

# Coping with Heart Disease

You may have physical, mental and emotional effects as you deal with heart disease. Dealing with these normal responses takes different ways of coping.

Coping is not a negative word! We “cope” everyday. There is no “one way” to cope, but our goal in this class is to recognize what ways may help you!

## Stress management

Stress is the response to a perceived demand, internal or external, on our mind, body, or emotions.

### Signs of stress:

- Muscle tension
- Racing heart
- Headache
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Thought distortions or “should” statements, such as “I should be able to do more”

### Ways to cope with stress:

- Exercise!
- Deep breathing
- Yoga
- Journaling
- Talking with others
- Balance positive and negative thoughts - your “self talk”
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Guided imagery



## Self-talk

- The habitual things we say to ourselves and the way we think of ourselves.
- Negative self-talk can make chronic conditions seem like an uphill battle with new obstacles to overcome each day
- Work to transition negative thought to positive thoughts. Think of “The Engine That Could”: I think I can; I think I can.
  - Negative thought: “My future frightens me. My life will never be the same”
  - Positive thought: “I’m still the same person I’ve always been. I can cope.”

## Progressive muscle relaxation

- Some people cannot relax due to muscle tension.
- Alternate tensing and relaxing the different muscle groups throughout the body, starting in the feet and moving to head.
- Become fully aware of each muscle and changes in sensations as you let go of the tension and relax.

## Guided imagery

- It’s like a guided daydream, where you transport yourself to another time and place, picturing yourself in a peaceful, relaxing environment.
- It is best used for fatigue and relaxation.
- Think of a time and place where you felt safe and comfortable. Imagine those surroundings, sights, smells and sounds. Bring as much of that experience back into the here and now as possible.
- For free guided imagery recordings, visit <https://wexnermedical.osu.edu/integrative-complementary-medicine/guided-imagery>.

## Depression

Unhappy feelings or depression often occur with chronic illness. These feelings are part of the normal ups and downs that all paths have.

Although everyone feels down sometimes, signs of depression can linger and interfere with your ability to live your life and cope with stressors.

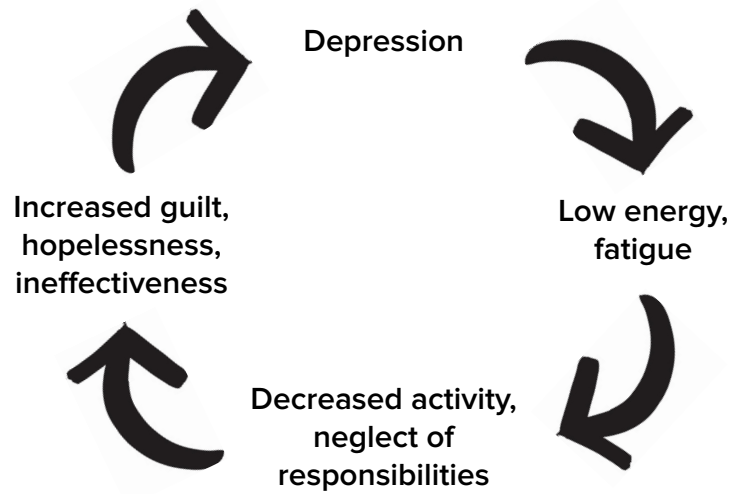
Recognizing you are depressed is the first step toward feeling better.

### Signs of depression:

- Loss of interest
- Isolation withdrawal
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Increased or decreased appetite
- Unintentional weight loss or gain
- Low energy or fatigue
- Confusion or lack of concentration

## The depression cycle:

Here is how one sign of depression, low energy or fatigue, can start the depression cycle. It can be hard to cope and manage your depression once you find yourself in the depression cycle.

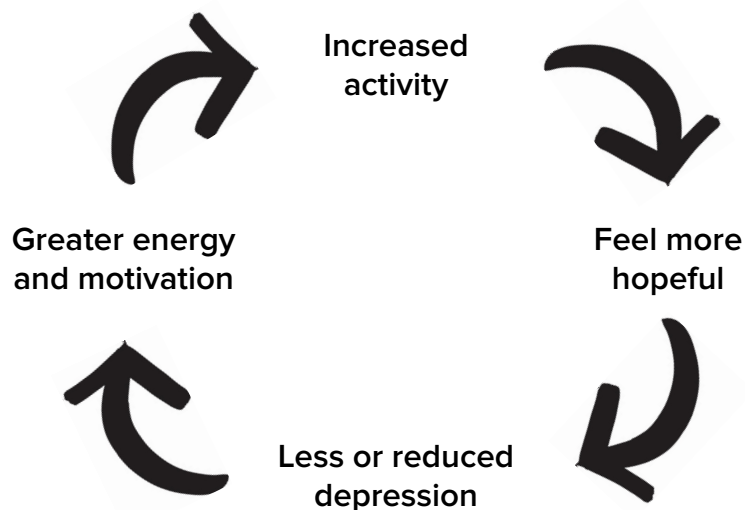


## Coping methods:

- Contact with others - call a friend or family member
- Plan ahead for a special event
- Get out of the house
- Do something nice for yourself
- Exercise!

## Reversing the depression cycle:

Here is how one coping method, exercise, can help get you out of the depression cycle and feeling better!



## Dealing with anger, fear and frustration

These feelings are among the most common responses to chronic illness.

Health is very important to us. When we have a chronic illness, we often feel a loss of control and worry about the future.

These feelings and emotions are normal and happen to almost everyone.



## Depression resources

Not all depression can be handled through self-management. Sometimes depression is severe and needs professional treatment. Talk to a member of your care team for a referral for counseling or call one of the resources below.

- **Ohio State Harding Hospital Outpatient Services:** 614-293-9600

Provides treatment of mental health issues, including:

- Adjustment disorder (a group of symptoms, such as stress, feeling sad or hopeless, and physical symptoms that occur after a stressful life event)
- Anxiety disorders, such as panic attacks, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Depression

- **Ohio State's Couple and Family Therapy Clinic:** 614-247-7883

The clinic can help you adjust to lifestyle changes, manage stress and connect with resources of support.

- **Beating the Blues US,** [www.beatingthebluesus.com](http://www.beatingthebluesus.com)

A self-help, online treatment program for depression using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. The program consists of 8 weekly online treatment sessions of 50 minutes.

- **Ohio State Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for Faculty, Staff and Their Families**

Offers tools and resources to help address complex issues that affect your mental and emotional well-being. EAP services are also available to benefits-eligible faculty and staff's immediate families, members of their household, parents and parents-in-laws.

For more information, visit <https://osuhealthplan.com/eap> or call 1-800-678-6265 for live, immediate assistance 24/7.

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**Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.**

For more health information, go to [patienteducation.osumc.edu](http://patienteducation.osumc.edu) or contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).