It’s important to take care of yourself. Often when people become depressed, it’s because they are overwhelmed, have lost faith or lack coping skills. Genetic or biochemical factors also may be at work. Here are some tips to help manage depression:

1. **Be honest with yourself about what might be behind your depression.** For example, are you overcome with fear about what the future holds? What would help ease your concerns, or make you feel more in control? Do you feel as though you have enough support? Have you lost connections with friends who can make you laugh or be your cheerleader? Some people say writing in a journal helps them to connect with their feelings and possible solutions.

2. **Make healthy choices.** Often, feeling depressed starts a downward spiral of not-so-healthy behaviors. Exercise can help boost endorphin levels, the body’s feel-good hormones, and make you feel stronger. It’s also important to eat healthy foods and get enough sleep.

3. **Seek out a good therapist.** Seeing a counselor can help you build coping skills, boost your confidence and outlook. Be sure to choose someone you feel comfortable talking openly with.

4. **Engage in activities that allow you to reconnect with what matters and can help prevent depression.** Volunteering is also a great way to boost your mood and feel more socially connected. Beyond the mental health benefits, it seems volunteering may also reap improved physical effects, too, including a lower blood pressure and a longer life.

5. **Reach out to friends and family.** Although you may not feel up to it, share your feelings and fears with people you trust. Doing so will give them a chance to help.

6. **Try to reduce stress in your life.** If you feel overwhelmed at work or home, it only makes matters worse. Try to lower stress. Carve out time to listen to your favorite music, do yoga or meditate. Only say “yes” to what you can handle.

7. **Follow up with your health care team.** Alert them right away if you start feeling more depressed or desperate.

8. **Take your medicine as directed.** People who are depressed are less likely to take their medicine. Many heart-related medications help keep your blood pressure low, guard against clots and help your heart work better. Without them, your condition will get worse or you might be putting yourself at risk for a heart attack or stroke.

For more about your heart condition or risk, please visit [CardioSmart.org/Depression](http://CardioSmart.org/Depression).