

Live Well to
Learn Well

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health.cornell.edu

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Appointments:
Monday–Saturday

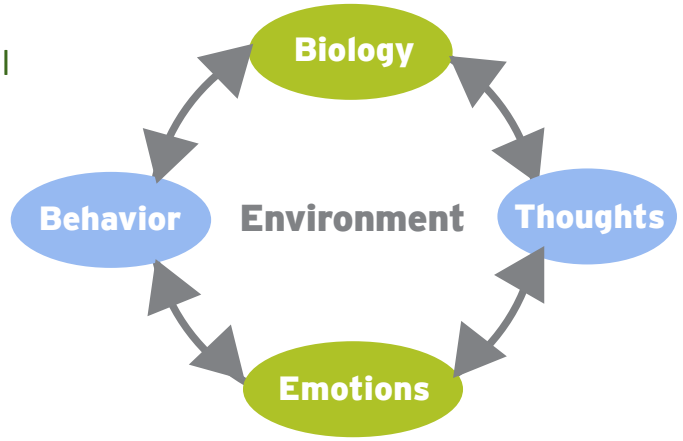
Check web for hours,
services, providers,
and appointment
information

110 Ho Plaza,
Ithaca, NY
14853-3101

Adapted from
“The Depression Spiral”,
VA Center for Integrated
Healthcare: http://www.mirecc.va.gov/cih-visn2/clinical_resources.asp

The Depression Cycle

Depression is thought to develop in response to several interconnected factors, including one’s biology, environment, and how one typically thinks, feels, and behaves. The relationship between these factors in maintaining depression is illustrated, at right.



Example of the cycle in action

- Anna recently moved to a new area and has not yet made friends (**environment**) →
- She tells herself: “Everyone already has their social circles established; I am never going to meet any new people.” (**thoughts**) →
- This makes her feel angry, lonely, and sad (**emotions**) →
- Upset by these feelings, she stays in on Friday night and spends most of Saturday in bed (**behavior**) →
- In turn, she feels tired and dull (**biology**) →
- This increases the negativity of her thoughts and her cycle of depression continues.

Ways to reduce depression

Because a variety of factors impact depression, we can make changes in just one area and disrupt the cycle. The strategies below are all useful for improving depression, when used alone and even more so in combination with one another.

Biology	Thoughts	Emotions	Behavior
Medications	Recognize negative thought patterns	Identify feelings	Spend time with friends
Light Therapy (regular exposure to natural light and/or light boxes)	Challenge negative thoughts	Talk with a professional about your feelings	Engage in pleasurable activities
Adequate sleep, nutrition, and exercise	Focus on positive aspects of a situation	Practice letting go of painful emotions	Make time for self-care

