

# Finding what works for me

Every person is affected by depression differently, so some strategies will work better than others for each individual person. You can use the 'spiral' nature of depression in your favour – making even very small changes in your behaviour can have a big impact in turning the downward spiral around!

This worksheet helps you build on any steps you have taken so far and continue to tackle the depression affecting your life. It is important to plan small steps at first, and to take things slowly.

If you are moderately to severely affected by depression, and especially if you feel you are at risk of harming yourself in any way, then the most important first steps are to act quickly to get professional support from a doctor or counsellor, and start building a wider support network. See the 'Get Support' section for more information.

## 1. One small thing

Thinking about how depression is affecting my daily life at the moment, what is a small change I can make that might make a difference to how things feel?

A few quick examples to help you:

- getting outside into the fresh air once a day
- telling someone else how you are feeling
- getting an attractive poster or plant for your room
- planning to get up and eat breakfast every morning

Don't think too hard about your answer at this point - just write down the first thing you can think of. The change needs to be something that you can do i.e. that is within your own control

## 2. What I've tried so far

What strategies, if any, have you already tried to help you tackle your depression? If you had a previous episode of depression then what do you think was helpful to you in moving on beyond the depression on that occasion?

List strategies that have helped (even if only a little):

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### 3. Things I might consider trying

The 'Tackle Depression' and 'Get Support' sections of Students Against Depression.org cover a wide range of strategies that might help you turn things around. The Student Stories section will show that different things work for different people, so it is important for you to keep trying until you find the things that will work for you.


You can use the 'My strategies' table to get an overview of some of the things that might help and to keep track of things you have tried and what they have contributed. The strategies are listed in a recommended order of priority for someone who is moderately to severely affected by depression – getting support from others, preferably from professionals, is very important if this applies to you. After that the simplest self-help strategies, which can make an immediate difference, are listed in the First Steps section.

There are lots of things on the list because lots of different things can help against depression. You don't need to do them all - and doing only a few can make a big difference! Give yourself small, realistic steps to take one at a time, and don't overwhelm yourself

- Give yourself some time to browse the information and stories at Students Against Depression.org
- Mark strategies you think you'd like to try, then identify a few (up to 5) you'd like to try first.
- Use the relevant 'Take Action' worksheets for the strategies you have chosen.
- Give yourself a reasonable length of time to see how it goes, then evaluate and make notes.
- Some of the first steps lead on naturally to longer-term strategies. Build up gradually and be gentle with yourself (see Learning self-compassion).

### 4. Take Action workbook

If you prefer a more structured approach, then the Take Action worksheets attached to each page on Students Against Depression.org have been organised into a Workbook with step-by-step modules, which help you try the strategies in a recommended order. See 'Take action in your own life' for the collection of Workbook modules.



***"There is no quick fix or easy answer - it might take time to find the things that help you best. Everyone experiences depression and low moods differently, and therefore requires different support. But when you find the right thing for you it can make such a huge difference to your quality of life, so it's crucial to keep trying." - Dani***

Strategy	Section	Tick (intention to try out)	Worksheet done?	Tried strategy out (dates, length of time)	Notes (Was this helpful or not? (evaluate))
Safety plan	Check suicide & self harm (GS)				
Break isolation/ Tell someone how I feel	Build support networks (TD)				
Check warning signs for depression	What is depression? (UD)				
See doctor	Counsellors & doctors (GS)				
Consider medication (if prescribed by a doctor as appropriate for me)	Counsellors & doctors (GS)				
See counsellor	Counsellors & doctors (GS)				
Build support network	Build support networks (GS)				
Self care plan	First steps (TD)				
Focusing outward – distraction and 'keeping busy'	First steps (TD)				
Get going (basic activity plan & first steps summary)	First steps (TD)				
Sort out sleep	Healthier daily routines (TD)				
Understand food & mood	Healthier daily routines (TD)				
Exercise plan	Healthier daily routines (TD)				
Check alcohol & drugs	Healthier daily routines (TD)				
Relaxation skills	Healthier daily routines (TD)				
Connect with others	Healthier daily routines (TD)				
Understand my depression better	Changing attitudes (TD)				
Identify my depressed thinking	Changing attitudes (TD)				
Challenge my depressed thinking	Changing attitudes (TD)				
Stress management	Changing attitudes (TD)				
Anxiety and/or anger management	Changing attitudes (TD)				
Learn self compassion	Changing attitudes (TD)				
Mindfulness	Living well (TD)				
Emotional literacy	Living well (TD)				
Assertiveness	Living well (TD)				
Relationship skills	Living well (TD)				
Identify life values	Living well (TD)				
Happiness skills	Living well (TD)				
Alternative approaches	More ideas & resources (GS)				
Therapeutic writing	More ideas & resources (GS)				
Other help and resources	More ideas & resources (GS)				
Understand different perspectives on depression	Different perspectives (UD)				
Take action against depression beyond my own life	Take Action (TA)				