

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES

MOVE

Get physical: dance, exercise, stretch, mall walk

DO SOMETHING POSITIVE AND FUN

Play board or card games indoors, and snow games outdoors; watch funny movies

STOP COMPLAINING ABOUT THE WEATHER

Stop resisting the cold and snow. The fact is: it will be cold and it will snow until it is no longer cold enough to snow. **We cannot control the weather**; complaining about it will only increase our level of frustration, discontent and stress.

FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION OUTWARD

Notice your surroundings; engage with your surroundings

WATCH DIET AND FOOD INTAKE

Watch carbohydrate intake in particular

GET AS MUCH NATURAL LIGHT AS POSSIBLE

Get outdoors, walk, play in the snow; let the light in and lighten up your home

SOCIALIZE

Take a class or join a group

PLAN FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Keep it simple, inexpensive and playful

STAY PRESENT FOCUSED: PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

Notice when thoughts or feelings of the past or future intrude on the present; remind yourself as often as necessary that it is here and now, and gently but firmly return your attention to the moment and activities at hand.

PRACTICE

Observe your thoughts and feelings as they arise and fall away.
Acknowledge and accept whatever thoughts and feelings arise,
without analysis or judgment.

Release the thoughts and feelings that arise,
knowing that others will certainly follow.

Stop struggling— allow your thoughts and feelings to rise and fall, and come and go without resistance or struggle.

Coping with Depression and the Winter Blues

Eat a healthy, balanced diet.

Get enough rest and relaxation. Take 5-10 minutes three times a day to retreat from the madness, to calm and center your self. If possible, periodically take a vacation from stress to refresh and regroup; even a responsibility-free 2-4 day weekend away from it all will help.

Be patient with and kind to yourself.

Move. Bend, stretch, exercise easy or vigorously, walk, run, hike, bike, swim, participate in a team sport (racquet ball, softball, baseball, basketball, volleyball, golf), lift weights, box, jump rope, wrestle with your kids, dance. Spend 15- 30 minutes a day engaged in some kind of physical activity.

Observe how your thoughts and feelings come and go, ebb and flow. Practice the art of accepting your thoughts and feelings without analysis or judgment.

- ❖ Be aware of the fleeting nature of thoughts and feelings.
- ❖ Stop fighting your thoughts and feelings (your self), allow them to come and go, as they will.
- ❖ For a few minutes each day practice the following:
 - As a thought or feeling arises, identify it (“what is this thought or feeling?” or “I am thinking or feeling _____”).
 - Acknowledge the thought or feeling without judging it as being right or wrong, good or bad, positive or negative (think or say, “ah, there it is again”).
 - Think or say to yourself or aloud “stop—let go” and re-focus your attention on something else.
 - Expect the thought or feeling, or another like it to come again.
 - Remind your self that thoughts and feelings leave as quickly as they come if you do not focus your attention or cling to them.
 - As a thought or feeling arises, start the process again.
- ❖ With practice and patience, you will learn to let your thoughts and feelings come and go as they arise, and to live with the thoughts and feelings—whether positive or negative—that you experience moment by moment in the process of being you.

Practice staying present focused. Whenever an intrusive or negative thought or feeling from the past arises, consciously stop and re-focus your attention on the moment at hand. Practice mindfulness meditation.

Practice deep breathing, particularly when you feel anxious or overwhelmed with thoughts or feelings. Deep breathing will calm your thoughts, feelings and body—and allow you to gradually regain a sense of control.

Share your thoughts and feelings with at least one other person. Expend the effort to reach out to a trusted family member or friend or counselor, particularly when you are feeling isolated or alone, hopeless or like life is no longer worth living. **Ask for company and help as needed.**

Attend a social activity or event—even if you don’t feel like actively participating.

Write or draw your thoughts and feelings in a journal.

Focus your attention on someone or something other than yourself (even if you can do so for only brief periods of time)—**do something positive or kind for someone else.**

Stop listening to, watching, or reading the news until your mood and state of mind improves. Watch television programs or movies or read stories that present a positive, emotionally or spiritually uplifting message.

Adjust your expectations of yourself. Accept that you may not be able to do or accomplish as much, that you may be less organized and more easily overwhelmed, that you may not be able to think as clearly, and that you may have less patience than usual. Forgive yourself for your thoughts and feelings. Remind yourself that you are only human.

Try light therapy. For many, light therapy has proven helpful in easing or managing depression particularly through the fall and winter seasons.

At the end of each day take a moment to practice noticing at least one thing positive about the day (i.e. the sun shined, it didn't rain, I concentrated long enough to read one article, I got out of bed, I made it to work, I made it through the meeting without screaming, I fed the kids or the animals, I said good morning to a co-worker even though I didn't mean it, etc.) **and finding at least one thing to be thankful for** (I'm still breathing, I still have a job, I have a roof over my head, my dog/cat adores me, etc.).

Explore herbal remedies. Consult a herbologist, or a natural food or herbal supplement specialist. Though scientific studies to date on the effectiveness of herbal remedies have been largely inconclusive, many people struggling with depression and anxiety have had success taking St. John's Wort, Valerian Root, Kava Kava, Omega-3, etc.

If symptoms of depression or anxiety persist for two or more weeks, if your daily functioning is compromised, or if you have had thoughts of harming yourself or others, contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), family doctor or a mental health practitioner for evaluation and recommendation.

If medication is prescribed for symptom management, take as directed. If the medication is causing side effects or does not seem to you to be working, contact your physician. ***Do not discontinue or alter the dosage of your medication without first consulting with your physician.***