



FREE GUIDE • DEPRESSION SUPPORT

When everything feels heavy. *Small steps still count.*

A gentle toolkit for the days depression makes everything harder. What it can look like, why small steps matter, and a kinder way to speak to yourself while you find support.

PREPARED BY

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01

BEFORE THE TOOLS

More than *sadness*.

Depression is not always sadness. Sometimes it is flatness.

Going through the motions while nothing feels quite real.

Maybe the things that used to bring you joy don't reach you anymore. Maybe you're watching your own life from behind glass, or carrying a heaviness you can't quite explain. Not dramatic enough, the voice says, to justify help. But constant enough that it's wearing you down.

This toolkit is a place to start. Not a cure, and not a list of things you're failing to do. Just a clearer picture of what depression can look like, a handful of small, doable steps, and a gentler way to speak to yourself along the way.

IF YOU NEED SUPPORT RIGHT NOW

Some days are heavier than a printout can hold. If that is today, please reach for one of these instead.

Call or text **9-8-8** (Suicide Crisis Helpline, available 24/7).

Call **ConnexOntario at 1-866-531-2600** for mental health services in Ontario.

If you are in immediate danger, call **9-1-1**.

A suggestion before you begin: read this guide one page at a time, on whatever day each page fits.

Nothing here is homework. If all you do today is read, that counts.

02

A CLEARER PICTURE

What depression can look like, *day to day.*

From the outside, your life might look fine. You're showing up, answering messages, keeping things running. Inside, there can be a flatness that won't go away. Depression shows up differently for different people, but it often touches the same parts of a day.

PART OF THE DAY WHAT DEPRESSION CAN FEEL LIKE

Mood	Low, empty, or flat most of the day, more days than not, for weeks at a time
Interest	Things you used to enjoy, hobbies, people, even food, don't bring much anymore
Energy	A bone-deep tiredness sleep doesn't fix. Small tasks take enormous effort
Connection	Cancelling plans, pulling away from people, more time alone than usual
Thinking	A fog that won't clear. Hard to focus, hard to decide, easy to blame yourself
Body	Sleeping too much or too little. Eating more or less than usual. Feeling off

Sadness comes and goes with life events. Depression lingers, and it leans on your energy, sleep, appetite, and ability to enjoy things. If you've been wondering whether what you feel is "bad enough" to count, that question itself is worth taking seriously.

WORTH SAYING PLAINLY

This isn't laziness, and it isn't a character flaw. Depression also lies. It tells you nothing will help, that you should be able to handle this, that you're a burden. Those aren't truths. They're symptoms.

03

WHY SMALL COUNTS

Small steps, *on purpose*.

Depression pulls you inward. The less you do, the heavier doing becomes, and the heavier it becomes, the less you do. Nobody chooses that loop. It builds quietly, one cancelled plan and one skipped meal at a time.

Small steps are how the loop starts to loosen. Not big resolutions, and not forced positivity. A step so small it almost feels silly, taken on purpose, can do more than the perfect routine you never start. For many people, doing comes a little before feeling like it, not after.

- i. **Pick something tiny.** Smaller than feels worthwhile. Opening the curtains is a real step.
- ii. **Cut it in half anyway.** If a walk feels like too much, make it the front door and back.
- iii. **Do it without grading yourself.** The step is the win. Speed and polish don't matter here.
- iv. **Notice that you did it.** One quiet acknowledgement: that was hard, and I did it.

WHEN TO USE THIS

Small steps suit the mornings when getting up feels like a wall, and the evenings when the couch has held you for hours. You're not trying to fix the day. You're reminding your body, gently, that it can still move.

04

A MENU, NOT A TO-DO LIST

Tiny steps for *heavy days*.

Different days leave you with different amounts to work with. Meet the day where it is, and pick from the row that matches. Nothing on this page is required. It's a menu, not a measuring stick.

ON A DAY WHEN
YOU HAVE

STEPS THAT COUNT

Almost nothing

Getting through

Sit up. Open the curtains. Drink a glass of water. Reply to one message, even with three words.

A little

Moving gently

Wash your face or shower. Step outside for two minutes. Eat something simple. Change out of the clothes you slept in.

A bit more

Building

Walk to the corner and back. Call or see someone who is easy to be around. Clear one small surface. Make one simple meal.

The point is not productivity. A glass of water won't fix depression, and it isn't meant to. Each small step is a quiet message to yourself: I'm still here, and I'm still on my own side.

IF A STEP DOESN'T HAPPEN

Then it doesn't happen, and that is information, not failure. Shrink the step and try again tomorrow. On the hardest days, resting without punishing yourself for resting is itself a step.

05

THE INNER VOICE

Self-compassion over *self-criticism*.

Depression usually arrives with a narrator. You should be grateful. You should be stronger. Everyone else manages. The voice sounds like truth because it never stops, but listen closely and it only ever says one thing: you are the problem.

You can't argue that voice into silence, and you don't have to. The practice is quieter than that. You learn to notice it, question it, and answer it with something kinder that is still true.

- i. **Notice the sentence.** Catch the exact words: "I'm useless." "I'm a burden." "I should be over this by now."
- ii. **Ask one question.** Would I say this, in these words, to someone I love who was struggling?
- iii. **Offer a truer sentence.** Not forced cheer. Something honest and kind: "This is hard, and I'm doing what I can today."
- iv. **Let it be enough.** You don't have to believe the kind sentence fully. Saying it is the practice.

WHAT SELF-COMPASSION IS NOT

It isn't letting yourself off the hook, and it isn't pretending things are fine. It's offering yourself the same steadiness you would offer a friend, so you have something to stand on while you heal.

06

MORE SUPPORT

When therapy *helps*.

You don't need to hit rock bottom before you deserve help. If several of these have been true for a few weeks or more, it's worth a conversation with someone trained to help:

- ☐ The heaviness is there most days, and it isn't lifting
- ☐ Things you used to enjoy don't reach you anymore
- ☐ You're pulling away from the people who matter to you
- ☐ You're exhausted no matter how much you sleep
- ☐ The harsh inner voice is winning most days

Therapy for depression isn't about performing, and you don't need to know what to say when you arrive. A therapist helps you understand what's underneath the heaviness, interrupt the pull inward, and rebuild slowly, with small, real steps rather than forced positivity. Virtual sessions can help on the days when leaving the house feels like too much.

A GENTLE WORD BEFORE YOU GO

If the steps in this toolkit feel out of reach right now, that is not a failure on your part. It is a sign you deserve more support than a printout can offer, and that kind of support exists.

YOUR NEXT STEP

You deserve more *than getting by.*

When you're ready, working with a therapist on what's underneath the heaviness can happen gently, and at your pace. The next step is a free 15-minute consultation. Answer a few questions, get matched with the therapist who fits your situation, and pick a time that works. No obligation, no pressure, and nothing to pay.

Get matched & book your free consultation

gracewaywellness.com/book/free-consultation · about 90 seconds

Meet our therapists first

gracewaywellness.com/our-team

Prefer to reach out directly?

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