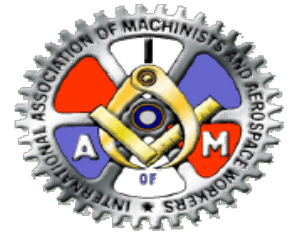




# HELPING HANDS



## How to Deal with Depression During Covid

(Excerpts from Psychology Today)

### 1. Mind Your Thoughts

Our minds are constantly telling us stories. When we're feeling down, the stories tend to be negative:

- *Nothing ever works out in my life.*
- *I'm such a failure.*
- *This is hopeless.*
- *People would be better off without me.*

We need to remind ourselves that these thoughts are creations of the mind. There are alternative stories that aren't so disheartening and are more accurate. Maybe we've had some failure in our lives... **and** a lot of success. Some things don't work out... but other things do.

Action Step: Start to notice the thoughts you're having, especially when your mood takes a nosedive. What went through your mind just before? What did you tell yourself? And then write it down (that part is important). When we can capture these stories, we're in a better position to start to question them, and to drain their power.



### 2. Move Your Body

Physical movement is as effective as antidepressant medication, has many positive side effects, and is free! Research has shown that walking, jogging, running, weightlifting, and other forms of exercise can reduce depression. Any movement is better than none. It may be helpful not to think of it as "exercise," which often sounds like a chore—something you "should do" but don't want to. Instead, ask yourself what type of movement your body is craving. Is it walking with a friend? Dancing in your kitchen? An online yoga video in your living room? Find any way to move the body, especially in ways that are fun. In addition to the mood boost, it's also helpful for sleep.

Action Step: Plan to increase your movement today. Make it small and make it doable. A five-minute walk around the block is a good first step (pun sort of intended).

### 3. Consecrate Your Sleep

There's a close connection between sleep and depression. Poor sleep can contribute to depression. And while we can't guarantee sound sleep every night, there are things we can do to sleep more soundly.

Treat sleep like it's sacred. Set aside a time for winding down at the end of the day as a buffer before bedtime. Stop working. Put screens away. Take 30 to 60 minutes to read, enjoy low-key conversation, do bedtime yoga, or anything else you find calming.

Other specific practices that make for healthy sleep include:

- Keep a consistent bedtime and wake-up time. Aim to stick to this schedule even after a poor night's sleep.



- Avoid daytime naps. Sleeping in the day tends to interfere with solid sleep at night. If you do nap, keep it short, and do it earlier in the day.
- Get out of bed if you're not able to sleep. Staying in bed when we're awake and frustrated can cause us to associate the bed with being awake and stressed out. Do something relaxing like reading for a half-hour or so before going back to bed.
- Beware of short-term "sleep aids." Chemicals like alcohol may knock you out, but they don't provide high-quality sleep. And in the long run, they can create an unhealthy dependence.

Action Step: Take some time to plan an enjoyable winding-down routine

that will prepare you for sleep.

4. Be with People

Good relationships are antidepressants. Aim to spend more time with those you love, whether in person (if possible), or by phone or video conference. Be creative if need be—go for a walk with a friend. Watch a movie “together” with someone, even if you’re not in the same location. And as hard as it might be, look for ways to improve others’ lives—yes, even when you’re struggling. Look for any opportunity to show kindness to people in your life. Research shows that helping others is a powerful mood enhancer.

Action Step: Text a friend or family member to set up a time to talk, whether in person, by phone, or by video. Be sure to ask how they’re doing.

5. Be Open to the Present

Step into the moment, exactly where you are. Depression is made worse when we’re focused on the future, imagining we’ll always feel this way and that things will never get better. There are countless ways to practice presence, including meditation. Being present is about coming home to yourself because you only exist in the present: your body, your feelings, your thought processes. We can find our spirits there, too—the deepest parts of ourselves that are always with us, and that are undiminished by any challenges we’re facing. That’s where we find our strength and resolve to keep facing each moment of our lives.

Action Step: When you wake up in the morning, take five calm, deliberate breaths, slowing down the exhale. Notice how things are for you—thoughts, feelings, physical sensations. Begin your day from a grounded place of connection with yourself.

More than anything, be good to yourself—now and always. These are stressful times. This is hard. None of us have done this before. And we’re doing the best we can to figure things out. Whatever you do, don’t give up on yourself. You’re worth more than you can imagine. And there’s more strength in you than you know, the strength to face the challenges of each day.

**Your EAP Representative (listed below) can help you find the most appropriate services for your situation**

IAM  
Peer Employee  
Assistance  
Program



The heart and soul of the District 141 Employee Assistance Program is the local lodge EAP peer coordinator. These dedicated men and women volunteer their personal time to assist other union members and their families who are experiencing personal difficulties. EAP peer coordinators do not make clinical diagnoses or clinical evaluations, however, they are trained to make a basic assessment of your situation and refer you to an appropriate resource for a more detailed evaluation. EAP peer coordinators will follow up to ensure you have been able to access services that addressed the difficulty you were experiencing.

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Depression is Different

Depression is a common but serious mood disorder. It causes severe symptoms that affect how you feel, think, and handle daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or working. Learn more about depression:

↳ <https://go.usa.gov/xds5Z>  
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