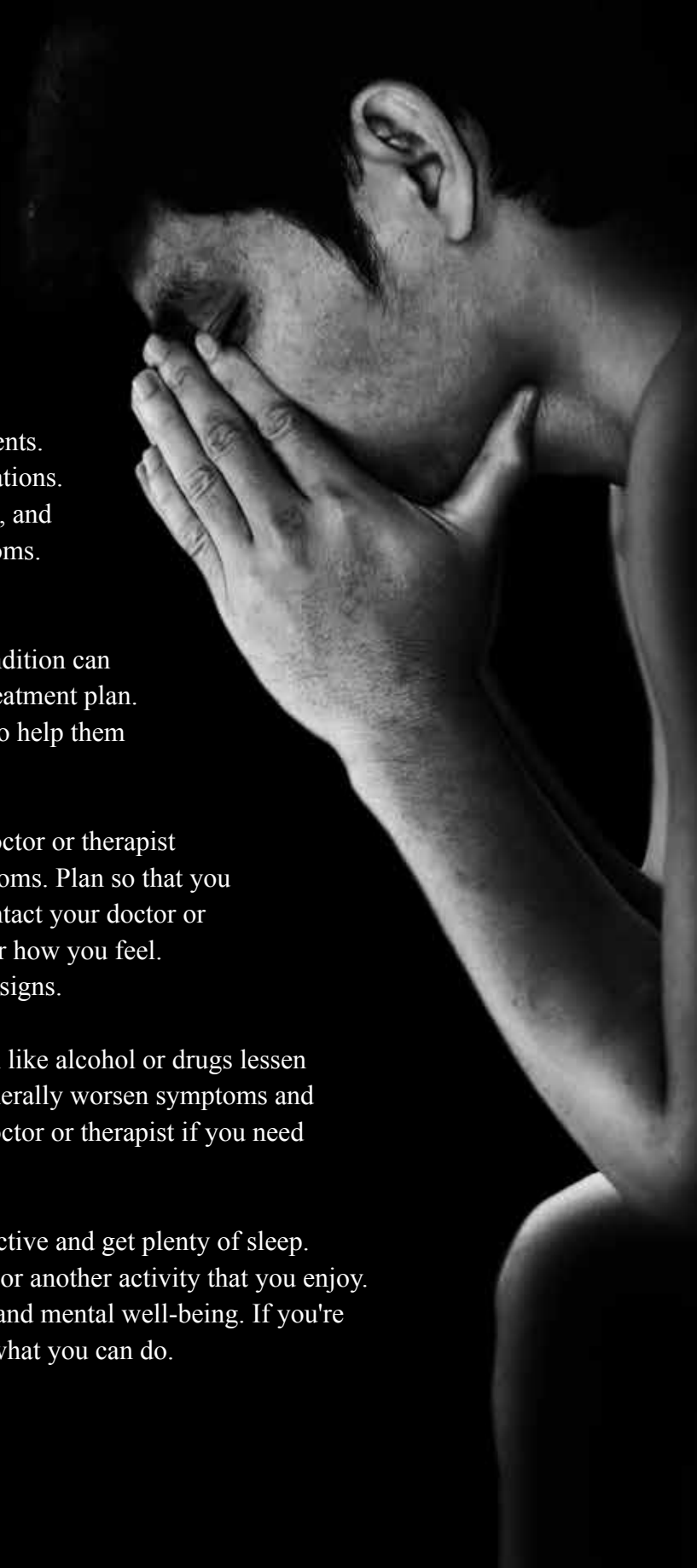


# Coping with Depression

Depression generally isn't a disorder that you can treat on your own, but in addition to professional treatment, these self-care steps can help:

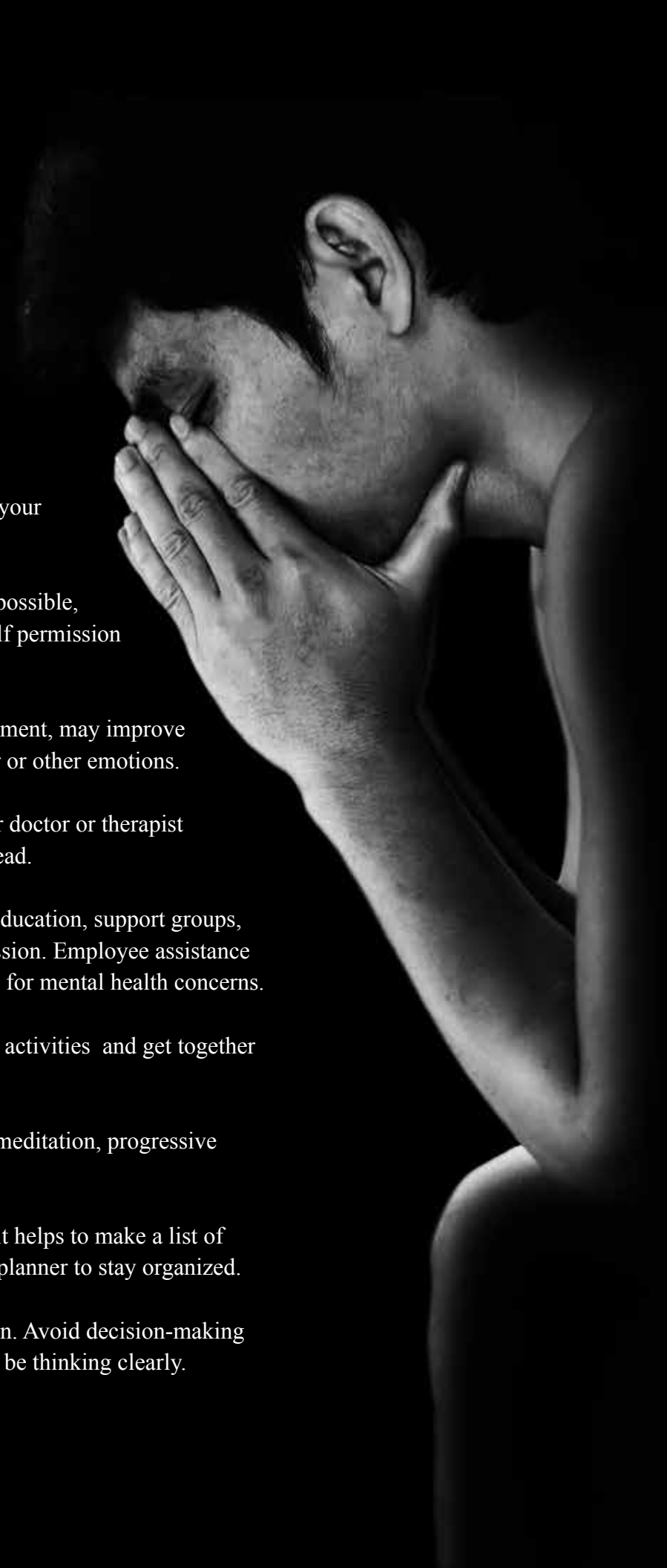


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- Stick to your treatment plan. Don't skip appointments. Even if you're feeling well, don't skip your medications. If you stop, depression symptoms may come back, and you could also experience withdrawal-like symptoms. Recognize that it will take time to feel better.
  - Learn about depression. Education about your condition can empower you and motivate you to stick to your treatment plan. Encourage your family to learn about depression to help them understand and support you.
  - Pay attention to warning signs. Work with your doctor or therapist to learn what might trigger your depression symptoms. Plan so that you know what to do if your symptoms get worse. Contact your doctor or therapist if you notice any changes in symptoms or how you feel. Ask relatives or friends to help watch for warning signs.
  - Avoid alcohol and recreational drugs. It may seem like alcohol or drugs lessen depression symptoms, but in the long run they generally worsen symptoms and make depression harder to treat. Talk with your doctor or therapist if you need help with alcohol or substance use.
  - Take care of yourself. Eat healthy, be physically active and get plenty of sleep. Consider walking, jogging, swimming, gardening or another activity that you enjoy. Sleeping well is important for both your physical and mental well-being. If you're having trouble sleeping, talk to your doctor about what you can do.

## Coping and Support

Talk with your doctor or therapist about improving your coping skills, and try these tips:

- Simplify your life. Cut back on obligations when possible, and set reasonable goals for yourself. Give yourself permission to do less when you feel down.
- Write in a journal. Journaling, as part of your treatment, may improve mood by allowing you to express pain, anger, fear or other emotions.
- Read reputable self-help books and websites. Your doctor or therapist may be able to recommend books or websites to read.
- Locate helpful groups. Many organizations offer education, support groups, counseling and other resources to help with depression. Employee assistance programs and religious groups also may offer help for mental health concerns.
- Don't become isolated. Try to participate in social activities and get together with family or friends regularly.
- Relax and manage your stress. Examples include meditation, progressive muscle relaxation, yoga and tai chi.
- Structure your time. Plan your day. You may find it helps to make a list of daily tasks, use sticky notes as reminders or use a planner to stay organized.
- Don't make important decisions when you're down. Avoid decision-making when you're feeling depressed, since you may not be thinking clearly.



## Prevention

- Reach out to family and friends, especially in times of crisis, to help you weather rough spells.
- Get treatment at the earliest sign of a problem to help prevent depression from worsening. Consider getting long-term maintenance treatment to help prevent a relapse of symptoms.



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