



Depression Worksheets

for Teens & Adults

By Kyler Shumway, PsyD

Understanding Depression



Depression is more than just sadness or feeling “down.” It’s a whole-body experience that can affect how you think, feel, and function. People living with depression often describe feeling heavy, numb, or stuck, like a fog has settled over everything. And while it’s **one of the most common** mental health struggles, it can feel incredibly isolating.

Depression isn’t a personal failure. It’s a response rooted in both biology and lived experience. It may be linked to how your nervous system processes pain, loss, or chronic stress. Some people have brains that are especially sensitive to emotional disconnection or overwhelm. Others may carry the weight of trauma, perfectionism, or burnout. However it shows up, **depression is your body’s way of saying, “Something needs care.”**

Understanding depression through this lens can shift the story from “I’m weak” to “My system is doing its best to cope, and I can learn new ways to support it.” With the right tools and support, healing is possible. You can reconnect with meaning, energy, and yourself.

This worksheet is here to help you name your experience, understand what’s happening underneath the surface, and explore strategies that work with your system - not against it.

And you don’t have to do it alone. Consider working with a therapist (like the ones at Time for Therapy!) who understands depression and can help you move forward, one step at a time.

Noticing Symptoms



Depression can show up in different ways for different people. And, depression doesn't always fit the stereotypes we see in the media (e.g., laying in bed all day and eating ice cream).

What does your depression look like? Take a look at this checklist and see which symptoms show up for you.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Symptom	Description
	Feeling down, sad, or empty	Not just a bad day, but more like a heavy cloud that doesn't lift.
	Loss of interest	Stuff you used to enjoy just doesn't feel the same anymore.
	Low energy	You're tired all the time, even after resting or sleeping.
	Trouble sleeping	Can't fall asleep, wake up a lot, or sleep way more than usual.
	Changes in appetite	You're eating way more or way less than you normally do.
	Feeling worthless or guilty	You keep beating yourself up or feel like a burden to others.
	Trouble concentrating	It's hard to focus, finish things, or make decisions.
	Moving slower or feeling restless	You feel sluggish, or the opposite – on edge but exhausted.
	Thoughts of not wanting to be here	You've thought about death, disappearing, or wishing you could escape it all. <i>(If this is true for you, please talk to someone you trust right away. You matter.)</i>
	Something else? Write it in the next space.	

Note: You don't need to check every box for it to "count." Everyone's experience of depression is different and it's okay to ask for help no matter where you land.

The Vicious Cycle

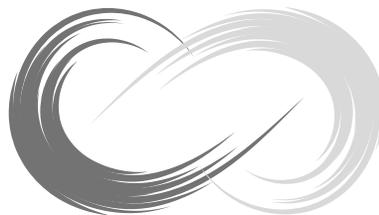
The hardest part about depression is the symptoms tend to feed themselves over time - what some therapists call The Vicious Cycle of Depression. Here's how it works:

You feel low, tired, or unmotivated



You stop doing things that bring joy or meaning

You withdraw or isolate from others



You feel worse as loneliness increases

See how it works? Now it's your turn - try guessing how other symptoms of depression feed the cycle by filling out the spaces on the right.

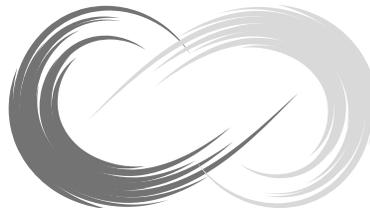
You avoid responsibilities like work or chores



You get stuck in negative thoughts



You feel ashamed or guilty



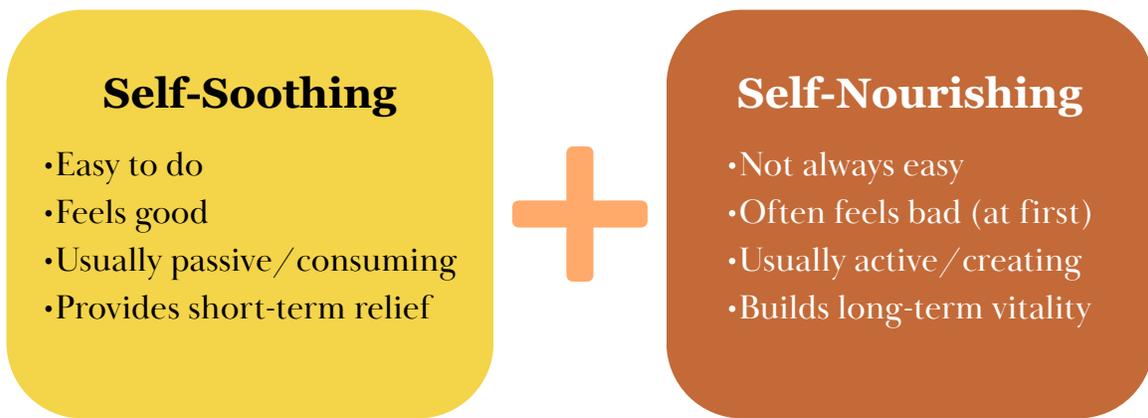
Breaking the Cycle Starts Small

Even one tiny action – texting a friend, stepping outside, brushing your teeth – can be a first step out. You don't have to fix everything all at once. You just have to interrupt the loop.

Self-Care Done Right

Breaking the cycle of depression isn't easy. But the best way to get started (and stay healthier long term) is to **set self-care habits** that work for you.

When you imagine self-care, what comes to mind? Maybe a nice bubble bath or listening to calming music. But what most people don't know is that self-care actually takes two different forms: **self-soothing** and **self-nourishing**. When people get depressed long-term, they often have enough self-soothing and **not enough self-nourishment**.



Let's see if you can tell the difference! Fill in the blanks with an "S" for **soothing**, an "N" for **nourishing**, or "B" if it's **both**. Not sure? Ask your therapist!

Self-Care Activity	Type
Wrap up in a blanket and rest	S
Eat a real meal, even something simple	N
Go outside and feel the air on your skin	B
Text a friend just to say hey	
Light a candle or turn on cozy lighting	
Stretch for one minute and breathe	
Journal about what's on your mind	
Watch a comfort show without guilt	

Self-Care Activity	Type
Go to your therapy appointment	
Set a boundary with someone	
Ask for help with something	
Have a real conversation	
Apply for a job, program, or opportunity	
Cook yourself a full meal	
Go somewhere in public	
Swimming or walking	

How to Break the Cycle

Step 1: Start Tiny

Pick something that's doable – even if it seems small.

Circle one or write your own:

Get out of bed and stretch

Take a shower or brush my teeth

Eat a snack or drink water

Step outside for 2 minutes

Send a text to someone I trust

Put on clothes I feel okay in

Make a short list of what you might do today

Write down one thing that's been weighing on you

Remind myself: "Hard days don't last forever"

Finish one small thing I've been avoiding



Add one upbeat song to a playlist

Cross something off my list

Throw something away or recycle it

Light a candle or turn on a lamp

Move one object to a better place

Say "I'm doing my best" out loud

Text someone, even just a quick "hey"

Send a meme or reel to a friend to stay connected

Tell someone you trust that you're having a hard day

Respond to a message you've been avoiding

How to Break the Cycle

Step 2: Embrace (Temporary) Discomfort

Regaining balance means you'll need to add more self-nourishment into your self-care routine.

Choose **self-nourishing** activities that you can do **1) every day, 2) every week, and 3) every month**. Add them to your schedule and or ask a supportive friend or therapist for help being accountable. For example, you might choose to go for a 20-minute walk every day, go to therapy every week, and go to a friend gathering every month.

Something I can do daily: _____

Something I can do weekly: _____

Something I can do monthly: _____

Remember: Self-nourishment doesn't always feel good, but it is good for you. Use the mantras on the coloring pages later in this packet to help you embrace discomfort as you work on taking better care of your mind and body.



How to Break the Cycle

Step 3: Challenge Your Inner Critic

Depression feeds on harsh self-talk. Notice the voice that says “you’re lazy” or “you’ll never get better,” and gently talk back.

Try saying something more honest and kind:

Swap “I’m failing” with:

- “Struggling isn’t the same as failing.”
- “I’m doing the best I can with what I have today.”
- “Falling behind doesn’t mean I can’t catch up.”

Swap “I’m lazy” with:

- “I’m tired because I’m carrying a lot, not because I’m lazy.”
- “Resting is allowed. It doesn’t make me less worthy.”
- “Motivation is hard when I’m low and that’s not my fault.”

Swap “Nothing will ever change” with:

- “Just because I feel stuck now doesn’t mean I always will.”
- “This moment isn’t forever.”
- “Change starts small and I’ve already started.”

Swap “I’m too much / not enough” with:

- “I’m allowed to take up space.”
- “I don’t have to prove my worth - I already have it.”
- “I am enough, even on the hard days.”

If nothing else, try:

- “This is hard. And I can handle hard things.”
- “I don’t have to believe every thought I have.”
- “I’m here. I’m trying. That matters.”

How to Break the Cycle

Step 4: Remember Who You Are

Depression can make you forget your strengths, your values, and the things that make you you. Step 4 is about reconnecting with your identity – not who you think you should be, but who you are beneath the fog.

Ask yourself (and write your answers in the spaces if you'd like):

- *What do I care about deep down?*
- *What used to make me feel alive, even a little?*
- *When do I feel most like myself, even in small moments?*
- *What qualities have helped me get through hard things before?*

Even if those things feel far away right now, they're still part of you. This step is about reclaiming your story and reminding yourself that you're more than this hard chapter.

How to Break the Cycle

Step 5: Keep the Loop Open, Not Perfect

Breaking the cycle isn't a one-time fix. It's a loop you gently interrupt, again and again.

Some days you'll backslide. That doesn't mean you failed. It means you're human.

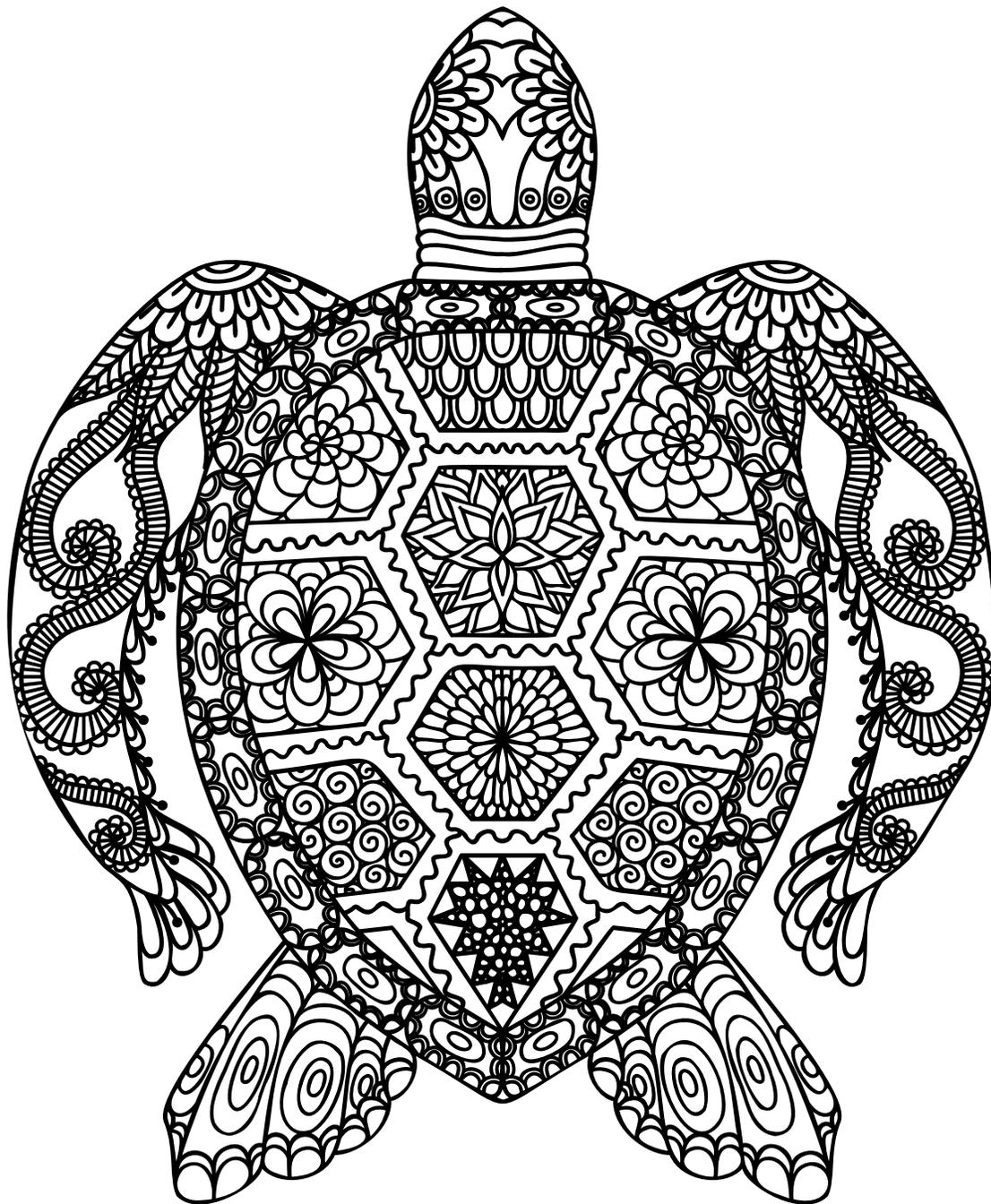
Think of these steps like a playlist. When you're stuck, press play again. Starting wherever you can. Trust that things can get better.

Songs That Say “Keep Going”

“Rise Up” – Andra Day
“Keep Going” – Faith Richards
“Brave” – Sara Bareilles
“Try Everything” – Shakira (from Zootopia)
“Unstoppable” – Sia
(Add more below!)



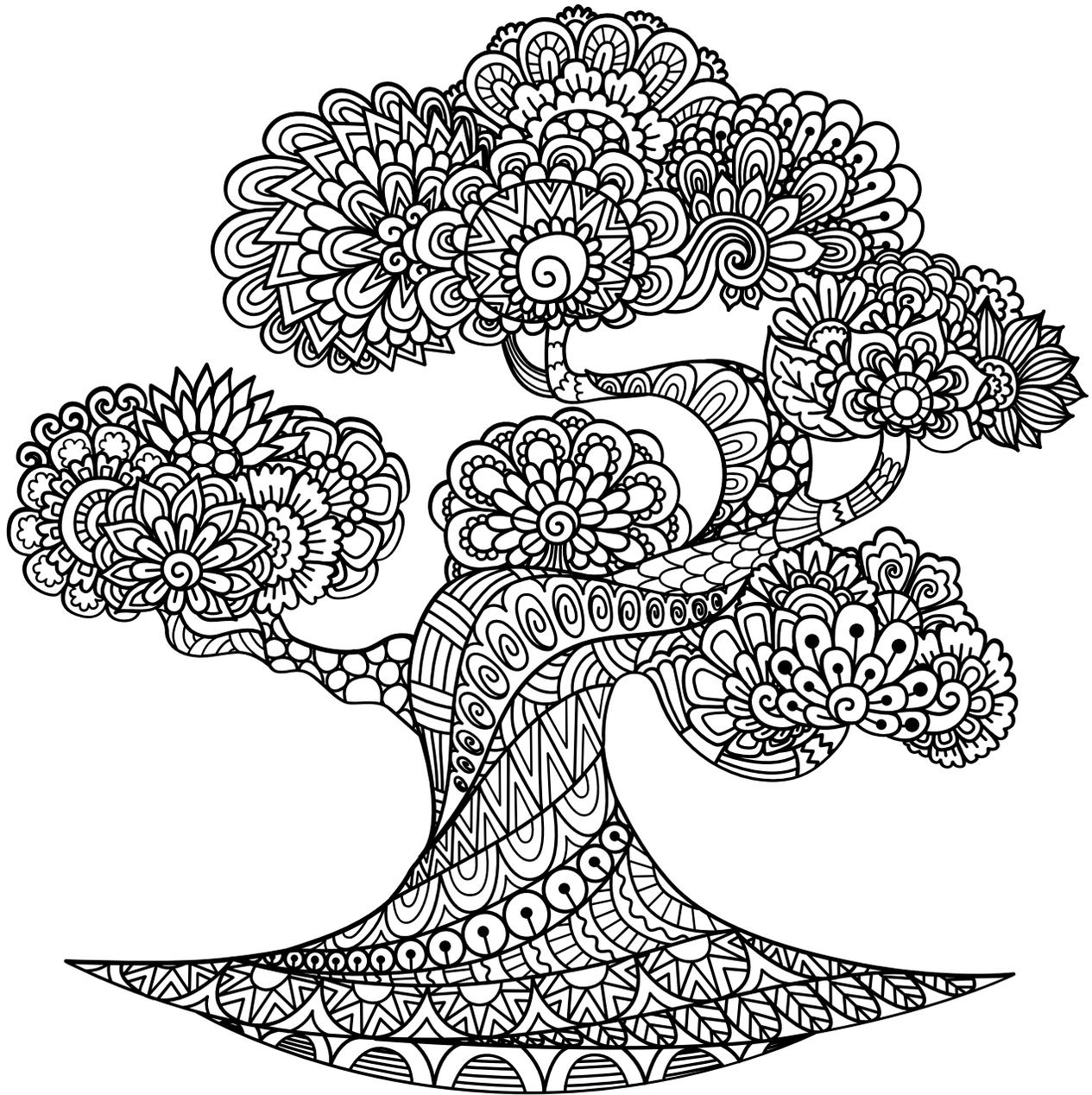
Color these mindful coloring images however you would like! Try to think of the phrase/mantra while coloring to help the message sink in.



**Small steps still
count.**

Even now, I
am still me.





**This moment
is enough.**

Want more worksheets?

Let us know by contacting us through
our website! We'll keep adding to our
resource library over time.

timefortherapy.com/worksheets

