

Supporting Someone with Depression

Recognize that depression is an illness. Just like a cold or flu, a person cannot simply choose to “get over” depression. Also like other illnesses, depression can affect anyone. A person can develop depression even if they seem to have a good life, with little to be upset about.

Make a point to reach out. Many people with depression will isolate themselves, often falling out of touch with friends and family. You can't make someone accept help, but you can provide the option. Check in regularly, invite them to talk, and reemphasize your support.

Just listening can help. You don't have to fix your loved one's problems or convince them that their negative feelings are wrong. Even if you disagree with some of their thoughts or feelings, respect and acknowledge that these experiences are real to them.

Be supportive of healthy habits. Exercise, healthy sleep habits, and socializing all contribute to mental health, and help combat depression. Support these activities by giving encouragement, offering to accompany your loved one, or providing positive feedback.

Encourage professional help. Mental health counseling and medication are effective in treating depression. If your loved one is unsure where to start, offer to help them find the right provider, such as a physician, mental health counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist.

Connect your loved one with social support. In addition to professional help, your loved one may benefit from other sources of support. These could include community organizations, religious groups, or mental health support groups.

Take any mention of suicide seriously. Symptoms of depression include intense sadness, despair, and thoughts of suicide. If you feel that someone is in danger, don't hesitate to call 911, take them to an emergency room, or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 for free and confidential support available 24/7.

Make time for self-care. Supporting someone with depression can be frustrating, tiring, and emotionally draining. It's okay to take a break just for you. Make sure you are getting adequate sleep, eating properly, exercising, and taking time to relax.

You are not responsible for curing your loved one. Your love and support are valuable, but ultimately, you cannot make them better. It is unfair to yourself to take responsibility for another person's depression, or their recovery.