



Understanding Depression

Signs, Support, and Self-Care

A compassionate, plain-language guide

8.3%

of U.S. adults (about 21 million) had a major depressive episode in the past year.

Source: NIMH, 2021

61%

of adults with depression received treatment — most who seek support see real improvement.

Source: NIMH, 2021

Signs to Watch For

Persistent low mood or emptiness (2+ weeks) • Loss of interest in things once enjoyed • Changes in sleep or appetite
Low energy or fatigue • Trouble concentrating • Feelings of worthlessness or guilt

Thoughts of death or self-harm always warrant immediate professional support — see below.

Self-Care That Helps

A complement to treatment, not a replacement for it.

• Consistent Sleep

Same wake time daily, even on hard mornings.

• Movement + Sunlight

A short walk outside can lift mood and energy.

• One Small Goal

Pick one tiny, doable task — momentum matters more than size.

• Stay Connected

Reach out to one person, even briefly — isolation feeds it.

Myths vs. Facts

MYTH

"Just think positive and it'll pass."

"It's just laziness."

"Medication changes who you are."

FACT

It's a medical condition — willpower alone doesn't resolve it.

Fatigue and low motivation are documented symptoms, not character traits.

For many, treatment restores the energy depression had been draining.

Supporting Someone Else

Listen without trying to fix it • Avoid "just snap out of it" • Offer specific help ("I'll come with you") • Take any mention of suicide seriously

If You've Tried Everything: Advanced Options

qEEG (Brain Mapping): A painless scan that maps your brain's electrical activity to reveal patterns linked to mood, focus, and sleep — helping guide a more targeted treatment plan.

Neurofeedback Therapy: A non-invasive, drug-free therapy that trains the brain toward healthier activity patterns — often considered when medication and talk therapy alone haven't fully helped.

Ask your provider whether qEEG or neurofeedback is appropriate for your situation.

When to Reach Out for Support

If depression is persistent, severe, or includes thoughts of self-harm, please reach out to a professional or trusted person right away — you don't have to manage this alone.

US: Call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) — free, confidential, available 24/7.

This guide is educational and not a substitute for professional medical or mental health care.