

GETTING HELP

MH | 04

Depression and anxiety are treatable. How to find what works for you.

"I'm not telling you it's going to be easy. I'm telling you it's going to be worth it." -Art Williams.





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WRITER'S NOTE

My favorite moments as a psychiatrist happen when someone I've just met trusts me enough to invite me alongside them. We walk through the most human parts of their lives—the gritty, messy, vulnerable, raw, triumphant, and terrifying chapters that no one else gets to read. Each story amazes me, and teaches me, too. Each journey leaves me heartbroken, happy, and humbled by the honesty and healing that happen.

When someone comes to see me, we usually talk long—and thoroughly—over the course of the next few weeks or months. We tune up their sleep, exercise, and nutrition. We strategize about workloads and family stress. We practice cognitive techniques and behavioral ones, too. We figure out how to get exercise. After careful consideration, we may even start medications.

No two mental health challenges look exactly the same. Recovery looks a little different for everyone, and sometimes more bumps than miracles happen along the way. But I see people heal, and I believe with every fiber of my being, the same thing can happen for you.

-Jon

A young man with a backpack is hiking through a mountainous landscape. He is wearing a plaid shirt and is smiling. The background shows rugged mountains under a clear blue sky.

Professional help:

It's not as scary

as it sounds

And good for you for being brave enough to think about it.

Hey you, the one reading this article. Good for you! You saw this booklet, you picked it up, and you started reading it. Well done! You took the time to stare your depression or anxiety in the eye, and tell it it's not going to win. That's amazing! You know depression and anxiety are treatable, and you're ready to think about starting treatment. And that alone is worth celebrating!

It's OK if you have questions. There are lots of treatments out there, and it might take some time to find the one that works for you. Don't give up. Even exploring treatments to find the right one is closer to managing your symptoms than you were before.

You're on the right track. Good for you!

Your treatment might include talk therapy – advice from a trained professional to help you see things in a new light. A therapist may be able to show you strategies that you hadn't heard of before. And if you learn something useful, you'll be in good company. Some of God's biggest champions took advice from others when they struggled. Moses is a great example. He was so weighed down by the petty disagreements he had to solve every day that he'd nearly given up on things ever getting better.

But fortunately for Moses, his father-in-law Jethro



Even spiritual giants like Moses and Elijah needed help to cope sometimes.

had some experience mediating quarrels - maybe because his seven children weren't afraid to speak their minds. Jethro told Moses to put other people in charge of the smaller stuff so that Moses had time to mediate the more significant problems. Jethro's advice helped the leader of the Exodus make it through his days in one piece. Maybe little talk therapy can do the same thing for you.

If you don't have a therapist yet, there are tips for finding one on page 14 of this booklet. Remember, every mental health professional is unique. There are many treatment styles and approaches to therapy. If you visit a therapist and don't feel that he or she is addressing your concerns in a meaningful way, it's OK to try a different professional. Keep looking until you find someone who can help you.

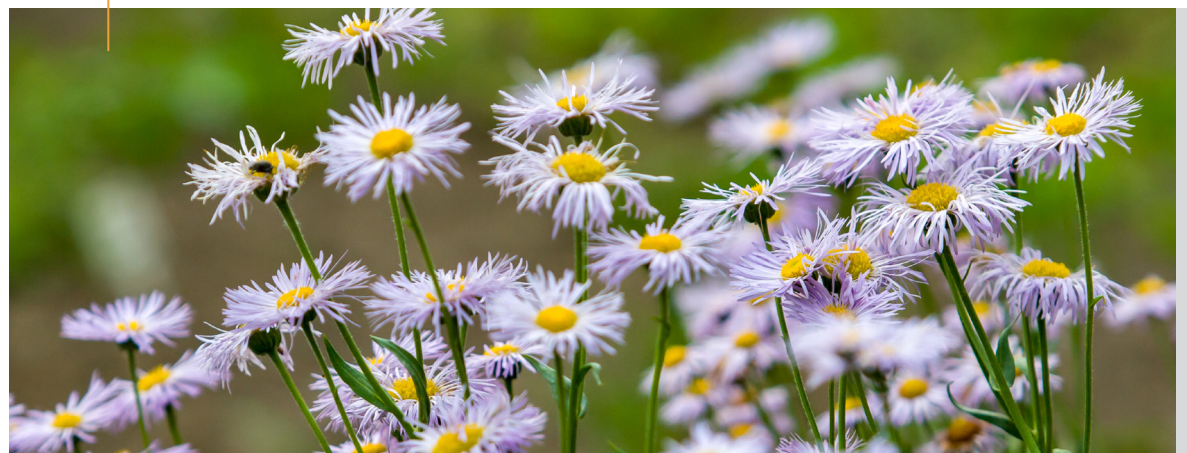
But what about the M-word - medication? Do you need it? Will it help? Every person's situation is different, and only your doctor or mental health professional can answer that question. Still, if your provider or psychiatrist suggests medication as part of your treatment, it might be worth considering.

Jesus treated the whole person - he healed broken bodies, restored possessed minds, and forgave sins. Often, the Greek verb *Sozo* - to save, heal, restore, or make whole - gets used for all three kinds of healing in the Bible. When Elijah broke down after his encounter on Mt. Carmel, God fed him first and gave him rest before he sat him down for a talk. Elijah's body needed to heal before his mind was ready to learn.

You are a whole person too, and God wants you to restore you. If your brain is less than healthy, taking medication might help you to understand things you never would have seen before. It could open your eyes to a little more of the beautiful world God created for you. And the good news is that, with your doctor's supervision, of course, you'll most likely be able to taper off your medication in a year or less and keep feeling better.

No matter what treatment you and your doctor decide on, congratulations for taking a step. Well done for looking out through the fog of depression and anxiety, and seeing the light on the other side. It's real, and you can get there.

Photo at left: Mariusz Szczawinski on Dreamstime. Below Photo: Vladimir Kazakov on Dreamstime.



FINDING SAFE PEOPLE

You can take back control of your life, but you don't have to do it alone. Friends, family, and trained professionals can help you as you heal.

You don't have to do this alone

Healing isn't something you're supposed to figure out on your own. Finding the right support system is a tremendous part of the journey to get your life back. God is someone you can always count on, and it's important to have a human support system, too. Even when you're feeling comfortable with your next steps to recovery, a little accountability or encouragement can do wonders. And that's especially true if you can find someone safe to talk with. Reaching out can take a lot of strength. Choose a friend who will make it easier for you.

Friends and Family

Friends and family can be huge parts of your healing process, and the tips in this article apply to them as much as to professional help. A family member or someone in your friend group who passes the safe person test is a great choice to tell about the weight you've been carrying. But don't stop at family and friends. You want to learn about

your illness, what it does, and how to take control of your life. You need to talk to someone with experience treating depression and anxiety.

Professional Advice

Your doctor or health care provider can provide a lot of support, as can your church pastor, or a counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist. But keep in mind that professionals aren't all the same, and not every counselor will be the right fit for you. Your situation and symptoms are unique to you. Find a place and a person that makes you feel comfortable, safe, and understood.

A SAFE PERSON...

...listens to understand

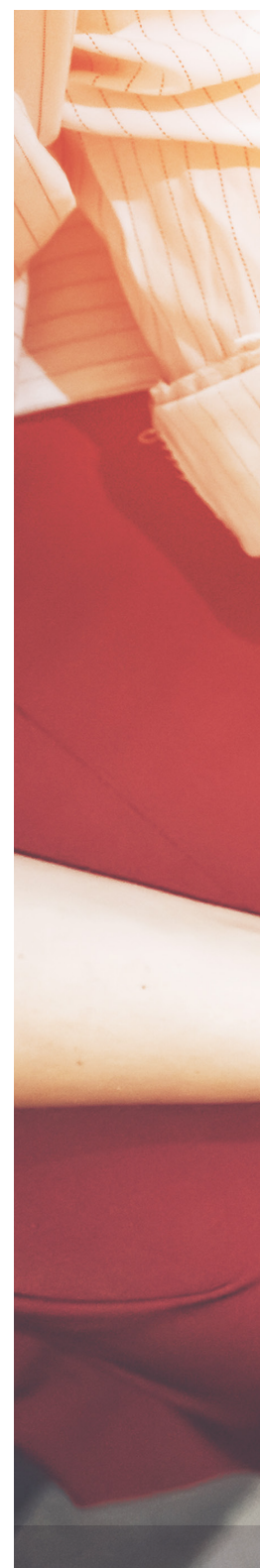
Find someone who truly wants to hear what you are saying, and who'll ask questions as needed to make sure they understand. If someone only listens because they're waiting for the next chance to continue with their speech, they aren't really listening at all.

...sees a better version of you

Depression and anxiety can feed the negative voices in your head and make you feel worse and worse about yourself. A safe person will remind you of the good they see in you, and inspire you to grow into the person God created you to be.

...asks questions before sharing information

Look for a person who listens carefully, waits for you to finish, and then asks follow-up questions to see if they understood you. A good listener





**A safe person listens to understand, sees a better version of you, and validates you the way you are.
Photo: Ded Mityay, Dreamstime.**

will hear you out, and then check to see if they followed, before they even consider giving advice.

...doesn't downplay your experience

If someone tells you that they know how you feel, or that you should feel differently, they may not be the safe person you need as you heal. Watch out especially for anyone who says it's wrong to feel the way that you do.

...and validates you as you are

A safe person will tell you that your feelings are valid and that you get to choose what to do with those feelings. They may encourage you to build healthier and more positive thought processes, but they aren't going to get angry with you if you're still feeling down as you tackle the next step. Depression will hang around for a while as you start your healing process, and that's OK. Anxiety will probably still pop up at times, but you'll learn to manage it. A safe person will know that.

The next article will walk you through some steps to starting treatment. Remember to seek out safe people as your guides on the journey to wholeness.

STARTING YOUR TREATMENT

Info from the National Institute of Mental Health to help you begin the treatment process. Start with your doctor.

What's the best way to approach your doctor about starting treatment? Here's a helpful step-by-step guide. The following information has been reprinted, lightly edited, from the NIMH website. Much of this information was originally written to help people with depression, but in this publication, we've added references to anxiety when the advice applies. Photo by Natalia Bachkova on Dreamstime.

Step 1: Visit your doctor or care provider

If you think you may have depression or anxiety, start by making an appointment to see your doctor or health care provider. This could be your primary doctor or a health provider who specializes in diagnosing and treating mental health conditions (psychologist or psychiatrist). Your doctor should do an exam and ask you about your health history to make sure that an unrelated physical problem is not causing your symptoms. Certain medications, and some medical conditions, such as viruses or a thyroid disorder, can cause the same symptoms as depression, for example. A doctor can rule out these possibilities by doing a physical exam, interview, and lab tests.

Making the appointment. If you still need to make an appointment, here are some things you could say during the first call: "I haven't been myself lately, and I'd like to talk to the provider about it," or "I think I might have depression (or anxiety), and I'd like some help."

Talking to your doctor. How well you and your doctor talk to each other is one of the most important parts of getting good health care. But talking to your doctor isn't always easy. It takes time and effort on your part as well as your doctor's.

Before your appointment, make a list of:

- Symptoms you've had, even if they don't seem related.
- When did your symptoms start?
- How severe are your symptoms?
- Have you experienced these symptoms before?
- If you have had these symptoms before, how were they treated?
- Personal information that might be

related, such as major stressors or life changes.

- Medications, vitamins, or other supplements that you're taking, including how much and how often
- Questions that you want to ask

Find a doctor you can trust. If you don't have a primary doctor or if you don't feel comfortable talking with the doctor you usually see, this may be the time to look for a new doctor. Whether you moved to a new city, changed insurance providers, or had a bad experience with your doctor or medical staff, it's worth the effort to find a doctor you can trust.

Step 2: See a mental health professional, if needed

Your doctor may refer you to a mental health professional, such as a psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, or mental health counselor, who should discuss with you any family history of depression, anxiety, or other mental disorders, and get a complete history of your symptoms. The mental health professional may also ask if you are using alcohol or drugs, and if you are thinking about death or suicide.

Finding a mental health professional.

If your doctor does not refer you to a mental health professional or you feel your concerns were not adequately addressed, call or visit the website for your health insurance provider. You can also try searching the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) behavioral health treatment services locator (found online at <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>) or the other resources on [nimh.nih.gov](https://www.nimh.nih.gov) to find one.

Starting Treatment. Depression and anxiety are treated with medicines, talk therapy (where a person talks with a trained professional about his or her thoughts and feelings, sometimes called "psychotherapy"), or a combination of the two. A healthy lifestyle can also help. Make sure to get enough sleep and exercise, eat a healthy diet, and turn to family and friends that you trust for support. There is no "one-size-fits-all"



treatment, so it may take some trial and error to find the treatment that works best.

Choosing the right medication, dose, and treatment plan should be done under an expert's care and should be based on a person's needs and their medical situation. Your doctor may try several medicines before finding the right one.

You and your doctor should discuss:

- How well medications are working or might work to improve your symptoms
- Benefits and side effects of each medication
- Risk for serious side effects based on your medical history
- The likelihood of the medications requiring lifestyle changes
- Costs of each medication
- Other alternative therapies, medications, vitamins, and supplements you are taking and how these may affect your treatment

- How the medication should be stopped (Some drugs can't be stopped abruptly and must be tapered off slowly under a doctor's supervision).

Antidepressants are medicines that treat depression, though they can also be helpful for treating anxiety disorders. They may help improve the way your brain uses certain chemicals that control mood or stress. You may need to try several different antidepressant medicines before finding the one that improves your symptoms and has manageable side effects. A medication that has helped you or a close family member in the past will often be considered.

Antidepressants take time – usually 2 to 4 weeks – to work, and often, symptoms such
(Continued on page 11)

More information on psychotherapy is available on the NIMH website at [nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/psychotherapies/index.shtml](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/psychotherapies/index.shtml).




Photo by Panuwat
Katlungka, Dreamstime.
Photo at right: Mimage
Photography, Dreamstime.

Treatment Options From The NIMH

Continued treatment advice from the National Institute of Mental Health website. Learn how to prepare for a visit to your provider.

(Continued from page 9)

as sleep, appetite, and concentration problems improve before mood lifts. It is important to give medication a chance before reaching a conclusion about its effectiveness. If you begin taking antidepressants, do not stop taking them without the help of a doctor. Sometimes people taking antidepressants feel better and then stop taking the medication on their own, and the depression returns. When you and your doctor have decided it is time to stop the medication, usually after a course of 6 to 12 months, the doctor will help you slowly and safely decrease your dose.

About Talk Therapy (or Psychotherapy)

Psychotherapy can be an alternative to medication or can be used along with other treatment options, such as medications. Choosing the right treatment plan should be based on a person's individual needs and medical situation and under a mental health professional's care.

Even when medications relieve symptoms, psychotherapy and other interventions can help a person address specific issues. These might include self-defeating ways of thinking, fears, problems with interactions with other people, or dealing with situations at home and at school or with employment.

Talk Therapies for Depression

Several types of psychotherapy (also called "talk therapy" or, in a less specific form, counseling) can help people with depression.

For mild to moderate depression, psychotherapy may be the best option. However, for severe depression or for certain people, psychotherapy may not be enough. For teens, a combination of medication and psychotherapy may be the most effective approach to treating major depression and reducing the chances of it coming back.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) can help an individual with depression change negative thinking. It can help you interpret your environment and interactions in a positive, realistic way. It may also help you recognize things that may be contributing to the depression and help you change behaviors that may be making the depression worse.

Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) is designed to help an individual understand and work through troubled relationships that may cause the depression or make it worse. When a behavior is causing problems, IPT

may help you change the behavior. In IPT, you explore major issues that may add to your depression, such as grief, or times of upheaval or transition.

Problem Solving Therapy (PST) can improve an individual's ability to cope with stressful life experiences. Using a step-by-step process, you identify problems and come up with realistic solutions. It is a short-term therapy and may be conducted in an individual or group format.

Talk Therapies for Anxiety

Psychotherapy or "talk therapy" can also help people with anxiety disorders. To be effective, psychotherapy must be directed at the person's specific anxieties and tailored to his or her needs.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is an example of one type of psychotherapy that can help people with anxiety disorders. It teaches people different ways of thinking, behaving, and reacting to anxiety-producing and fearful objects and situations. CBT can also help people learn and practice social skills, which is vital for treating social anxiety disorder.

Cognitive therapy and exposure therapy are two CBT methods that are often used, together or by themselves, to treat social anxiety disorder. Cognitive therapy focuses on identifying, challenging, and then neutralizing unhelpful or distorted thoughts underlying anxiety disorders. Exposure therapy focuses on confronting the fears underlying an anxiety disorder to help people engage in activities they have been avoiding. Exposure therapy is sometimes used along with relaxation exercises and/or imagery.

The symptoms of mental disorders can have a profound effect on quality of life and ability to function. Seeking help is not an admission of weakness, but a step towards understanding, and relief from distressing symptoms.



Your pastor isn't a replacement for a mental health professional, but a local pastor or trained pastoral counselor could be an important part of your journey. Photo: Adam 121 | Dreamstime.com.





TALKING TO YOUR PASTOR

Your pastor might be a great additional resource for your recovery, especially if you're looking for someone to guide your spiritual healing.

Your church pastor can talk with you about the spiritual part of your life and recovery on a different level than other mental health professionals. If you decide to reach out to a pastor, here are a few things to keep in mind.

Your pastor doesn't replace your doctor

Your pastor can provide spiritual guidance, community, and problem-solving strategies. But, unless she or he is also a mental health professional, your pastor will not have all the tools to diagnose and treat depression and anxiety.

See a doctor, and get a medical work-up.

If your illness is severe enough that the doctor feels it should be treated, a mental health professional needs to be involved. Your pastor can provide additional support or problem solving, so talk to him or her, as well.

Some pastors are trained in counseling

Your pastor can always offer you support, prayer, and a listening ear. However, if you would like to talk with a pastor in more detail about your depression and strategies to treat it, ask your pastor if she or he is trained in pastoral counseling for depression, or knows a pastor who is.

A trained pastoral counselor can draw from some form of mental health training, along with his or her spiritual guidance experience. This might be especially helpful if your doctor has decided that your depression or anxiety is mild enough not to require treatment right now, and you'd love to learn some new mental health strategies.

Pastors are unique, just like your journey

Your recovery journey will be unique to you, and anyone you invite to be part of it needs to be a safe person. If your pastor is a good fit to help you regain control of your life, bring him or her in. But if not, don't feel pressured. You can talk with another pastor or a different mental health professional. Just don't give up until you've found someone safe to talk to.

A pastoral counselor should encourage you not to feel guilty about depression

Depression and anxiety are real illnesses. In the Bible, some people thought the man born blind was being punished for sin in his family. But Jesus told them they were wrong. God wasn't punishing the man at all. Unfortunately, some people still blame illnesses, especially mental illness, on the person who gets sick, even today.

Look for a pastoral counselor who will gently steer you away from thoughts that your depression or anxiety stems from failure in your relationship with God. You may feel numb or disconnected from many things because of your condition. As you heal, you'll hopefully be able to enjoy the feeling of closeness to God more and more, but none of this means God is angry with you. He cares about you and wants to feel better.

Depression and anxiety are illnesses. You aren't lazy or choosing to be this way. It's not a sin to be sick, and you can get better. A safe and healthy pastoral counselor will help you remember that.

TREATMENT RESOURCES

Looking for a mental health professional? Want to join a support group? Maybe these resources can help.

So you've read about your options - both for medication and talk therapy, and a few other things you can do on your own. What do you do now?

Not sure where to start with treatment?

Now, you make the call. You don't need to have your whole treatment figured out to get started. Your doctor and/or mental health professional will play a big part in making a plan.

If it feels like a lot to take on, just try to make it through step one: Call your doctor. That's all you need to think about right now. After that, you'll focus on getting to your appointment. Take it one day at a time. And don't get discouraged. We know you can do this.

Here are a few resources that might be helpful as you take your first steps into treatment.

Worried you might hurt yourself?

Talk to someone instead! Call the national suicide prevention lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 (1-833-456-4566 in Canada) or chat online at suicidepreventionlifeline.org. Someone is waiting to talk to you.

Looking for a Therapist?

The registry at findtreatment.samhsa.gov is a good place to start. Ask your doctor and health insurance provider for suggestions. The resources at www.nimh.nih.gov might help, as well.

Not sure how to pay for your treatment?

The US federal government offers a directory of low or no-cost clinics where you can find affordable health care. To find a clinic near you, please visit findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov/Search_HCC.aspx.

Interested in joining a support group?

Many professional, consumer, advocacy, and service-related organizations can connect you with mental health support groups. Remember that a support group is not a replacement for treatment with a doctor or mental health professional, but the added

If it feels like a lot to take on, just try to make it through step one: Call your doctor. That's all you need to think about right now. After that, you'll focus on getting to your appointment. Take it one day at a time. Don't get discouraged. We know you can do this.

encouragement can be helpful. You can go to nimh.nih.gov/outreach/partnership-program/outreach-partners.shtml, for a list of NIMH Outreach Partners. They may be able to connect you with mental health or depression support groups.

Online support groups can also be helpful, but be careful about which groups you join. Make sure the group is affiliated with a reputable health organization, moderated professionally, and maintains your anonymity.

Want to find other people who care?

The National Alliance on Mental Illness, or NAMI, has almost 1,000 different local chapters across the United States. Many NAMI affiliates offer an array of free support and education programs. Find a NAMI chapter near you by going to nami.org/Find-Your-Local-NAMI.

Hoping to learn more about treatment?

Visit the www.nimh.nih.gov, to explore the latest research, and find the most recently approved treatment options on the FDA website, www.fda.gov.

You have a lot of treatment options, and that's a good thing. Don't give up. With time and patience, you and your doctor or therapist will find what works for you. And in the meantime, know that you're not alone.

Along with your treatment, there are things you can do on your own to start feeling better



To read more booklets in this series, turn to the back cover. Photo: Saletomic on Dreamstime.

Want to go beyond treatment and try more things? The other booklets in this series might be helpful.

even faster. Booklets five, six, and seven in this series will give you some ideas. Self-help intervention works well when paired with meds or therapy, if your doctor recommends those to you.

Please remember, though, that the tips in these booklets don't replace treatment with a doctor or mental health professional. We love you, but we're so far away.

Our advice is always an "and" not an "or." Use only what is helpful. Not everything will work for every person, and that's just fine.

Want to read more of these booklets?

There are seven in the series. To read more, please visit [OneTeamMentalHealth.org](https://www.oneteammentalhealth.org), or write to us at: AdventSource, ATTN: Mental Health Project, 5120 Prescott Ave, Lincoln, NE, 68506.

Youth and Young Adult Ministries
North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists
Mental Health Series: Issue 04 - Getting Help
Jonathan Betlinski, MD; Rachel Scribner, MA; Gary Parks, MDiv

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