



Feelings of depression come in waves and it can be especially challenging when these feelings stick around. It can feel like having a heavy weight on your shoulders and the world around you can look dull and gray. Here are some tools to support you move through these waves.

Understanding Depression on a Nervous System Level

So, what actually is depression?

Depression isn't a flaw or a failure – it's **a protective response** of your nervous system.

When your nervous system detects a threat (like not finding a job or potential rejection) and 'fight or flight' doesn't resolve it, the body shifts into the state of freeze or shutdown.

In this state, the nervous system sends signals to the body, *"Hey... this is too much, let's conserve energy. Let's slow everything down. Let's protect this body by doing less."*

Depression can be understood as the body's way of **pulling inward to survive**.

Energy drops. Motivation fades. The world feels heavier, quieter, farther away.

Dopamine, the brain chemical linked to motivation and drive decreases in depression. Not because something is broken, but because the nervous system senses that pushing forward isn't safe. Lower motivation becomes **a way the body conserves energy** and protects itself from further overwhelm.

*please note...this is a very simplified version of what happens physiologically

Okay... but what now?

There can be a lot of shame in feelings of depression. How does knowing depression is your ancient nervous system working for your survival change your relationship with your experience?

Please take a moment to feel what it would feel like to acknowledge depression is an OK experience to be having, it's normal and **you're not alone in it**.

Here are the three most effective tools to help feelings of depression:

1. Activate your sympathetic nervous system aka **get moving!** Any movement is good movement!
2. Pick a daily routine and stick to it. Return to a practice that grounds you on a daily basis. **Find safety in maintaining structure.**
3. Increase your sense of connection/**spend more time in connection with others**

TOOL #1 : Activate your sympathetic nervous system

The most immediate and effective way to relieve feelings of depression is to **reactivate the energy flow** in your body and help your nervous system experience that a return of energy in the body is not a threat.

Depression is a state of down-regulation, so you need to up-regulate the body to get back to center.

Supporting the body in reactivating the systems of the body that may be shutdown can help restore healthy blood circulation, improve oxygen and nutrient delivery, and **re-engage** neural pathways associated with **emotional regulation, vitality, and resilience**.

So what can I do...?

here are simple yet effective ways to start moving out of shutdown

ways to up-regulate your nervous system

- **any physical activity** you enjoy, get moving! any movement is good movement
- go for a **run** (even 10 minutes can make a big difference!)
- **contrast temperatures** – take a hot then cold shower (this releases mood-boosting neurotransmitters) if you have access to sauna and cold plunge, even better!
- **jump and shake!** For real... it helps. Kids do it all the time for a reason.
- **vocal activation** – find moments to sing, humm, scream – unblock your throat chakra!
- **upregulating breathwork**

try this one



**TOOL #2 : Pick a daily routine and stick to it.**

Often with feelings of depression one experiences a loss of sense of time. As time continues to pass by without your active engagement in it, it can feel like life is one meaningless blob and that there's no point.

Finding **structure in your day-to-day routine** can have a huge impact on how you feel.

Choose **one manageable thing** to insert into your everyday that you practice committing to as part of establishing a daily routine.

- wake up at the same time every morning! (this can be a game-changer!)
- journal for 5 minutes in the morning
- take time to cook something delicious for yourself everyday, a home-cooked meal is a great way to nourish your body and soul
- gratitude journaling - write down three things you're grateful for everyday (see more on this below)

GRATITUDE JOURNALING: This is scientifically proven to be the most effective way to increase happiness.

It's simple.

Think of something you're truly grateful for. Be specific and personal.

Write it down. As you write it down connect to the actual feeling of gratitude in your body.

Include challenges and growth.

learn more about gratitude journaling here

**TOOL #3: Increase your time connecting with others**

Connection with others is a basic human need for survival. It's up there with water, food and shelter. When you're not getting enough connection this can lead to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Get out there and find ways to connect.

Prioritize doing things that involve connecting with others. If you feel safe doing so, tell your community "Hey, I'm struggling, can we hang out more?", call old friends, host a weekly friend dinner, find new activities that involve connection (eg. sign up for a pottery class, try a dance class, go to a community event, go to a poetry slam ect.)

Focus on getting more social connection. This releases **bonding chemicals** like oxytocin, dopamine and serotonin.

are you feeling suicidal?

These are hard feelings to face. And it's ok that you're having them. Let a friend or therapist know that you're having these thoughts.

988 is a 24/7 confidential and free hotline you can call if you are in need of immediate support.

See <https://samaritanshope.org/> for more info.

get immediate support



Considering medication? Reach out to psychiatrist Dra. Lara - lmartin@institutsarro.com

questions for reflection

- How are you treating your feelings of depression?
- What is your inner-child yearning for?
- If you knew a loved one was feeling this way, what would you want them to know?

use affirmations to shift your mindset

Try these powerful "activations"
activations.com/en-eu

