

Depressed Mood



What You Should Know

After a disaster, while it is common to be sad, you may find your sadness becomes severe or long lasting. You may feel down, depressed, or blue for some time. You may lose interest or pleasure in activities you used to enjoy. You may notice an increase or decrease in appetite, resulting in weight loss or gain. You may have trouble sleeping or sleep too much. Some people report physical agitation or jitteriness, while others report feeling slowed down. You may find that you have trouble concentrating or making decisions. Sometimes people report feeling worthless or guilty. The most severe and dangerous symptom of depression involves thoughts of death or planning suicide. If you have suicidal thoughts—even if you would never act on them—contact your doctor or therapist so that you can develop a safety plan to use in case your thoughts about suicide increase to a dangerous level.

What Can Help

- **Practice calming strategies.** Depressed mood can sometimes be related to anxiety and worry. To reduce the worry and anxiety that contribute to feeling down, practice calming strategies such as breathing, prayer, meditation, yoga.
- **Reach out to others for support, or give support to others.** Spending time with or helping other people can often improve mood or help you replace negative habits and thoughts with more positive ones.
- **Deliberately schedule more positive or meaningful activities in your life.** Choose activities that energize you, distract you from your problems and sad thoughts, give you more positive feelings, or make you feel better about yourself. Plan one or more of these activities a week, even if you don't feel like it.
- **Change your unhelpful thoughts to more helpful ones.** Check out your thoughts. Are they negative and unhelpful? If so, they may be causing your upset feelings. Develop a plan to substitute helpful thoughts. For example, if you find yourself thinking, "I can't stand this," try changing it to something like, "This feeling won't last forever," or "It's okay that I'm still feeling bad; I'm doing everything I can to feel better." Remember that it is common to feel down after a disaster, so try not to judge yourself for feeling that way. Being hard on yourself tends to make you feel worse.
- **Take care of yourself.** A depressed mood can be improved by taking better care of your body. Eat healthy foods, exercise, drink plenty of water, and get enough sleep. Consider doing something nice for yourself that you wouldn't normally do, such as taking time for taking a hot bath, getting a massage, reading a fun book, or going for a walk.