

A Holistic Approach To Managing Depression

A holistic approach to managing depression involves nurturing your mind, body and soul through a combination of self-care strategies and, when needed, professional support. These practices are complementary to medical treatment and address the interconnectedness of your mental, physical and spiritual well-being.

Understanding The Cycle

A common depression loop looks like:

Low mood → less activity → lost motivation → feeling worse → even lower mood.
Breaking it often means doing small things that interrupt that loop—not “fixing everything,” just gentle shifts.

Mind (Mental and Emotional Wellbeing)

Focusing on mental health involves developing healthy thought patterns, managing stress and stimulating your brain.

Practice Mindfulness and Meditation: Paying attention to the present moment without judgment can help you manage difficult thoughts and feelings. Techniques such as focused breathing and body scans can help calm your mind.

Challenge Negative Thoughts: The way you think, feel, and behave are linked. Identify and reframe unhelpful thought patterns that contribute to feelings of depression.

Engage in Creative or Learning Activities: Stimulate your brain by learning a new skill, trying a new hobby or taking on a project. Creative outlets like writing, painting or making music can help you express emotions in a safe way.

Set Achievable Goals: Break down larger goals into smaller, manageable tasks to create a sense of accomplishment and purpose.

Journaling: Writing about your thoughts and feelings can help you process them and track your mood over time.

Body (Physical Health)

Physical health has a direct and significant impact on your mental health.

Get Regular Physical Activity: Exercise releases feel-good chemicals (endorphins) which improve your mood, reduce stress and boost self-esteem. Even gentle activity, such as walking for 20 minutes a day, can make a difference.

Eat a Balanced Diet: A healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean protein supports brain function and helps you to feel good. Consider a Mediterranean-style diet which has been linked to lower rates of depression.

Prioritise Sleep Hygiene: Aim for 7 to 9 hours of quality sleep per night. Establish a relaxing bedtime routine and avoid screens (phones, tablets, etc.) before bed to improve sleep quality.

Avoid Drugs and Alcohol: While you might be tempted to use substances to cope, they make depression symptoms worse in the long run.

Attend to Personal Care: Simple daily tasks like showering, brushing your teeth and getting dressed can make a big difference in how you feel.

Soul (Spirituality and Connection)

Nurturing your "soul" involves finding purpose, connecting with others, and engaging with the world around you.

Connect with Others: Strong social connections provide emotional support and a sense of belonging. Reach out to trusted friends or family, join a support group or volunteer in your community.

Spend Time in Nature: Being outdoors can boost your mental well-being and reduce feelings of stress. Even bringing nature indoors with plants or listening to natural sounds can help.

Practice Gratitude and Kindness: Taking time each day to reflect on things you are grateful for can shift your focus from negative thoughts. Small acts of kindness towards others can also create positive feelings.

Explore Spirituality: This does not necessarily mean organised religion; it can be anything that helps you develop a deeper sense of meaning or purpose. Practices like prayer, meditation or quiet contemplation can help you find inner calm.

What do I need today?

Every day, ask yourself: what do I need today that will nurture my mind, body or soul? What are my needs for today?

Professional Help

Talk to a Doctor: Consult your GP to understand your depression and explore treatment options, including therapy or medication if needed.

Consider Therapy: CBT helps to challenge negative thought patterns. Psychodynamic therapy explores past experiences and their link to current feelings. Person-centred therapy helps to develop self-esteem, personal identity and resilience.

Key Principle

Start Small & Be Kind: Break tasks into tiny steps. Don't get discouraged if you miss a day – just restart, even if it's a smaller version.

The Butterfly Effect

Small changes can produce large-scale impact. Small steps can produce significant benefits for your mental health.