

- Depression (Psychology) / Stress

Why am I depressed?

Know what it takes to naturally help you get out of your depressive state

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We cannot avoid stress. We cannot always be in control of the circumstances around us. Sometimes we even become a casualty of other people's actions and decisions in life. Other times we are innocent victims of injustice, persecution, natural disasters, and sin. We cannot expect ourselves to be jolly and positive all the time, especially when we find ourselves in a tough situation.



However, there are instances when we dive into a depressive state because of certain factors that are within our control. Oftentimes, there are triggers that bring about our depression. However, there are factors within our control that will prevent us from getting worse and also help us overcome our depression.

The brain produces chemicals or neurotransmitters that regulate our stress response and mood. Dopamine and serotonin are your happy hormones.

Dopamine is your reward center. It plays a role in movement, memory, pleasure, motivation, attention, sleep, arousal, learning, mood, and more. Have you ever wondered why eating chocolate makes you feel better when you're in a bad mood? It is because chocolate contains the amino acid tyrosine, which is a precursor of dopamine. It simply means that chocolate increases the production of your happy hormone dopamine. But before you grab a bar of chocolate, let me warn you that the effect of cacao is sabotaged by the added refined sugar. The high sugar content will cause your mood to crash after getting that high. Choose dark chocolate instead of milk chocolate.

On the other hand, serotonin is a neurotransmitter or chemical messenger that regulates sleep, mood, digestion, hunger, sexual behavior and body temperature. It also plays a role in learning, memory, and feelings of happiness. Plus, serotonin gets converted to the sleep hormone melatonin at night. If we have inadequate serotonin, sleep problems occur.

We can naturally get a boost in serotonin production when we get sun exposure. When sunlight enters the eyes, it stimulates the brain to produce serotonin. It pays to get sun exposure in the morning for about five to 15 minutes. You need not look straight to the blinding sunlight. All you have to do is open the windows, get that sunlight streaming inside or go out for a few minutes.

Another way to increase serotonin is through exercise. Now you may be feeling fatigue especially when depression hits. That is why it is a conscious decision and intentional effort to move. It doesn't have to be a high-intensity workout. Begin by walking or even pacing inside your room for about 10 minutes at a time. Just get out of bed. Don't be a couch potato too! Stand, walk, or pace. As you build your stamina and get your mood-stabilizing hormones working, you will have more energy to workout and you will say goodbye to depression. Remember, we do it because we have to and not because we feel like we want to.

Did you know that your gut health is connected to your mental health? The gut or your intestines are composed of cells that produce brain chemicals. Therefore, if your gut health is compromised, you have problems producing happy hormones too. The gut is also home to trillions of beneficial bacteria that are vital in ensuring normal processes between the gut and brain. What you eat will impact your mood. It will also determine how well you are able to produce neurotransmitters that will help you cope during periods of stress. It is important to pay attention to the type of food that you consume in order to overcome depression.

Feed your gut microbiome. That world within your body that houses trillions of friendly bacteria. Prebiotics in the form of bananas, psyllium husk, garlic, onion, honey, eggplant, peas, legumes, soy, whole grains like oats, asparagus, green tea, and more, feed the good bacteria in the gut to ensure proliferation.

It is also important to get amino acids especially tyrosine for the production of dopamine and tryptophan for serotonin production. While animal meat, eggs, and dairy contain these amino acids, consuming them comes with a cost. Animal meat and meat products are proinflammatory in nature and are not beneficial for mental health. Plant sources are the best choice. Consume soy and soy products, and green leafy vegetables like malunggay, mushrooms, banana, nuts, broccoli, peas, oats, pumpkin, and sunflower seeds. These are also good sources of magnesium. This mineral supports the activities of neurotransmitters and will aid in alleviating symptoms of anxiety, depression, and even sleep disorders.

If you have depression, make a conscious effort to avoid refined sugars, ultra-processed food, and animal products. These will only make your symptoms worse. Consume more wholesome food sources from fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, and seeds. Gradually get into the habit of being physically active and get some sun exposure on a daily basis. You will feel better and be able to cope better even if your actual problems don't immediately get resolved.

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