

Depression and Suicide Risk: A Non-Linear Journey

Before you read: This content talks about suicide prevention. Some linked sources may include sensitive topics. Our goal is to raise awareness, promote prevention and care for readers' well-being.

Living with depression can feel like a winding road. Some days feel lighter. Other days feel heavy and slow. This up-and-down pattern is common. It does not mean you are failing or going backward. It means you are human.

Depression is not a straight line from “sad” to “better.” Many people move between low points and brief highs. Learning to expect these shifts can reduce fear and shame. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, symptoms can change over time and vary by person, even with treatment. That is normal and okay.

Progress Does Not Mean “Cured”

Progress with depression often looks different than people expect. It may not mean that hard thoughts go away forever. Instead, progress can mean learning how to live alongside them. You may notice thoughts without acting on them. You may recover more quickly after a bad day. These are real gains.

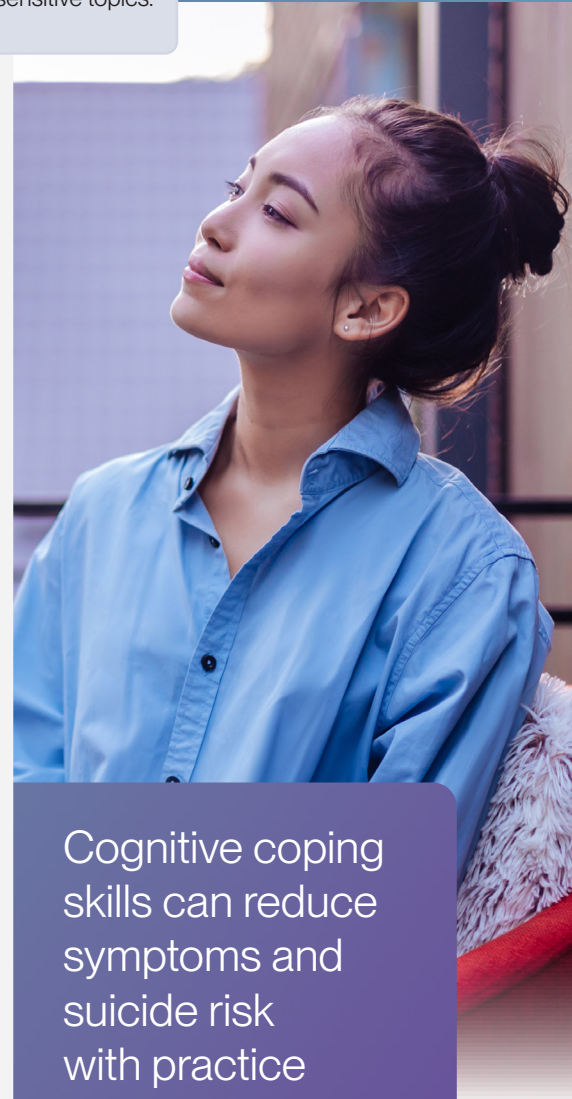
The American Psychiatric Association explains that treatment aims to reduce symptoms and improve daily life, not erase every difficult feeling. Many people learn skills that help them respond differently to distress, even when thoughts return.

Understanding Suicide Risk

Depression can raise suicide risk, but risk is not constant. Like moods, risk can rise and fall. Feeling better one day does not erase risk forever. Feeling worse does not mean harm will happen. Noticing changes early and using supports can help keep you safe.

If you ever feel at risk of harming yourself, reach out for help right away. You deserve support. The 988 Lifeline provides immediate, 24/7 crisis support. The SAMHSA National Helpline (1-800-662-HELP) can also provide treatment referral and resources.

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Cognitive coping skills can reduce symptoms and suicide risk with practice and support.

Beck Institute

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Coping with Intrusive Thoughts in the Moment

Intrusive thoughts can feel sudden and loud. They do not define you. Try these simple tools to get through the moment:

- Name the thought.** Say, “This is a depression thought.” Naming can create space.
- Ground your body.** Slow breathing, drinking cold water or placing your feet on the floor can reduce intensity.
- Delay action.** Make a rule to wait 10 minutes before responding. Intensity often fades.
- Reach out.** Text or call someone you trust, even if you do not know what to say. .

These skills are commonly used in evidence-based therapies to lower emotional distress and improve safety.

Breaking Negative Thought Patterns

Depression often repeats the same negative messages. Over time, you can learn to weaken their hold.

- Check for facts.** Ask, “What is the evidence for and against this thought?”
- Use kinder language.** Replace “I always mess up” with “I am struggling right now.”
- Focus on actions.** Small steps like showering or stepping outside can shift mood, even if thoughts stay stuck.
- Practice often.** Change comes from repetition, not perfection.

Cognitive coping skills can reduce symptoms and suicide risk when practiced with support (Beck Institute).

Hope on a Changing Path

You do not have to feel hopeful all the time to keep going. Learning to ride the highs and lows is part of recovery. With the right tools, support and health care, many people find a steadier life, even with ongoing symptoms. If today is hard, you are not alone. If today is lighter, hold onto that, too. Both belong on this journey.

#StopSuicide

If someone is in crisis, encourage them to call the **Suicide and Crisis Lifeline** at 988 or 800-273-8255. Help is free, private and available all day, every day.

Reviewed by Clinical Consultant, LMHC.

Call 911 if someone is in immediate danger or a life-threatening emergency requiring immediate physical intervention. If you or someone you know is struggling emotionally, feeling overwhelmed, anxious, hopeless, in crisis, or simply needs someone to talk to, call or text 988 for free, confidential support 24/7. The 988 Lifeline is available to anyone in the United States or U.S. territories. People do not have to be suicidal or in immediate danger to call or text 988. There is also a chat feature available on 988lifeline.org. Lucet members can contact us to connect with free resources and find care.