

Managing Feelings of Depression During COVID-19: Tips for Healthcare Workers

It is normal to experience feelings of depression in response to difficult situations, and healthcare workers on the front lines may be at increased risk given acute experiences of grief, trauma, and exhaustion. We offer the following tips to manage feelings of depression.

Behavioral activation. Maintain a daily routine of activities. Schedule a pleasant activity and commit to it even if you don't feel like it. Consider a warm bath, helping others, learning, virtually connecting with people, arts, or something creative.



Reach out. When feeling down, we tend to withdraw and avoid connecting with others. This is, however, the most important time to reach out. Look for support from people who make you feel safe and cared for. Consider even a short call or video chat; a good listener can make a world of difference when we feel down. Consider joining a support group to share experiences and coping strategies.



Nurture your health. Prioritize sleep, nutrition (don't skip meals, minimize refined sugars, and boost your intake of foods that are high in B-vitamins and omega-3 fatty acids), and activities that promote well-being such as meditation and getting outside.



Exercise. Research supports physical exercise as a safe and effective way of boosting our mood.



Challenge negative thinking. Depression can trigger thoughts of hopelessness and that are biased in a negative direction, making us feel worse. Try to challenge negative thoughts when you notice them. Ask yourself – Is this thought 100% accurate? Is there any element of distortion (e.g., thinking in black and white – not acknowledging a middle ground; catastrophizing – imagining only the worst possible scenario)? Is it possible to reframe the thought to view it from a more balanced perspective?



Seek professional support. There are individuals who specialize in the assessment and treatment of depression. If your feelings of depression are not responding to self-care strategies and are impacting your daily life, consider reaching out for support.



Contact UHN CARES

- 416-340-5033 or 14-5033, Monday to Friday: 9AM-5PM
- UHNCARES-COVIDPROGRAM@uhn.ca
- 'Mental Health Supports' tab on COVID-19 Intranet page

Sources:

- Psychology Today ([link](#)), The Conversation ([link](#)), HelpGuide ([link](#)), Research Gate ([link](#))