

Raising Your Energy: Get Out of the Mire of Depression

Raising energy is such an important part of improving your depressed mood. Low energy is a defining quality of depression, caused by brain structure and function. But the good news is that it is possible to raise your energy level. Your brain is amazing in its ability to expend energy to raise your energy level. Different types of activity raise energy differently.

If you could exercise, that would be the most powerful way to raise energy, but the inability to get moving is precisely the problem that keeps you from doing this. When you are trying to convince your lethargic, depressed mood that getting something done is a good idea, it is necessary to take really small steps to get moving. Then the movement itself begins to energize you.

One person I recently spoke with called these kinds of steps RSNFGs, standing for *Ridiculously Small No Fail Goals*. I want to suggest a few of these to help you start thinking about raising energy: oh, that is the first RSNFG: think about wanting more energy. Do you? You just completed your first goal.

I was not kidding, despite the tone of my last comment. Even changing your thinking can be hard and yet it is the necessary first step to *doing*. So now I want to suggest you up the ante on your thinking. Here is the second thing you can think about: What task do you want to do at home or at work that you are not getting done? Has the mail piled up unopened? Has the file pile on your desk grown high? Have you neglected answering emails that you flagged as "later"? Is your house or your work space a mess? Have you put off a necessary phone call, e.g., to schedule a doctor appointment or talk to your colleague about getting a letter of recommendation or ask a professor for an extension on your paper because you had the flu?

RSNFG 2: Pick one thing you might want to get done.

RSNFG 3: Pick which of these following techniques is the best one to try.

1: Add 2 words to every statement you make to yourself that you won't or can't do it: "Until Now." For example, "I can't get my homework done on time, until now." "I have always had my bedroom in a mess, until now." By adding these 2 words, you are injecting into your thought process the possibility that things can change. This is the essence of hope - a sorely missing quality in depressed thinking.

Now we go on to small goals that are not so 'no-fail' but for which there is no penalty for lack of completion.

Prime the Pump
Get the Train Rolling
Utilize Future Energy

These ideas are really basic, and thus just where you might need to start if you are feeling the stuckness of depression. And if you think this sounds like a lot to do, go back to RSNFG #1 and remember this. You have not tried to tackle your goals these ways, until now. It is possible

that one of these ideas will function like a lighter: it will give your brain just the spark of energy you need to create a small flame of hope that will lead to starting a fire of activity. When that happens you will feel persistently more energy.