

FACTS ABOUT

Helping Someone with Depression

Information for Family and Friends



Depression is a serious medical condition where the body and mind are not capable of dealing with the emotions the person is feeling. We have all suffered from unhappiness and maybe even some level of depression.

The first thing to do is initiate a conversation. If you are able to bring up the topic of depression with your friend or family member it will indicate that you are willing to listen to their story.

Once you open the conversation, most times, the person you are concerned about will begin to tell you how they got to this point in their life. It is very important that you do not try and solve their problems or give them anecdotes for their situation. They don't need to hear what you did to overcome something you see as similar.

Tips for Active Listening

Active listening can be shown by simply using body language that acknowledges what a person is saying.

- Stay calm and relaxed at all times.
- Tell them you have noticed a change in their behavior.
- Let them know you are listening without being judgmental.
 - Maintain eye contact.
- If you push the wrong button, tell them you are sorry and move on.

Ask Direct Questions

Let the person know that you care by insisting that you talk to them daily at a certain time. Call and check on them if you haven't heard from them by 3 p.m. every day. Direct questions will require the individual to confront the issue in an open and safe environment. Direct questions may include:

- How long have you felt this way?
- Why do you feel this way?
- What do you need to overcome these feelings?
- Have you ever thought about or attempted suicide?
- Do you have a plan? How? Where? When? It is difficult to talk about how a person thinks they might end their own life. It is important to find out how much they have thought about it and how detailed their plan has become.

People with depression often don't want you to be burdened by helping them. If they think their problems are making their friends miserable, they tend to feel guilty and believe they are a burden.

People suffering with depression tend to feel like they are not worth saving. Try anything to help them understand how important and valued they are to you. This can be difficult and frustrating, but you need to remain persistent. You need to convince the person that the period they are going through is temporary and that they will get through it.

Remember, there are additional resources available to help you accomplish this task. Review this information frequently and when you need help to help, contact the organizations listed on the next page. There are many organizations and groups to help you and the person who is suffering from depression.

(more information on next page)

MORE ABOUT

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There are many things that you can do to help a friend or family member who is suffering from depression. Beyond practicing active listening and asking direct questions you can also try some other things that will help the person through this rough time.

Spend time with the person and ask them about their experiences. Get them to talk beyond the depression and to talk about things that they know and things that they like and enjoy.

Encourage other friends and family to call the person at random times. This helps reinforce the person's social network and lets them know that there are other people who care about their wellbeing.

Suggest the person see a doctor to help with depression. There are many creative options for treatment. Very few people require in-patient treatment. Help the person make the appointment with the doctor and help them get there on time. Offer to go with them if they are afraid to go alone. Follow up to see how the appointment went.

Encourage the person to take up activities they enjoy doing with other people. Encourage them to eat well and to exercise. Getting out of the house and around other people can provide tremendous benefit.

Maintain frequent contact with the person. Reinforce the fact that you care about them.

Take Care of You

As a person helping others you need to take care of yourself too. It can be exhausting worrying about someone else, so it is important to take time for your own personal needs. Take the necessary time for family, friends and - most importantly - yourself by doing the things you enjoy.

What NOT to do

- Don't assume the problem will just go away.
- Don't tell the person to "just snap out of it", "get your act together" or "just cheer up" - these suggestions make it sound like you think the situation is trivial or less important than it is to them.
- Don't avoid the person.
- Don't tell them they just need to stay busy or keep their mind off the situation.
- Don't encourage them to use drugs or alcohol.



WESTERN COLORADO



SUICIDE PREVENTION
FOUNDATION

Sources of Help

Western Colorado Suicide Prevention Foundation
<http://www.suicidepreventionfoundation.org>
(970) 683-6626

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org