

Getting Started Exercising when You're Anxious or Depressed

Source: [HelpGuide.org](https://www.helpguide.org)

Many of us find it hard enough to motivate ourselves to exercise at the best of times. When we feel depressed, anxious, stressed or have other mental or emotional problems, it can seem doubly difficult. This is especially true of depression and anxiety, which can leave you feeling trapped in a catch-22 situation. You know exercise will make you feel better, but depression has robbed you of the energy and motivation you need to work out, or your social anxiety means you can't bear the thought of being seen at an exercise class or running through the park. So, what can you do?

It's okay to start small. In fact, it's smart.

When you're under the cloud of an emotional disorder and haven't exercised for a long time, setting extravagant goals like completing a marathon or working out for an hour every morning will only leave you more despondent if you fall short. Better to set achievable goals and build up from there.

Schedule your workout at the time of day when your energy is highest.

You may want to exercise first thing in the morning before work or school, at lunchtime before the mid-afternoon lull hits, or for longer sessions over the weekend. If depression or anxiety has you feeling tired and unmotivated all day long, try dancing to some music or simply going for a walk. Even a short, 15-minute walk can help clear your mind, improve your mood, and boost your energy level. As you move and start to feel a little better, you'll experience a greater sense of control over your well-being. You may even feel energized enough to exercise more vigorously—by walking further, breaking into a run, or adding a bike ride, for example.