Understanding your depression

When you’re depressed, you’re often overwhelmed with negative thoughts. These thoughts bring about feelings such as guilt, shame, frustration and anxiety. As a result, you may:

- Avoid things and people around you
- Lose interest in things you used to enjoy
- Sleep too long or not enough
- Feel agitated or numb
- Have suicidal thoughts

If you have these symptoms most every day, you may need help. If you don’t get help, the symptoms can worsen and create problems in your wellbeing, relationships. In addition to getting help from a doctor or counselor, understanding your depression may help you better manage it.

What makes you feel depressed?

When and where are you more likely to feel sad? You may notice your feelings are worse at a certain time of day, day of the week or in certain settings. Who or what is around you? Maybe a person or situation really upsets you. Listing these things may help you see what thoughts and feelings lead you to feel depressed. And knowing your triggers can help you learn ways to deal with them.

Coping skills to reduce depression

Depression can steal your energy and hope, but it’s important to take steps to help you feel better. Consider these tips:

Take care of the basics
- Get adequate sleep
- Eat healthy foods
- Drink water
- Move your body and exercise

Stay connected
- Talk to someone you trust
- Join a support group
- Keep up with social activities even if you don’t feel up to it

Be mindful
- Try meditation
- Write in a gratitude journal
- Practice deep, slow breathing
- Listen to happy music

Challenge negative thinking
- What would you say to a dear friend going through the same struggle?
- What would you do differently if you didn’t feel so sad?
- Is what you’re thinking based on facts or feelings?

When you avoid people or things you need to do, you’re more likely to feel worse and have more symptoms. It’s important to learn and practice coping skills that may help you break this cycle.

You may need help to get better

If you’ve been using coping skills and your depression isn’t getting any better, you may need additional help. Consider reaching out to your doctor or seeking out a mental health professional. Depression is a tough illness, but there are many treatment options available that can help. And seeking help is a sign of strength.