



Coping with Chronic Illness: A Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Approach for Adherence and Depression

By Steven Safren, Jeffrey Gonzalez, Nafisseh Soroudi

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If you suffer from a chronic medical condition like cancer, HIV, diabetes, asthma, or hypertension, you know how hard it can be to perform all the self-care behaviors required of you, especially if you are also dealing with depression. Studies have shown that depressed individuals with chronic illness have a hard time keeping up with the behaviors necessary to manage their condition and improve their health. The program outlined in this workbook can help you take better care of yourself while simultaneously relieving your depression.

Designed to be used in conjunction with visits to a qualified mental health professional, this workbook teaches you strategies for maintaining your medical regimen. You will learn how to set up a reminder system for taking medication, plan for getting to medical appointments on time, and how to communicate effectively with your medical providers. You will also learn how to follow the advice of your treatment providers, such as adhering to certain lifestyle and dietary recommendations. These Life-Steps are essential to the program. As you begin to take better care of yourself, you will notice a decrease in your depression.

In addition to these self-care skills, you will also learn how to maximize your quality of life, which is another important part of lessening your depressed feelings. Begin to re-engage in pleasurable activities and utilize relaxation techniques and breathing exercises to help you cope with stress and discomfort. Use problem-solving to successfully deal with interpersonal or situational difficulties and change your negative thought through adaptive thinking. By treatment's end you will have all the skills you need to successfully manage your illness and cope with your depression.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Steven Safren is Associate Professor at harvard medical School. Jeffrey Gonzalez is Clinical Fellow in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School.

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