

If You Know Someone Who's Depressed

<http://www.healthyplace.com/communities/Depression/living/ifyouknow.htm>

Main Problems for Friends and Family

Let me start by saying that I, for one, appreciate your wishing to understand someone else's depression. I commend you for taking an interest in a very difficult subject and for wishing to help. In an indirect way, you're a victim of depression too because this illness impinges on everyone around the people who have it.

Pardon my bluntness, but there are a few things you really need to know, before you get too far into this subject.

1. You cannot cure someone else's clinical depression. It is not just sadness which can be waved off with a few kind words. It goes far deeper than that. If you are going into this with the heroic notion that you can somehow "fix" it for your friend, spouse or relative, then you need to disavow it immediately. Operating on this assumption will only frustrate you and does no one any good.
2. There are ups and downs in depression recovery. It is neither swift, nor steady. Your friend or relative is going to go on the decline, now and then. Don't think it's because you are failing them or they are not trying hard enough. The "roller-coaster" effect is just a part and parcel of depression.
3. Please don't tell a depression patient that "you understand." Unless you, yourself, have experienced clinical depression, you don't. And your friend, spouse or relative knows it. It's not a bad thing; since understanding depression means having it. I'd rather that no one, anywhere, understood it. The point here is to be honest with your friend or relative and don't profess things that aren't so. Sincerity will help him or her a great deal; it will engender trust, which every depression patient has a problem with, at one time or another.
4. No one wants to make your life miserable by being depressed. Try not to view someone else's depression as your own affliction. Rather, be grateful that you don't have clinical depression and try to realize what the other person is going through. Don't take the things your friend, spouse or relative says/does, personally. They aren't meant that way.
5. Recovery from depression is not just a matter of taking anti-depressant medication and going to therapy. Both the depression and recovery from it can totally change a person's life. Treatment involves a lot of fundamental changes in a person. At times, you'll wonder if it's the same person you've known for so long. Believe me, it is--the depression probably hid the "real person" from your view, up to the point that he or she was diagnosed and began treatment.
6. At times, it may seem that the person is actually pushing you away. This is very likely true. Most depression patients believe that they unduly affect those around them and will do anything to prevent that from happening. Thus, they isolate themselves from others. This kind of self-sabotage is actually a symptom of the illness itself. Don't let it overcome your relationship. Try to understand that this is often involuntary and irrational, and act accordingly.

What To Say Or Do

I cannot tell you precisely what is best for your friend, spouse or relative. I can only give you some guidelines. The rest is up to you.

1. Don't ask very general questions; you won't get a meaningful answer. As an example: Rather than asking "How are you?" ask "How are you today compared to yesterday?" or something of this kind. Make the question open-ended, so the person can say what he or she wants, but provide something specific for them to talk about.
2. Try to get the person out. He or she will want to isolate themselves--hibernate, even--but this is exactly what should not happen. Take walks, go shopping, go to a movie, whatever you have to, to get the person out of the environment they are trying to take shelter in. You may get some resistance, and even complaints; be persistent but not unreasonable.
3. Don't be afraid to let your spouse, relative or friend talk about whatever they want to. Even if they mention self-injury, or they are suicidal, you are not endangering them by listening. Actually, you are helping to protect them from those things; talking helps them deal with these feelings.
4. Keep an eye out for any changes in behavior. These can include appetite, sleep habits, drinking or drug abuse, anything at all. Any major changes may be a sign of trouble.
5. Little things go a long way for someone with clinical depression. Small gifts and favors seem much bigger to them than to you. Don't be afraid to (for example) leave the person a short note with a smiley face on it. Even if it seems silly or hokey, small considerations will help.

Accepting Depression In Someone Else

Just as any depression patient must learn to accept his or her illness, and work on overcoming it, so you must accept that they have a mood disorder. Since recovering is really a matter of work on the patient's part, it's impossible to start doing this work until one accepts that one must do it. By the same token, you will find it impossible to deal with someone else's depression, unless you accept that he or she has an illness--a very real one.

From what I've seen, this is one of the hardest things for friends and family to do. I will not kid you into thinking that this is easy. It's not. Accepting an illness in someone else, that you don't understand and never will (hopefully), is not a simple or trivial matter. Above all, don't blame yourself for it. No one can "make" another person depressed, so don't fall into the trap of thinking that you caused it.

Take Care Of Yourself

This is just as important as anything else! You offer nothing to someone else if you're stressed out. If you need to, take some time away from the depressed person. It will give you a better perspective on things and unravel frustrations and tensions. Just make sure that your friend or relative knows that you're still committed to him or her, anyway. You can even tell him/her that you're taking "time out" for yourself, so you can better help. (It's true.)

Things to Say to Someone With Depression

1. Be On Their Side

- The depressed person will often be defensive, so an accusatory tone is not helpful. Try to convey a sense of understanding. It isn't helpful to say "Why can't you just get out of bed?" Instead try "You seem to have trouble getting out of bed in the mornings. What can I do to help you in this area?"

- The person may have lost perspective on how big a problem actually is. They will find it hard to hear that what is insurmountable for them is actually not such a big deal. It is unhelpful to say “What’s your problem? You’re upset about nothing.” Instead try “You seem to be finding this issue a big deal at the moment. Can we solve it together?”
- When I was very sick, I often thought that my wife was trying to ruin my life. To counter that kind of thinking she would often say “We are a team. I am on your side.”
- Depression is an awful illness, a whole world away from pure sympathy-seeking. So you should treat it as such. “I trust you. If you had a choice in the matter you wouldn’t choose to have depression. How about we search for some solutions together?”

2. Give Plenty of Reassurance

- Many people suffering with depression feel unworthy of being loved. You need to reassure them frequently. For example “I love you for who you are. I am not going to leave you.”
- In a similar vein, they may have lost the ability to recognize their positive attributes. You might reaffirm them with “You are a sensitive person who cares for others” or “People really love you a lot. They think you’re a great person.”
- If said repeatedly and with absolute sincerity then it is helpful to say “If you ever need a friend, I am here.”

3. Give Understanding and Sympathy

- People with depression can spend a lot of time ruminating on their situation and feeling sorry for themselves. Pointing it out to them is not helpful. Instead, try to sympathize.
- “I can’t imagine how hard it is for you, but you have all my sympathy.”
- “All I want to do is give you a hug and a shoulder to cry on.”
- “I can’t honestly say that I know how you feel, but I want to help in any way I can.”

4. Offer to Help

- “Let me do anything you need me to do to help.”
- If you ask “What is the best thing I can do to help you right now?” don’t be offended if the reply is “Leave me alone”. Sometimes, that is the most helpful thing you can do at present.
- Well meaning people often attempt to immediately fix the problem. “Have you tried aromatherapy? There was an article about it in the paper...” . This kind of comment can come across as trivializing the illness. If you want to introduce a treatment idea, make sure you are respectful about the seriousness of depression. “It’s important that you stay on your medication and keep seeing your doctor. I’ve found some information on aromatherapy. Would you like to look into it with me?”

- While it is important to accept the person in the state they are in, don't let it totally consume your life. Otherwise, you'll fall in a heap and won't be much help to anyone. You need to take care of yourself. "I am committed to you and to helping you. But I also need to eat / shop / go out for coffee / ring a friend / see a movie to recharge my batteries. Then I can look after you better."

Best Things to Say To Someone Who is Depressed

[PRINT](#) [EMAIL](#)

It is most tempting, when you find out someone is depressed, to attempt to immediately fix the problem. However, until the depressed person has given you permission to be their therapist (as a friend or professional), the following responses are more likely to help.

The things that didn't make me feel worse are words which 1) acknowledge my depression for what it is (No 'it's just a phase') 2) give me permission to feel depressed (No 'but why should you be sad?')

Here is the list from contributors to a.s.d.:

1. "I love you!"
2. "I Care"
3. "You're not alone in this"
4. "I'm not going to leave/abandon you"
5. "Do you want a hug?"
6. "I love you (if you mean it)."
7. "It will pass, we can ride it out together."
8. "When all this is over, I'll still be here (if you mean it) and so will you."
9. "Don't say anything, just hold my hand and listen while I cry."
10. "All I want to do know is give you a hug and a shoulder to cry on.."
11. "Hey, you're not crazy!"
12. "May the strength of the past reflect in your future."
13. "God does not play dice with the universe." - A. Einstein
14. "A miracle is simply a do-it-yourself project." - S. Leek
15. "We are not primarily on earth to see through one another, but to see one another through" - (from someone's sig)
16. "If the human brain were simple enough to understand, we'd be too simple to understand it." - a codeveloper of Prozac, quoted from "Listening to Prozac"

17. "You have so many extraordinary gifts--how can you expect to live an ordinary life?" - from the movie "Little Women" (Marmee to Jo)
18. "I understand your pain and I empathize"
19. "I'm sorry you're in so much pain. I am not going to leave you. I am going to take care of myself so you don't need to worry that your pain might hurt me."
20. "I listen to you talk about it, and I can't imagine what it's like for you. I just can't imagine how hard it must be."
21. "I can't really fully understand what you are feeling, but I can offer my compassion."
22. "You are important to me."
23. "If you need a friend..... (and mean it)"

When is depression hormonal?

Nearly every woman will experience depression at some point in her life. In many cases these feelings are not true mood disorders, but instead are signs of an underlying imbalance that can be alleviated, naturally.

Unfortunately many conventional healthcare practitioners treat depression as an isolated problem and are quick to offer prescription antidepressants. The most popular antidepressants are SSRI's (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors), which work by artificially increasing the serotonin in your brain. At Women to Women we recognize that your body's production of serotonin — and your resulting mood — depends on a dynamic balance among your body's many hormones. That's why it is no surprise to us that depression is a common symptom associated with so many forms of hormonal imbalance, from adrenal fatigue to menopause to thyroid dysfunction.

Once you understand the physical causes of your depression, you can often give your body the support it needs to overcome your feelings of sadness, without drugs. The most common imbalances related to depression are the following:

Adrenal fatigue. We often see depression in women who are burdened with high levels of constant stress, which results in [adrenal fatigue](#). The adrenal glands help mobilize the body to deal with stress by producing cortisol. They are also responsible for producing DHEA, a precursor hormone that helps regulate mood and promotes healthy energy levels and sex drive. When the adrenals are chronically straining to maintain high cortisol levels in response to unremitting stress, DHEA production suffers, resulting in an impaired ability to respond effectively to stress while maintaining proper energy and mood. This imbalance results in depression, fatigue, loss of libido, sleep disturbances and weight gain.

Hypothyroidism. Many of our patients have subclinical or acute [hypothyroidism](#), meaning the thyroid does not produce enough of its main hormone, thyroxine, or the liver doesn't properly convert this hormone into its active form, triiodothyronine. These issues can be a problem even when thyroid tests appear normal. The most common symptoms of suboptimal thyroid function are fatigue, depression, weight gain and hair loss.

Insulin resistance. Years of poor diet and eating too many refined carbohydrates and sugars cause the body to stop responding to insulin. As a result, your cells cannot absorb the glucose they need for energy and send signals to your brain to crave more carbohydrates and sugar. Satisfying that craving causes a short burst of serotonin, but when that burst wears off serotonin levels plunge. This explains why many women become addicted to sugar or carbs, while experiencing worsening depression.

Perimenopause and menopause. The hormonal shifts that occur during perimenopause and menopause often affect mood, in the form of mood swings, irritability, anxiety or depression. So-called “estrogen dominance” (really a deficiency of the mood-enhancing progesterone), can exacerbate symptoms of depression. In addition, perimenopausal women are more prone to problems with adrenal and thyroid function, as well as insulin resistance.

Natural relief for the causes of your depression

First and foremost, understand that the solution to your depression depends upon the severity of your symptoms. For women with major depressive disorder, bipolar disorder, or women who may be harmful to themselves or others, an at-home approach is not enough. Every woman with depression should discuss her feelings with her healthcare provider or a mental health professional to make sure she gets the help and relief she needs.

But for women with hormonal depression — like those whose symptoms are related to stress and adrenal fatigue, subclinical hypothyroidism or perimenopause — a natural approach can bring relief.

The basic idea is to solve the underlying imbalances that are causing your depression — and encourage your body to produce more serotonin naturally — by giving your body the support it needs to make and balance its hormones. This support comes in the form of medical-grade nutritional supplements, dietary changes, exercise and phytotherapy. Moderate daily sun exposure also helps by eliminating vitamin D deficiencies (vitamin D can have a profound effect on the brain by supporting serotonin production). At the same time, try to reduce the demands you place on your body, especially sources of chronic stress.

We’ve had great success in relieving feelings of depression in women naturally. We know depression can be discouraging but the good news is — you can feel like yourself again!

The Personal Program is a great place to start

The Personal Program promotes natural hormonal balance with nutritional supplements, our exclusive endocrine support formula, dietary and lifestyle guidance, and optional phone consultations with our Nurse–Educators. It is a convenient, at-home version of what we recommend to all our patients at the clinic.

- To learn more about the Program, go to:
<http://www.womentowomen.com/symptoms/depressed-a.aspx?id=1&campaignno=depression&adgroup=ag1depressed&keywords=depression>

If you have questions, don’t hesitate to call us toll-free at **1-800-798-7902**