

Treatments for Depression – An Overview

Many worthwhile and effective treatments are available for fighting depression. These can be helpful individually; they tend to be even more helpful when several are drawn together in an integrative way. Here are some of the most established treatments – what they consist of; pros and cons; overall effectiveness.

TREATMENT TYPE:	DESCRIPTION:	PRO'S:	CON'S:	EFFECTIVENESS:
Cognitive Therapy	Trains clients to recognize and replace negative thoughts.	Exceptionally well supported by research; builds self-efficacy.	Takes time and effort to learn; requires discipline and awareness.	Very effective, especially longterm
Behavior Therapy	Trains clients to recognize and replace dysfunctional behaviors.	Builds strength, resilience, competence, and self-confidence.	Takes time and effort to master; requires changing established habits.	Very effective, especially longterm
CBT (Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy)	Combines the benefits of cognitive and behavioral skills.	Increases effectiveness further by blending two powerful approaches.	Double set of skills to learn and master; requires ongoing discipline and effort.	Exceptionally effective; top-rated
Exercise As Treatment	Prescribes regular exercise as mood-lifting intervention.	Elevated mood; improved health, fitness, and self-confidence.	Requires effort and a regular allotment of time.	Highly effective, short and longterm
Lifestyle Adjustment	Prescribes healthy eating, improved sleep patterns, etc.	Improves overall mental and physical health; increases resilience.	Requires giving up pleasurable habits: junk food/drink; sleeping in late, etc.	Effective; helps prevent relapse
Interpersonal Skills Training	Teaches skills for building and maintaining relationships.	Produces more capacity for closeness, trust, support, and communication.	Full effectiveness requires others' positive participation.	Effective and helpful
Assertiveness Training	Teaches skills for standing up for oneself in a nonaggressive way.	Develops more self confidence and power in relationships.	Requires effort and courage to implement skills.	Effective and helpful
DBT (Dialectical Behavior Therapy)	Well-established skills training for managing intense emotions.	Well supported for bipolar disorder, BPD, etc; Improves coping skills.	Still fairly new treatment for depression; requires effort/learning.	Breakthrough for high-intensity folks
Mindfulness / Meditation	Draws on Eastern philosophies to promote peaceful awareness	Promotes relaxation, appreciation, serenity.	Still fairly new treatment for depression; requires learning/time.	Still new; some rate it very highly.
Grief Therapy	Promotes talking through impact of serious loss.	Helps resolve grief triggers, promotes moving on to a new phase of life.	Usually insufficient by itself to resolve depression; not relevant to everyone.	Can be a helpful adjunct treatment
Trauma Resolution Work	Promotes talking through past traumas and difficulties.	Done well, can help put a painful past behind, and promotes moving on.	Done poorly, can get clients even more stuck and distressed by past events.	Mixed results, positive/negative.
Freudian Psychoanalysis	Longterm, intensive analysis of childhood events, dreams, etc.	Can expand insight, self-awareness, and awareness of family problems.	No coping skills training; can become "the blame game;" increase distress	At best, a limited adjunct treatment
Antidepressant Medication	Chemical management of depressive symptoms.	Can reduce intensity of symptoms such as fatigue, crying, overwhelm.	Growing list of negative side effects, including suicidality; financial costs.	At best, short-term symptom reduction
Other Psychotropic Medications	Anti-psychotics, mood stabilizers, anti-anxiety pills, etc.	Can decrease intensity of negative moods and other symptoms.	Can reduce overall responsiveness; serious side effects; financial costs.	Significant risks; try other methods first