period of time, and can be life threatening, because it can make the person feel suicidal.

Depression can affect anyone, at any age. It affects one in five of us at some point in our life. It not only affects the person but also their, relatives, friends and colleagues, who may find the sudden changes in behaviour difficult to understand. This lack of understanding may in turn make it difficult to sympathise with the person and may add to the depression suffered by the person.

Depression is an illness that can be treated.



What causes Depression?

There is no one cause for depression; it varies very much from person to person and can occur for a variety of reasons - it may be a direct response to a traumatic or distressing life event. It may be a combination of a number of the following factors:

1. Loss and disappointment at home, work, or school (in teens, this may be breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend, failing a class, or parents divorcing)
2. Alcohol or drug abuse
3. Childhood events like abuse or neglect can produce depression in adulthood
4. Chronic stress
5. Death of a friend or relative
6. Depression often runs in families. This may be due to your genes (inherited), learned behaviour, or both. Even if your genes make you more likely to develop depression, a stressful or unhappy life event usually triggers the beginning of a depressive episode. Drugs such as sedatives and high blood
7. pressure medications
8. Medical conditions such as hypothyroidism (underactive thyroid), cancer, or hepatitis
9. Nutritional deficiencies (such as a lack of folate and omega-3 fatty acids)
10. Loss of job

What are the Symptoms of Depression?

You may experience a range of the following:

- Lack of energy to tackle normal tasks of the day
- Not feeling like yourself
- Waking up early, having difficulty sleeping or sleeping more
- Concentration not as sharp, feeling disconnected, distracted
- No longer enjoying the things you used to do for fun
- Withdrawing from friends and social opportunities
- Feeling alone, even with people around
- Being restless and easily agitated/irritable over things that normally didn't bother you
- Not eating properly and losing or putting on weight
- Feeling sad, hopeless and crying a lot
- Physical aches and pains with no physical cause
- Lacking self-confidence and self-esteem
- Losing interest in your sex life
- Taking a bleak, pessimistic view of the future

Remember: If you are experiencing 3 or more of the symptoms above over several weeks or months then it is possible that you could benefit from seeing your doctor and/or seeing a counsellor.

What can you do to help yourself?

Over the next few pages we have outlined
some ideas that might help you

Acceptance

The first step in helping yourself is in accepting that you are experiencing depression and not being critical of yourself because of it. From this you can begin to understand what you are feeling and begin to get the professional help you need.



Fight negative attitudes

Try to recognise the pattern of negative thinking when you are doing it, and replace it with a more constructive activity. Look for things to do that occupy your mind.



Activity is good for the mind



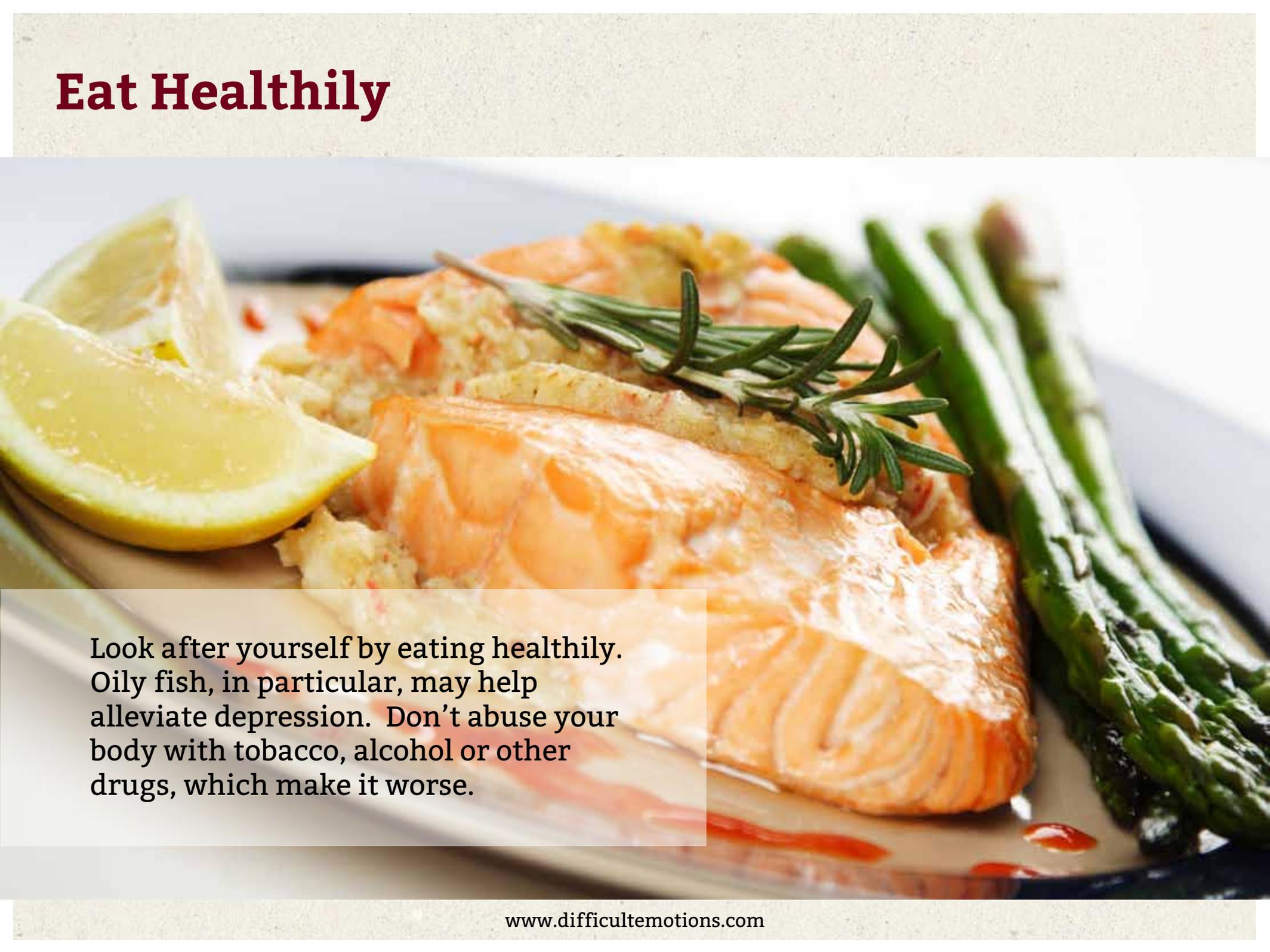
Although you may not feel like it, it's very therapeutic to take part in physical activities for 20 minutes a day. Playing sports, running, dancing, cycling, and even brisk walks can stimulate chemicals in the brain called endorphins, which can help you to feel better.

Caring for yourself



You need to do things that will improve the way you feel about yourself. Allow yourself positive experiences and treats that reinforce the idea that you deserve good things. Pay attention to your personal appearance. Set yourself realistic goals that you can achieve and that will give you a sense of satisfaction.

Eat Healthily

A close-up photograph of a healthy meal. The main focus is a piece of salmon, cooked to a golden-brown color, garnished with a sprig of fresh rosemary. To the left of the salmon are two bright yellow lemon wedges. To the right, several green asparagus spears are visible. The food is served on a white plate with a dark rim. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

Look after yourself by eating healthily. Oily fish, in particular, may help alleviate depression. Don't abuse your body with tobacco, alcohol or other drugs, which make it worse.

Alternative & Complimentary Therapies

Some people with depression have found treatments such as acupuncture, massage and homeopathy helpful.



Counselling & Support Groups

A counsellor or support group can be of great help. You will have a safe space where you can talk about how your feeling and be listened to confidentially without judgement or prejudice, often just releasing thoughts and feelings through talking can help a lot. Remember don't isolate yourself get help and find space to talk about how you are feeling.

Remember: Seek Medical Help

It is very important that if you think you are suffering with depression that you discuss this with your doctor. They will be able to give you lots of advice and practical help, including advice about anti-depressants, many of which are not addictive and would be prescribed on a short-term basis.



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