



# THE INSTITUTE FOR HEALTHY FAMILIES OF NORTH TEXAS

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## **Depressed, Dejected and Down in the Dumps?**

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It is no wonder so many people are depressed because of lost jobs, reduced income, mounting debt, family stressors, and health issues in the current economy. Happiness and a life well lived is a choice in spite of economic woes. Here are some ideas to help you deal with depression, anxiety and/or stress. You may also need to follow a treatment plan designed by a medical doctor for medications and talk therapy with a licensed therapist.

1. Make some lasting **Life Style** changes
  - a. Exercise regularly (consider yoga, swimming, walking, running, tennis, golf)
  - b. Enjoy the companionship of a pet
  - c. Seek out family and friends for human companionship
  - d. Select classical or acoustic guitar music for easy listening
  - e. Enjoy a healthy diet and avoid fatty and processed foods
  - f. Avoid alcohol and sedatives, unless prescribed by your doctor
  - g. Get plenty of sleep and rest
  - h. Join a support group or volunteer for a non-profit organization
  - j. Ask your doctor about supplemental vitamins such as Vitamins D, B and Folic Acid.
2. Engage in **Stress Reduction** activities
  - a. Identify stressors
  - b. Learn to "let go" of those things you cannot change, but change those things that you can
  - c. Break the cycle--when you feel anxious, change your activity
  - d. Stick to your medical and/or counseling treatment plan
  - e. Socialize often with family and friends by inviting them to dinner or to watch a ball game
  - f. Reconnect with your church or synagogue
  - g. Engage in creative activities
    - 1) Keep a gratitude journal
    - 2) Prioritize your life to manage time and energy
    - 3) Pursue a hobby or collection, or take a continuing education class
    - 4) Listen to good music or attend a live theater production
    - 5) Paint, draw or try pottery-making or sculpture
    - 6) Take photos of children, nature or wildlife
    - 7) Spend time outdoors
3. Turn around negative thoughts with **Positive Thinking** exercises to deal with stressors
  - a. Identify at least one stressor that makes you feel anxious
  - b. Describe how that stressor makes you feel and write it down
  - c. Turn it around and describe how you would like to feel and write it down
  - d. Think of at least one positive thing about your stressor and write it down
  - e. Focus how the stressor has motivated you to make changes in your life
4. Try **Visualization** exercises:
  - a. Visualize or imagine using your five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste and smell) to reduce stress by recalling a beautiful place you have seen; a melody or hymn you have heard; the feel of soft fur, fleece or velvet; the taste of fresh fruit or a fresh vegetable; and the smell of a pleasant fragrance.
  - b. Imaginary Massage: Start at the top of your head and work down to the toes or start with the shoulders and work down to the fingertips.
  - c. Remind yourself to "live in the moment"—today is all we are promised, so live one day at a time!

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