

# Coming Out of Depression and Back into Life

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Everyone gets depressed at times. It's human. Losses in life leave us feeling sad, down, powerless, hopeless and alone. Whether you lost your house, health, spouse, or maybe lost your childhood, the same question faces everyone: Now what? How can life be any good anymore? In the darkest hours of depression, that last question can become a matter of life and death. Depression can often lead to thoughts of suicide.

But depression can also lead us back to life again. Most everyone who has been through the darkest times in life will look back from a better place someday. Life does get better. Your attitude and feelings get better. You will feel good about living again. Here are some ways to get there—and to get there faster.

1. Talk it out. When you isolate and avoid people, you may feel temporary relief, but your depression will last longer and get deeper. Find someone in your life to talk with for encouragement, support and new perspective. You'll also stop feeling so lonely.
2. Walk it out. Run or get moving with some form of exercise. Exercise releases endorphins in your brain that can improve mood in similar ways as anti-depressants. Your mood will not only improve, but you will also get out of the house and into the world again.
3. Eat a balanced diet. You may have less appetite when depressed, but your body and brain still need nourishment. You may eat less for now, but make sure to still eat a balance of fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods, including water. For those who overeat when depressed, go back to Point #1—talk it out instead of eat it out. Food is no substitute for love. And added weight can lead to even more depression.
4. Focus on the good in your life. Gratitude is the key to happiness in life. It is also an antidote to depressions. While depression focuses on things lost or missing in your life, gratitude focuses on the good things you have. List ten things that you are grateful for in life right now. Remind yourself every day of at least three of these. If you pray, thank God for these good things every day.
5. Focus on the goals in your life. From planning a phone call today or for a vacation or college degree, our goals move us forward in life. Goals motivate us to do things to reach them. Goals put us in motion again. List five goals for the next week, the next year, and the next decade.
6. Grieve your losses in life. Everyone has lost something in their life. Loved ones die, a job is lost, parents divorce, cancer is diagnosed—the list is nearly endless. Still, life goes on and the world keeps turning. After grieving your loss and its pain, consider how to adjust and go forward again. The eventual end of grief is to let it go. Until you get there, at least make it your goal to adjust someday. The depth of today's grief will get less as time goes on and life becomes better.
7. Keep hope alive. Consider this wisdom from the Bible; "Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? But if we hope for what we do not have, we wait for it patiently." (Romans 8) We can hope and look forward in life or lose hope and look backward. Keep hoping and keep living. Depression is meant to be temporary, like a rest stop on an interstate. Practicing these seven points will help you back on the road to enjoy life again.