

Week 1/Video 4: Basic Self-Care - Sleep & Exercise

Thank you for taking the time to try that technique- Were you able to identify a time when you felt depressed, including the relevant symptoms? It might not always be easy to complete the tool and that's okay. We will continue to practice this technique over time and learn from it what we can.

You may notice that we spent a lot of time today focusing on understanding the experience of depression and that is because slowing ourselves down to better understand what we are feeling is powerful. Knowing what's going on creates a better sense of control and provides a step towards acting with intention in managing symptoms of depression.

To wrap up today's session, let's talk about importance of basic, foundational self-care as it relates to managing depressive symptoms.

Self-care includes the various ways that we look after ourselves physically, emotionally, and mentally. While self-care can look different from person to person, there are some types that we recommend for everyone: good sleep, physical activity, and attending to your own nutritional needs. These are the foundation of basic physical and mental health and, without this foundation, you may find you're more vulnerable to depressive symptoms.

Let's briefly discuss each:

We'll start by talking about sleep. Research shows that humans need 7-8 hours of sleep consistently every night in order to be well- rested and perform optimally. While we sleep, our brain is hard at work forming pathways for learning and consolidating information we've taken in that day. Sleep also helps regulate our mood and weight.

While it may be common in college to pull all-nighters, anything less than the 7-8 hours a night consistently will impact your functioning. And your brain remembers the sleep you lost and creates a sleep debt account. Sleep deprivation will impact your mood, your energy, your grades, your ability to focus and your ability to concentrate in class and on homework. Even 1 or 2 hours of sleep deprivation a night can have an impact on your brain. Similarly, research shows that sleeping too much, which can often happen when we are depressed, increases our risk of diabetes, headaches, and can exacerbate symptoms of depression.

In addition to good sleep, research has shown that exercise is important in combating symptoms of depression. Exercise leads to positive changes, both short and long term. In the short term, exercise releases endorphins, which are powerful chemicals in your brain that can improve mood, energy levels, and concentration, often leading to feelings of euphoria. Over time, consistent exercise promotes long- term changes in the brain,

resulting in improved memory, coping, cognitive functioning, mood, and self-esteem. Some people experience a sense of calm and happiness after a good hike or improved concentration after they went for a swim.

Nutrition is also an important aspect of managing depression. When experiencing depression, many people notice changes to their appetites or eating patterns. Research shows that individuals experiencing depression often have deficiencies in vitamins (like B6, Thiamine) and minerals (calcium, iron) that are linked to mood and present in a well-balanced diet.

Recommendations on appropriate nutrition are outside the scope of this webinar series. However, we do recommend that individuals experiencing depression focus on staying hydrated and working towards a balanced diet. We also encourage students to speak with medical providers about their vitamin and mineral levels and/or to follow-up with a Registered Dietician, where you can obtain more personalized feedback on food and nutrition. Health Services here at Cal Poly is a great place to start with these questions.

Let's review the Sleep Hygiene and Exercise Tips worksheet on page 10 in your workbook to consider ways to improve your sleep hygiene and to review some tips for exercise.

As you review this, please pick one thing from each of these lists that you are going to do for the next week. Go ahead and circle, star, asterisk or highlight it. Remember when choosing exercise options to attend to your level of physical fitness and any injuries that you may have. We also encourage you to follow up with a physician if you have any exercise concerns. Try to choose something that seems doable, enjoyable (even if it's hard to get started), and that presents a low level of obstacles to you being consistent in moving your body. Take a moment to review before we discuss Nutrition in the next video.