



COMMUNITY RESOURCE GUIDE

Depression

Understanding it, finding help, and supporting each other

If you or someone you know is in crisis, call or text 988 — free, confidential, 24/7.



What Depression Is

Depression (major depressive disorder) is more than feeling sad. It causes symptoms that affect how a person feels, thinks, and handles daily activities — sleeping, eating, working — for at least two weeks.

It can affect anyone regardless of age, sex, race, income, culture, or education. Genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors all play a role.

It is a real medical illness — and it is treatable. Most people improve with treatment.

BY THE NUMBERS

18.3%

of U.S. adults currently have or are treated for depression — about 47.8 million people

1 in 3

adults report a depression diagnosis at some point in their lives

26.7%

of adults aged 18–29 report depression — more than double the 2017 rate

Signs and Symptoms

Symptoms last most of the day, nearly every day, for at least two weeks. Not everyone experiences all of them.

Mood and thinking

- Persistent sad, anxious, or empty mood
- Hopelessness, pessimism, guilt, or worthlessness
- Trouble concentrating, remembering, or deciding

Energy and behavior

- Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed
- Fatigue, restlessness, or slowed movement
- Withdrawing from friends, family, or work

Body and safety

- Changes in sleep — too much or too little
- Changes in appetite or weight; aches without clear cause
- Thoughts of death or suicide — seek help right away

Yoga Therapy for Depression

Yoga therapy adapts the tools of yoga — movement, breath, and meditation — to a person's individual needs, rather than teaching a general class. It is used alongside medical and mental health care, never in place of it.

Meta-analyses of randomized trials find that active yoga meaningfully reduces depressive symptoms, and that mindfulness-based yoga also lowers anxiety and rumination in major depressive disorder.

Slow breathing and sustained relaxation engage the vagus nerve, easing the stress response that keeps depression entrenched.



Practicing safely

- Look for a C-IAYT credential — certified by the International Association of Yoga Therapists
- Choose trauma-informed teaching: invitational language, choice, and no hands-on adjusting without consent
- Keep your care team informed; yoga complements therapy and medication rather than replacing them

Working Through the Four Bodies

Yoga therapy draws on the kosha model — layers, or sheaths, of a whole person. Depression touches every layer, so practice addresses each one.



Physical

Annamaya kosha

Posture, energy, sleep, and appetite — where depression shows up as heaviness and fatigue.



Mental

Manomaya kosha

Attention, thought patterns, and rumination — steadied through breath and focus.



Emotional

Pranamaya kosha

Mood, numbness, and the capacity to feel — met with gentle, sustained self-contact.



Spiritual

Anandamaya kosha

Meaning, connection, and worth — the sense that life is more than the symptoms.

The Physical Body



Annamaya kosha — the sheath of nourishment



How depression shows up here

- Heaviness, fatigue, and slowed movement
- Disrupted sleep and appetite
- Collapsed posture and shallow breathing
- Withdrawal from activity of any kind

What practice offers

Rhythmic movement

Sun salutations at a slow pace, or simple standing flows to rebuild energy without demand.

Grounding standing poses

Mountain, warrior, and tree bring weight, stability, and a sense of being held by the floor.

Supported backbends

A bolster along the spine or supported bridge to counter collapsed posture and open the chest.

Restorative rest

Legs-up-the-wall and supported reclining poses held 6–12 minutes with props.

The Mental Body

Manomaya kosha — the sheath of mind and thought



How depression shows up here

- Rumination and looping negative thoughts
- Difficulty concentrating or deciding
- Harsh self-criticism
- Restlessness or mental fog

What practice offers

Pranayama

Even-count breathing, and lengthening the exhale to settle the nervous system; energizing breath for low, flat days.

Mindful movement

Matching one movement to one breath gives the mind a single task and interrupts rumination.

Focused meditation

Short, guided practice on breath or sound — starting with 5 minutes, not 30.

Yoga nidra

Guided 'yogic sleep' that systematically rests attention through the body, useful when the mind will not settle.

The Emotional Body

Pranamaya kosha — the sheath of breath and vital energy



How depression shows up here

- Numbness, or feeling cut off from emotion
- Low mood that does not shift
- Loss of pleasure and motivation
- Feeling drained by ordinary contact

What practice offers

Breath as a mood dial

Longer exhales calm agitation; fuller inhales and gentle movement lift flatness and lethargy.

Body awareness

Naming sensation without judgment rebuilds the link between feeling and body.

Heart-centered poses

Supported chest openers and hands at the heart invite warmth rather than forcing positivity.

Loving-kindness

Directing goodwill toward yourself first, which counters the self-blame depression feeds on.

The Spiritual Body

Anandamaya kosha — the sheath of bliss and connection



How depression shows up here

- Loss of meaning or purpose
- Feeling disconnected from others
- Hopelessness about the future
- A sense of not mattering

What practice offers

Intention setting

A simple sankalpa — a short, present-tense phrase held at the start and close of practice.

Practicing together

Shared, regular practice restores belonging; isolation is both a symptom and a driver of depression.

Gratitude

Noticing one small thing that held steady today, kept deliberately modest.

Stillness and silence

Savasana and quiet sitting, where the sense of being more than the illness has room to return.

How to Support Someone

Start the conversation. Say what you have noticed without judgment, then listen more than you talk.

Take it seriously. Depression drains energy and motivation — no one can simply snap out of it.

Offer practical help. A ride to an appointment, a shared walk, or a standing check-in text.

Ask directly about suicide. Asking does not plant the idea. If the answer is yes, stay with them and call or text 988.

Look after yourself too. Supporting someone is demanding — the NAMI Family Caregiver HelpLine is there for you.



Treatment and Self-Care Options



Talk therapy

Cognitive behavioral therapy, interpersonal therapy, and other evidence-based approaches, delivered in person or online.



Medication

Antidepressants prescribed and monitored by a clinician. It can take several weeks to feel the full effect — keep in touch with your provider.



Peer and group support

Support groups, warmlines, and community programs connect you with people who understand from lived experience.

Things that help alongside treatment

- Keep a regular sleep schedule and move your body a little each day
- Break tasks into small steps and set realistic expectations
- Stay connected — tell one person you trust how you are doing
- Avoid alcohol and other substances, which can worsen symptoms
- Postpone major decisions until you are feeling better
- Free self-help tools and screenings: mhanational.org

If You Need Help Right Now

These services are free, confidential, and available 24/7. You do not have to be suicidal to reach out.



988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988 • chat at 988lifeline.org

Spanish: dial 988, press 2, or text AYUDA to 988. Veterans and service members: dial 988, press 1. Videophone available for Deaf and hard-of-hearing callers.



Crisis Text Line

Text HOME to 741741

Connects you with a trained volunteer Crisis Counselor by text, chat, or WhatsApp — for any moment that feels overwhelming.



Emergency care

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room

Use this if there is immediate danger to life. DBSA also lists 988 and texting DBSA to 741741 as crisis options.



Ongoing Help and Referrals

For treatment referrals, information, and peer support when it is not an emergency.

SAMHSA National Helpline

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Free, confidential, 24/7, 365 days a year. English and Spanish.
Treatment referrals for mental health and substance use. TTY 1-800-487-4889. Text your ZIP code to 435748.

NAMI HelpLine

1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

One-on-one support, information, and resources. Text NAMI to 62640 or email helpline@nami.org. Monday–Friday, 10 a.m.–10 p.m. ET. Specialty lines for caregivers and teens.

FindTreatment.gov

[findtreatment.gov](https://www.findtreatment.gov)

SAMHSA's online locator for licensed mental health and substance use treatment providers near you, searchable by ZIP code.

DBSA and local peer support

dbsalliance.org

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance offers peer support groups and crisis planning tools. NAMI has 700+ local affiliates with free groups and classes.



Help Is Available

988

Call or text — Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, 24/7

741741

Text HOME — Crisis Text Line, 24/7

1-800-662-4357

SAMHSA National Helpline — treatment referrals

1-800-950-6264

NAMI HelpLine — support and information

You are not alone, and depression is treatable. Reaching out is a sign of strength.

This guide is for general information and is not a substitute for professional medical advice.