

7. Social Support

When people are depressed, they often don't want to socialize. They begin isolating themselves from people they used to enjoy spending time with such as family and friends. When you avoid people it is easy to become more depressed. This leads to doing even fewer things with others and the cycle continues.

Getting started

One way to gain more pleasure from social situations is to make sure you are doing something you really enjoy. You will be more likely to be in a good mood and friendlier to others if you are doing pleasurable activities such as playing or watching sports, cooking, participating in an outdoors club, getting involved in spiritual groups, joining a volunteer group or taking a class. Keep in mind that antidepressant medication may increase your energy and decrease your irritability, so taking medication could improve the time you spend with others.

In the box below, list the activities you could do with other people that will increase your social interaction and support.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____

Who should I reach out to?

It is very important to have the support of family and friends when you are suffering from depression. Who you speak to about your depression is an individual decision. Some people know that their family/friends will be supportive and others fear they will be judged negatively. It is worth thinking this through or talking with your physician or therapist about whom to tell. Regardless, it is important to create a social support system for

yourself. This may be limited to professionals but that is ok. MDOCC care managers are available to talk with you and provide support during your treatment.

Should I tell people at work?

This is a difficult question to answer. Again it varies on the individual circumstances. Despite many advances in the field of psychiatry there is still stigma related to the illness of depression. If you are uncertain about this, talk to your physician or therapist.

Your Support System

Even though it will be hard at first, work to strengthen your social support system. *Social support system* refers to the people in your life (family, friends, coworkers, neighbors and acquaintances) with whom you feel comfortable with and you find supportive and helpful. Having a strong support system will help you during tough situations. People who are part of your support system can help you challenge your negative thinking and provide encouragement. Keep in mind you should probably decrease your contact with people who criticize and who regularly bring you down or cause you stress.

In the box below, list the people who are in your Social Support System

<u>NAME</u>	<u>PHONE #</u>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____

Information on Social Support was obtained from The Depression Helpbook by Wayne Katon, M.D., Evette Ludman, Ph.D. and Gregory Simon, M.D., M.P.H.

Disclaimer: This written information is not intended as a substitute for medical or mental health care advice. Please be sure to discuss any questions or concerns you may have with a professional person.

