



Taking Charge of Depression

Positive Action, Positive Mood

- People rarely "snap out of" depression. It takes patience and work to feel better day-by-day, but feeling better is something that you can accomplish!
- One key to finding a way out of depression is for you to move toward what is most important. ***In other words, move toward goals and values even when you don't feel much motivation to do so.***

Things to Start Doing Today to Take Charge of the Depression:

- Spend time with friends and family who are willing to listen and who give respect, understanding, appreciation, and acceptance. Don't turn away family and friends who are willing to offer support and help.
- Set small, achievable goals.
- Break goals into smaller steps and set priorities. *(For example, instead of planning to clean the whole house, plan to clean for 10 minutes at a time).*
- Put off important decisions until the depression has lifted. Before deciding to make major life changes, such as changing jobs, or getting married or divorced, discuss such plans with others who know the circumstances and who may have a more neutral viewpoint.
- You may feel a strong urge to be alone. However, don't give in to it. You'll find it much better if you make the effort to be with other people and confide in someone rather than isolating yourself.
- Go at a moderate pace. It may not be possible initially for you to do all the things that you've commonly done in the past.
- Set up routines to get in the habit of doing a little every day.
- Don't worry about doing things perfectly. Just doing them is the important thing.
- Do a project, or plan or organize something, or finish a job, or learn something new. These are the kinds of activities that usually make people feel useful, capable, and independent.
- Get plenty of rest and eat healthy foods. Exercising, even for short time periods *(for example, ten-minute walks)* can be helpful.
- Don't use alcohol or drugs *(unless the drugs are prescribed and taken as directed)* because they can worsen a depression in the long-run.
- Reward yourself! When you meet goals, even little ones, follow up with things that you enjoy, such as laughing, relaxing, eating good meals, seeing beautiful scenery, or playing a game.



**Remember,
move
toward
goals and
values.**



People are always busy thinking. As one thought passes, there's another thought ready to take its place. Most of the thoughts that people have are **automatic thoughts** that:

- Pop up when a person isn't even trying to think them.
- Can be positive or negative. (*It's the negative thoughts that contribute to depression*)

Thoughts Affect Depression

- The way a person thinks affects the way he or she feels and acts.

For example, if SPC Murphy thinks he will perform well on a mission, then he'll probably feel excited about that mission and do a good job. If SPC Jones thinks he won't do well, then he might feel upset or get distracted and not do such a great job. Upset feelings can interfere with SPC Jones' ability to do his best and succeed.

- The way SPC Jones thinks (both positive and negative) is **learned**. Since negative thinking can cause depression, depression can be thought of as a **learned thinking problem**.

SPC Jones learned what he believes from his parents, his friends, society, and from the way he has been treated by others.

- The good news is that because thoughts are learned, SPC Jones can learn to avoid negative thoughts leading to depression and instead enjoy positive thoughts that lead to happiness and health.

Role of Thoughts in Depression

When SGT Cox feels depressed, she's likely to have negative thoughts focused on bad things that have already happened or that might happen in her future. Negative thoughts like these aren't necessarily "true" or useful, and are often both causes and symptoms of depression.

Negative thoughts often center on three ideas. SGT Cox may be thinking:

1. "I am the **cause** of _____ (bad event)."

For example, "I failed the training because I'm not good enough." Or, "I caused all the bad things in my life."

2. One bad thing means **everything** is bad.

For example, "I failed my training and so my whole life sucks." Or, "My boyfriend broke up with me and so all women are losers."

3. Things will **always** be bad.

For example, "I failed my training so my future is hopeless." Or, "This is never going to get better."



Thinking Errors

Negative thoughts often distort or twist the truth, making things seem worse than they really are. Here are some common types of thinking errors:

1. **All-or-Nothing Thinking:** Thinking in terms of either/or; black-and-white; good or bad; right or wrong.

- *A more healthy way to think is to look for a middle ground or gray areas. Rarely in life is something all-or-nothing.*

2. **Exaggerating or Minimizing:** Exaggerating means making too big a deal out of a negative experience. Minimizing means not giving oneself or others enough credit for doing something good.

- *A more healthy way to think is to stop blowing things out of proportion and to recognize and value successes.*

3. **Mental Filter:** Using a mental filter means only seeing the bad and not the good side of things. The positive is forgotten or ignored, and only the bad things are considered.

- *A more healthy way to think is to notice the good things and realize that they count as much if not more than the negative.*

4. **Not accepting the positive:** People with this thinking error reject anything positive, especially positive information about themselves.

- *A more healthy way to think is to accept the positive without letting any negative thoughts contradict it.*

5. **Reasoning with feelings instead of logic or facts:** Saying, “I feel like a loser, so I must be a loser,” is an example of using feelings instead of facts as proof of truth.

- *A more healthy way to think is to recognize the distinction between “feelings” and “facts.” Negative feelings can be useful signals that something’s wrong – but learn to distinguish them from facts that might lead to a different conclusion.*



Don't fall into these common thinking errors:

- All-or Nothing
- Exaggeration or Minimization
- Mental Filters
- Not accepting the positives
- Reasoning with feelings instead of logic or facts