



Tips for Recovery from Depressive Disorders for Adolescents

Developed in Collaboration with Northeast Behavioral Health Partnership and the Member and Family Advisory Board

1. **Participate in your treatment and ask questions.** Be actively involved in setting your treatment goals and your treatment plan. Your treatment should be based on your needs and goals. If you don't understand something, ask again. Write down questions ahead of time and bring them to the session. Be sure to talk to your primary care physician about your symptoms and medications.
2. **Treat thoughts of suicide, harming yourself, or death seriously.** Talk openly about any of these thoughts you are having with your clinician, prescriber or a nurse. If needed, get immediate help by calling 911 or going to the nearest hospital emergency room. Develop a safety plan with your therapist.
3. **Be alert to early symptoms.** Sometimes your depression might feel like anger or irritability as opposed to sadness. Symptoms of depression can return. Seek treatment as soon as possible. Ask your clinician about developing a Recovery Plan or Crisis Plan and share these with family and friends.
4. **Spend time with others,** such as family, friends and peer support groups. The more positive relationships you have, the better. Limit your time alone. Make sure you keep up with social activities, even if you don't feel like it.
5. **Take care of yourself.** Establish a healthy lifestyle. Being outside in natural sunlight for a few minutes every day, especially in the fall and winter, can help you feel better. Physical activity can help your mood. Establish an exercise routine and eat a healthy, well-balanced diet. Remember that alcohol and drugs can worsen depressive symptoms after the effects wear off.
6. **Sleep.** Make sure you get enough sleep. Adolescents need 8 to 9 hours of sleep.
7. **Keep your appointments.** This is your time, so use it effectively. If you take an antidepressant medication, make sure you take it regularly, even if you are feeling better. Call your prescriber if you have any questions, or if you have uncomfortable side effects. Ask about medications which may have fewer side effects. Be open with your therapist and remain willing to consider new perspectives.

8. **Practice skills you learn.** Often therapy for depression involves learning new ways to think about events and experiences in your life, so complete homework you are given. Practice helps when learning these new skills. Avoid being too critical of yourself.
9. **Try to be hopeful.** Remember that you are not alone. People who feel depressed can and do get better. Develop a skill or hobby. Try to do some things you enjoy with other people.
10. **Learn how people recover from depression.** Ask for written materials, read information from the library. Three internet sites to start with are the National Institute of Mental Health (1.800.421.4211 or www.nimh.nih.gov), WebMD (<http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/depression-children>), and the NBHP website, www.nbpartnership.com, and www.achievesolutions.net.