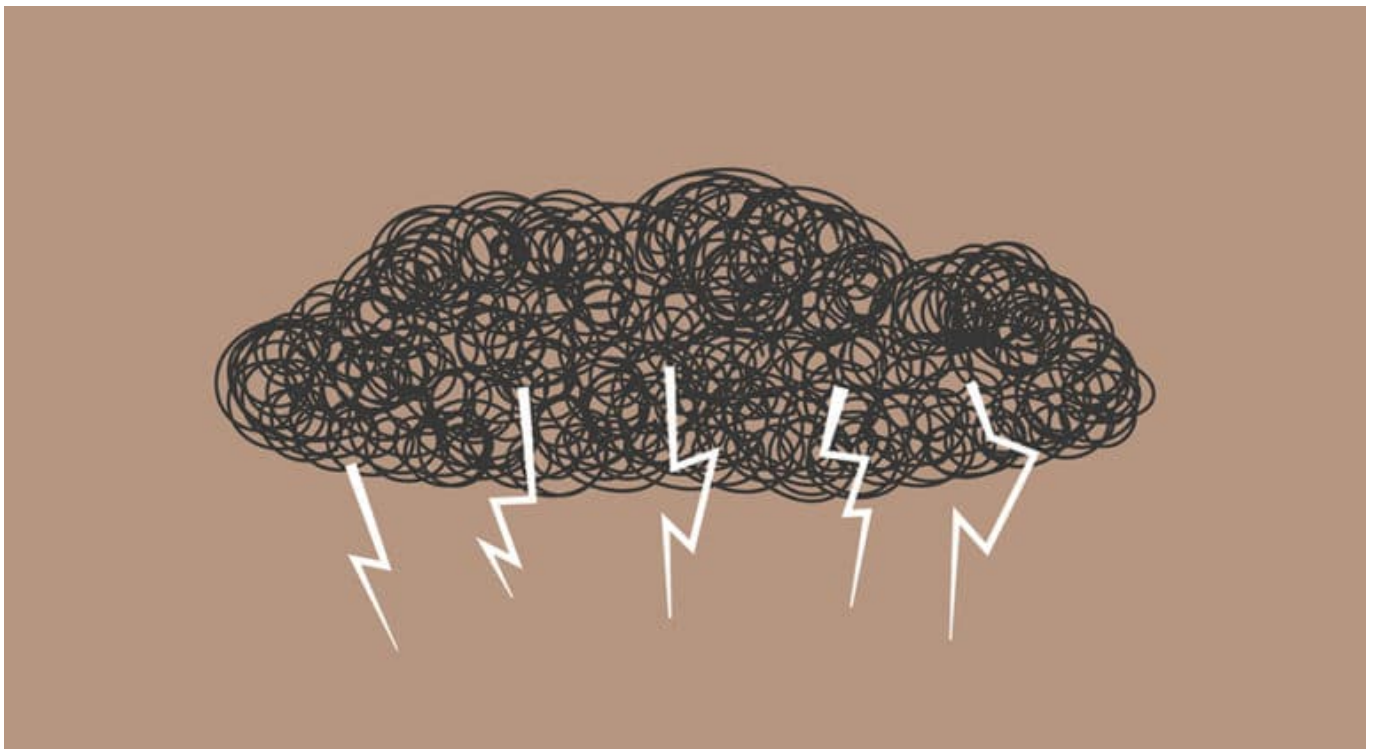


Depression and MS



In November, one of my friends passed away. Her death was sudden and devastating. I have never experienced a death to someone close to me. I was already in somewhat of a depressed state; and this news sent me spiraling. Even though I wanted to throw myself into my grief, I was afraid. Why may you ask? I was scared that too much stress would lead to a flare. I could not handle adding a flare to the mix with everything I was feeling. This realization made me angry. MS has such a grip on my life that I couldn't even allow myself to grieve properly without fear of repercussions.

It took time to figure out how to express my emotions without overextending. I have picked up some pointers that have helped me combat my depression to remain as flare-free as possible.

- 1. Allow the Emotions to Flow:** I understand the urge to suppress these emotions. Sometimes it feels easier to run from the feelings. But this is not a constructive or a healthy way of coping. When you are feeling down, allow yourself to feel it. But do not remain in those feelings. I allow myself a day or two to have a long and passionate cry. I let all the sadness flow through me without holding back. Once the day(s) are over, I allow myself the grace to take it easy. Slowly get back into a routine. But, since I am a mom, I do not always have the time for a whole day's cry. When that happened, I found it helpful to journal what I felt. I am still able to get the feelings out without the tears. Following the ebb and flow of your emotions can be beneficial to healing. I have spent years trying to hide my depression. Locking it up doesn't make it go away.

2. **Sleep:** When I am at my worst, sleep is the first thing to do. I become an insomniac and awake at all hours. Some nights, I go to sleep at 6 a.m. Then I am a zombie the rest of the day. Lack of sleep can make depression even worse. Sleep and mood are connected. What helped me was planning. I know it sounds silly, but it works. The first step, not taking naps during the day. Naps only delay going to sleep at night. Also, remove all distractions before bed, no electronics. I've started reading with a dim light before bed. Restructuring my bedtime routine has helped me to fall asleep faster.
3. **Set Achievable Goals:** It is hard to accomplish anything when feeling depressed. I struggle with getting the simplest things done. I've learned that creating a small list of things I can achieve helps me recenter. Only two to three goals are on the list. As I start to feel better, I add more challenging goals. I usually have a grooming goal on my list. It's embarrassing to say, but I am a person who can stop grooming during a bad depressive episode. When that happens, it only makes me feel worse. It's important to remember not to push yourself too much; make sure the goals are attainable.
4. **Support From Others:** When you are depressed, you may want to stay away from others. I usually withdraw from others. However, it is best to build a friends and family support group. Or you can connect with people online or on social media. I have two best friends I speak to when I am feeling low. Also, my husband and mother are very supportive when I feel depressed. Social media does provide an outlet to share my feelings. But only when I am in a better state of mind. I am mindful not to trigger someone else from what I am currently going through.
5. **Health Routines:** There may be a correlation between eating healthy and mental health. There is no magical diet to keep you happy. But, being depressed can result in bingeing or overeating. I understand how hard it is to get up and do anything. Exercise can help with feeling better. It produces endorphins, which make you feel good. I try to go for a walk. I keep it simple, and I do feel better.

Editor's Note: Find more resources and information about depression and MS on [the Society website](#).