



Healing Tips

Notes from a fellow traveler

Courage does not always roar. Sometimes courage is the small, quiet voice at the end of the day saying, "I will try again tomorrow." ~ Unknown ~

There is no quick fix or magic bullet that brings healing and wholeness when confronting the challenge of living with a mood disorder. Each of us is unique, bringing our own unique personal history, set of needs, values and vision, challenges and resources. Each person's road to healing will be as unique as they are!

But remember:

- ✓ Healing is a journey; it is not a passive process.
- ✓ People do get better - often by a process of trial and error.
- ✓ People do find a balance but only when it's based on what is important to them.
- ✓ You alone can do it - but you can't do it alone!

The MDSC would like to thank Kea, a MDSC member for sharing her wisdom and the steps she has taken to bring peace, health and happiness into her life.

Be prepared to be inspired! If you have some suggestions that you think will help your fellow traveler please Email us at: info@mooddisorderscanada.ca

Some Tips That Have Helped Me

by Kea

Exercise

I love walking and walk as often as possible, except in inclement weather. My home is about 50 to 55 minutes from my office and I walk either to or from (sometimes both) as often as possible. Try to do something you enjoy a few times a week. Things like Yoga and Tai Chi are especially beneficial.

Meditation

Hiking in the woods works wonders for me. It's amongst the trees, listening to the birds and watching the chipmunks and squirrels, that I feel most at peace, that the constant "chatter" in my mind stills. Walking in the woods or along a beach is an act of mediation for me. If you are able to mediate in more traditional ways, great! Whatever works for you! Just realize that "meditation" does not have to mean sitting still in a chair or on the floor, legs crossed, chanting a mantra.

Control Automatic Negative Thoughts

Become aware of your **ANTs** (Automatic Negative Thoughts) and stop them in the act. Negative thinking is an insidious habit and it takes a lot of conscious effort to break it.

Consider Your Diet

- ✓ Alcohol is a depressant; avoid it.
- ✓ Avoid sugary foods: If you have a sweet tooth, as I do, look for no-fat/no-sugar yogurt (unless you are adversely affected by sugar substitutes) and sugar-free instant puddings. Or have a little bit of bittersweet chocolate once in a while (because I personally do not want to live in a chocolate-free world).
- ✓ Try this: French vanilla yogurt with sliced fresh fruit or tinned fruit (rinse off the syrup first) and with some granola. You can find non-sweetened granola at your local bulk food store.
- ✓ Make sure your diet includes lots of veggies. If you don't like plain vegetables, try low-fat yogurt dips with raw veggies, as a treat.
- ✓ Don't forget about protein and fiber, and yes, we need a small amount of fat in our diets too! Find a nutrition program that works for you.
- ✓ Watch your caffeine intake. Hot chocolate has far less caffeine than coffee; try that. Or use half-decaf, half regular coffee when you are making your morning pot. Or even better, tea. Tea is full of anti-oxidants.

Be gentle with your self

This is a tricky one, because if you are like me, you are your own worst enemy, your own harshest critic. But we see ourselves through a distorted lens-try to remember that. Give yourself a mental pat on the back for making it through the day or handling a crisis or whatever.

Keep track of your journey

Try writing down what you've done (your successes, how far you've come) over the past year. You might just surprise yourself! I actually do this, usually on New Year's Eve or Day. It helps me realize that I have made strides in personal growth because too often I'm mired in feelings of failure and worthlessness and don't see how far I've traveled.

Happys

Keep a journal of what was good about the day. If you journal-write anyway, keep this separate. This is a trick I have used for years and I find it helps. Sometimes what was good was just a cup of tea or seeing a bird or feeling the sunshine on my face. Most of the good things in life are small things-flowery, the smell of the earth in spring, the crunch of leaves under foot in autumn, the scent of hot apple cider spiced with cinnamon, cloves, and orange in winter. If you can start an email group with a few people and send around your "happys" every day it can be quite rewarding and uplifting. I did this for a couple of years with an on-line group, but sadly we fell out of the habit. However, it's important to focus on anything positive, because so much of what we deal with every day is tremendously negative.

Watch a little less news on TV

I watch a lot of news and get very depressed by all the sorrow and suffering in the world. While I'm not advocating staying out of touch with what's happening around you, taking a break from time to time from the endless pain and death and horror is a good thing.

Look for a support group

Either on-line or in your town/city. Sharing your experiences with others who have been there is tremendously helpful. (Contact a mood disorders support group in your area or if there isn't one - consider starting one yourself).

Volunteer

There's nothing like reaching out to someone else to take your mind off your own problems. I volunteer with the Seniors Association here in my city and have been visiting an elderly woman for about 14 months now. She is losing her mental faculties, so it's sometimes difficult and sad, but she seems to appreciate my visits and knowing that I am helping in some small way is beneficial for my own mental health.

Post inspirational "quotes"

I love quotations and my office bulletin boards are jammed with them. I also post a quote on the main office door every week or so.

Adopt a pet

If you are able and inclined, adopt a pet from your local animal shelter. I have two cats at home, both shelter adoptees, and I think they have saved my life. Adopting a pet will save THEIR life too! There have been a lot of studies done on the value of pet therapy.

Pursue a hobby

I have a keen interest in paleoanthropology and archeology, love to travel and visit art galleries and museums, walk, knit, and read. One of my favourite places to be is a second-hand bookstore, browsing through the shelves. So find something that catches your interest and make time for it on a regular basis.

Make a date with yourself

This can tie in with your hobbies, if you like. Once a week, go on a date with yourself. Go to a movie. Go for a walk. Go window-shopping. Whatever. But just you. It's important to connect with your Self and we often overlook that in our busy, stressful lives.

Listen to music

I go through cycles where I listen to various genres of music. I love blues and jazz, classical, classic rock, today's country, gospel, choral...just about anything. Music is a wonderful mood-elevator.

Surround yourself with loving, supportive friends

Friends are those who love and accept you just as you are, who support you, respect you, and honor you. If you are hanging out with people who only criticize and pull you down...find other people to hang around with. The same applies to family. If your family has only harsh criticism and judgments for you, you might have to take a step away from them, for the sake of your mental health.

Faith

If you have it, hang on to it. I envy those who have a concrete belief in a higher power, as I no longer have that. But faith can be an amazing lifeline, so if possible, find what works for you and make it a part of your daily life.

Remember: No one gets out of life alive!

So try to find what meaning you can in your life and live to your best ability. It might all be a huge cosmic joke...but on the other hand, it just might mean something after all.

*Te teh ho Wakan Tanka oyish neka
~ Walk in the peace of the Creator Spirit ~
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