



Just Diagnosed: The First 48 Hours with Depression

A Management Guide brought to you by MyDepressionConnection.com

You've just been diagnosed with depression. Now what? Expert patient Deborah Gray shares her best tips for coping and taking control of your health.

[By Deborah Gray](#)

If you've just been diagnosed with [depression](#), you're probably experiencing a mix of conflicting emotions: embarrassment, confusion, fear. You may not even be convinced that the diagnosis is correct. Or you may have an overwhelming sense of relief — which was how I felt when I was first diagnosed. A diagnosis gave me something concrete to deal with, a problem that could be treated.

Since depression makes even the most mundane tasks difficult, the idea of taking charge of your treatment plan may seem overwhelming at this point. But it's crucial to put all your available energy into educating yourself about depression and its treatment. The more effective your treatment is, the quicker you will get your energy — and your life — back. Below you'll find a guide of helpful steps to take now that you've been diagnosed.

Learn more about your diagnosis. What type of depression do you have? If [medication](#) is part of your treatment regimen, the type of depression you have will determine which medication you are prescribed. The four main types of unipolar (as opposed to bipolar or manic) depression are major depression, dysthymia, atypical depression and psychotic depression.

Learn more about your treatment options. You can then make a well-informed decision when your doctor recommends a course of treatment. Your doctor will recommend a course of either: medication combined with psychotherapy, medication alone or psychotherapy alone. If you were diagnosed by your general practitioner (i.e., family doctor) he or she will probably refer you to a psychiatrist for medication and/or therapy, a psychopharmacologist for medication treatment or a therapist for psychotherapy.

Find out what your health insurance will — and will not — cover. Mental health treatment is not covered as completely as other illnesses by many health insurance companies. Find out if your treatment professionals need

Just Diagnosed: The First 48 Hours with Depression (cont)

to be in your insurance provider's network or if they can be out of network, if you need to obtain a referral for treatment and the specific criteria for psychotherapy.

Prepare for your visits with your doctor. Before visits with your treatment professionals, sit down and write up a list of questions you want to ask. It's easier than trying to think of questions while you're there, and this will ensure that you won't forget your questions or your doctor's answers.

Here's a list of [questions to ask your doctor](#) — I found that this information was always important.

Decide how open you want to be about your diagnosis. It's best to think in advance about what you're going to say to your employer and co-workers, friends and family. You may be surprised at how much resistance you encounter and where it comes from. When I was diagnosed, a long-time friend was completely unable to deal with it. Other friends questioned my doctor's recommendations regarding antidepressants, although they themselves had no experience with mental illness or knowledge of treatment options.

Be prepared for the possibility that your family will be less supportive than you would like. Unless they have some experience with depression or are otherwise knowledgeable about it, this is uncharted territory for them, and that can be frightening. You might want to wait until you have your treatment underway to talk about your diagnosis.

Get your hands on the best depression books. As you adjust to your depression diagnosis, choose doctors and determine your treatment plan, it's crucial that you become as knowledgeable about depression as you possibly can.

Finally, start living your life again. Your depression diagnosis is in all likelihood a confirmation of what you already knew — that something was wrong. But you're not as helpless as you were yesterday in the face of this illness. Now that the problem has been identified, you can educate yourself and move forward with treatment. I look back on my diagnosis as the beginning of a new life — soon you will, too.

Read more about [treatment](#) for depression.