

# Depression: Am I Getting Better?

After making the important step of seeking treatment for depression and making changes in your life, you may be wondering, “Am I getting better”? Improvement is typically gradual, much like a cloud that is slowly dissipating. As the cloud thins, you are able to see things around you more clearly. While it can be easy to dwell on the negative aspects of depression, a more optimistic approach is to focus on your improvements. Identifying areas in your life that have improved can help gauge your recovery.

## **Signs of Progress:**

Signs of improvement can include a reduction in the number of situations and feelings that were upsetting in the past. The intensity level of the physical and or mental responses are likely no longer as severe as they were before as well. As an example: you may be noticing improved communication with a coworker who you considered difficult to talk to before treatment was started. You may also think about situations that have brought about increased anxiety for you in the past. Do these situations continue to elicit tension for you? Has your outlook made it easier to deal with these situations?

Other signs of improvement can include an:

- improvement in use of positive thinking
- increase in communication with family and friends
- increase in daily activities (work and family life)
- decrease in feelings of shame and insecurity
- reduction in melancholy feelings
- increase in energy levels
- improvement in self-esteem

It is important to know that getting better from depression will rarely be a straight course to recovery. In other words, you will experience many “ups and downs” that may seem like your treatment isn’t working fast enough or not at all. Understanding that there will be “good days” and “bad days” during your recovery is important. Recognize that you can have good days is part of the recovery process and you should reward yourself in your progress.

## **Setting Successful Goals:**

The treatment goals for depression work toward positive changes in your thinking patterns and feelings. These changes will allow you to experience the full range of human emotions without feeling overwhelmed. Setting your goals to find successful change will start with your therapist. Identifying the positives and negatives concerning how you look at life events and situations is the start. Start out with small goals and build up to larger life changing goals.

Being patient in your recovery is important. If you have been dealing with depression, remember that once you start feeling better you will be able to see your situation in a clearer fashion. As you recognize your improved mood, you may realize that the depression has caused some damage in your work and home life. Your therapist and family/friends will be very important at this point. To be able to identify situations of concern and make the appropriate changes will help rebuild your life situation. Breaking down issues (such as work life, social life, and self-esteem concerns) into smaller steps will help move you into your long-term goals for recovery. As you gradually get better, remember the importance of accepting change and staying motivated to reach your goals.

## **Support System:**

Communicating your progress and feelings is another important step in your recovery from depression. Working on identifying the people that can help you will be the first step. Your doctor and therapist will be key members of your support system. If you are taking medications, you will need to communicate how you feel you are adapting and changing. Some of the medications can take weeks to take full effect and some may

have side effects. Identifying possible symptoms and changes can help your doctor assess if your medications are working or if they need to be adjusted.

Identifying friends and family members who you trust can also be very helpful. The recovery process can be slow, and as mentioned earlier, you will start to see your life in clearer terms. It's a good idea to have regular contact with trusted friends and family to help you identify concerning behavior patterns that you may not be able to see early in your recovery. Even more importantly, they are good company and can reaffirm positive steps.

While you have been provided with some ways to gauge your improvement, it is important to discuss your thoughts with your doctor and therapist. If you have concerns about medications and/or how long you will be on your medications, please talk with your doctor. Since everyone responds differently to medications, your doctor will help you with your individual situation.

As you continue the process of recovery, remember to give yourself credit for the positive changes you've made in your life. You'll likely find the positive steps that you identify - no matter how small - lead to the fulfillment of getting your life "back on track" and under your control.

Any reference to the products, services, information or websites of third parties is provided for informational purposes only and should not be construed as an endorsement by Cigna of the products, services, information, or websites of such third parties. Cigna neither reviews nor controls the content and accuracy of these references or websites, and therefore will not be responsible for their content or accuracy.

All Cigna products and services are provided exclusively by or through operating subsidiaries of Cigna Corporation, including Cigna Health and Life Insurance Company, Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Evernorth Care Solutions, Inc., Evernorth Behavioral Health, Inc., and HMO or service company subsidiaries of Cigna Health Corporation. The Cigna name, logo, and other Cigna marks are owned by Cigna Intellectual Property, Inc.

© Cigna. Some content provided under license.