Coping With the Exhaustion and Fatigue That Comes With Depression

by NIKKI THOMPSON

Coping With Depression and Fatigue

Living with depression is an everyday struggle. Getting through your daily routine can be hard enough as it is, but more so if you are trying to cope with fatigue.

Why Does Depression Cause Fatigue?

Depression and fatigue often go hand-in-hand, as fatigue is a common symptom of depression and can make you feel worse if you do not find a way to tackle the problem. You may believe that your lack of sleep, energy, and motivation is just a part of depression that will pass over time. However, these things may be part of a bigger issue, which is known as fatigue. If left untreated this problem may become more severe and more difficult to treat as it progresses.

The combination of depression and fatigue can decrease your concentration, motivation and ability to do many every day simple tasks, leading to issues with work, education and even personal relationships. It may be that you do not even realize that fatigue is part of the problem at hand.

You may find it hard to keep up at work, leading to higher levels of stress or negative emotions. Studying may also become harder and more intense if you lack the necessary concentration or motivation to attend classes, hand in assignments on time and revise for your exams.

Light exercise and daily tasks may become the most daunting part of your day. These examples of fatigue work alongside depression and can decrease your progress in recovery and treatments if left unacknowledged.

My Personal Experience With Fatigue and Depression

From personal experience, I did not realize fatigue affected me and that depression alone was the source of my issues whilst studying at university.

I found it difficult to concentrate on essays, found myself very tired and exhausted just by going to the shop or a class and was late quite often to work, lectures and social events because of this. It was not until these occurrences were pointed out to me by a friend that I noticed it may not just be my depression causing these problems.

It is important to first acknowledge that there may be something interfering with your sleep, body and mind, as well as depression and to tackle the cause before it becomes a bigger issue.

Understanding the Symptoms of Fatigue

Studies have shown that there is a strong correlation between people diagnosed with depression and fatigue. The

most common symptoms said to be impaired concentration, irritability and reduced productivity. Other symptoms may include:

- Low energy/tiredness
- Increased effort to do physical tasks
- General weakness
- Decreased mental endurance
- Slow thinking
- Feeling overwhelmed, bored or low

How Can Depression and Fatigue Be Treated?

It is important to seek treatment for fatigue, even if you believe it is not a problem or that receiving help for your depression alone can satisfy this.

The first step would be to speak to someone you can confide in, or if you feel comfortable enough to go straight to your doctor. Remember to not be afraid to be open and tell he/she everything you experience so they can find the best form of treatment for you.

If you have a therapist it would also be a good idea to inform them as well. They can help you form strategies to help you with your day-to-day life and give suggestions and ideas on how to help you battle fatigue as well as depression.

Remember, communication is key so do not be afraid to tell them anything you feel is a problem for you. Once you start and continue with the correct treatment and plans, you will begin to notice a significant difference in how you feel, not just mentally but also physically.

Simple Strategies for Fighting Back Against Fatigue and Depression

There are many things you can do by yourself or with the help of a therapist to combat fatigue alongside depression. Even small tasks throughout the day may not seem like much but will make a huge difference in coping with these symptoms. A few examples are:

- **Make a to-do list of small, yet productive tasks to keep you busy and out of bed throughout your day:** These could even be just going to the shop to buy groceries, light cleaning, light studying sessions or revision or just taking time out to pamper or treat yourself.
- **Partake in light exercise:** This could be doing a few minutes of an exercise video in your home, yoga, a stroll in your local park or even around your home by yourself or with a friend or loved one.
- **Try to keep yourself busy, but do not overdo it:** This may become overwhelming for you, but remember to take it easy, do not be too hard on yourself and remember to balance everything to suit you and your needs. Have a comfortable balance of productivity and recreation. Small steps are still progress forward, no matter how small.
- **Fixing your sleeping pattern:** This one proved most difficult for me as I have always had trouble sleeping throughout my life. Yet I found even going to bed that extra hour earlier, drinking a herbal tea before bed and working on it a little each day, it has helped my sleeping pattern and helped with problems of fatigue.

It is also important to remember that if you are struggling, there are so many people around you who are there and willing to help you if you need them.

Confiding in friends and loved ones about these issues can help them understand your situation more and make you feel less alone and isolated with your struggles.

Teachers, lecturers, and co-workers you feel you can trust and talk to can also help you make your work and education life easier. Once they understand your situation, they can set up plans to cater to your needs and can

begin to understand. Whether it is an extension for an assignment, a talk with student services, an easier workload in your workplace or maybe even a little time off, do not be afraid to reach out if you need help.

Seeking Help for Fatigue and Depression

Most importantly, do not ignore the symptoms or your problems. You may believe it is just laziness or solely because of your difficult times with depression, yet brushing it aside and not facing these issues will only make your depression harder to treat in the long run.

Seeking help is not a bad thing or a sign of weakness. I’m incredibly grateful my close friends noticed my symptoms as early as they did. It is helped me much more knowledge about fatigue and helped me on my road to recovery.