



Depression: Supporting Someone Who Is Depressed

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Overview

If someone you care about has been diagnosed with depression, you may feel helpless. Maybe you're watching a once-vibrant person become inactive or seeing a good friend lose interest in things they used to enjoy.

Most people with depression need some type of treatment. Counseling and medicine usually work well to treat depression. Sometimes counseling alone is enough. Often a combination of the two works best.

- The best thing you can do for someone who is depressed is to help them start or continue treatment.
- Offer support. You can do this by understanding what depression is, being patient, and offering help.
- Reassure the person that treatment can help them feel better.

How can you help someone who is depressed?

If someone you care about has been diagnosed with depression, here are some things you can do to support them.

- Learn about depression.
Know what is true about depression, and know the myths about depression. Myths include thinking that depression isn't real or that a person who is depressed is weak. Be aware of your own and other people's negative attitudes (stigma) toward depression. Do what you can to fight stigma and teach people about depression.
- Help the person set up and get to visits with a doctor or other health professional.
Reassure them that they will get better with the right kind of treatment. Treatment depends on how severe the depression is and includes medicine, counseling, self-care, or a combination of these.
- Help the person manage medicines.
Remind the person with depression that medicine is important and that the dose or medicine can be changed to reduce or get rid of side effects. Know the side effects of medicines and contact the doctor if needed.
- Keep in mind other health issues.
Be aware of other health problems the person may have, such as diabetes or heart problems. And help the person have good health habits. Encourage the person to seek treatment if they show signs they may be struggling with alcohol or drug use.
- Listen when the person wants to talk.

If you're there to help the person talk things through, it may help the person feel better or continue treatment.

- Avoid giving advice.
But gently point out that not everything is bad, and offer hope. Urge the person to continue treatment. Don't tell the person that they are lazy or should be able to get over it.
- Keep your relationship as normal as you can.
But don't pretend that depression doesn't exist or that there isn't a problem.
- Encourage the person to do things.
Ask the person to do things with you, such as go for walks or to a movie, and encourage the person to continue with favorite activities. If the person says no, then that's okay. But be sure to ask again in the future. Don't push too much, which may make the person feel worse.
- Ask what you can do.
Try to help with daily life. For example, you might help with housework or lawn care, getting the kids to school, or running errands.
- Don't be offended.
If you are a spouse or are very close to someone, you may feel hurt because the person isn't paying attention to you and may seem angry or uncaring. Remember that your loved one still cares for you but just isn't able to show it.
- Take care of yourself.
Spending a lot of time with someone who has depression may be hard on you too.
 - Take care of yourself first. Do things you enjoy, such as seeing family or going to movies.
 - Don't help too much. A common mistake caregivers make is providing too much care. Even if they don't admit it, people like to help themselves. Take some time off.
 - Don't do it alone. Ask others to help you, or join a support group. The more support you have, the more help you can give to the person.
- Get help right away if you or someone you know talks about suicide, self-harm, or feeling hopeless.

Where to get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If you or someone you know talks about suicide, self-harm, a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress, get help right away. You can:

- Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.
- Text **HOME to 741741** to access the Crisis Text Line.

Consider saving these numbers in your phone.

Go to **988lifeline.org** for more information or to chat online.

Related Information

- Depression
- Do I Have Depression?
- Interactive Tool: Are You Depressed?

Credits

Current as of: July 31, 2024

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