

HOW TO HELP A LOVED ONE OR FRIEND WHO IS DEPRESSED



If you know someone who is depressed, you can help him get on the path to recovery. Even if he is already getting help, you can give support that will make recovery easier.

Avoid adding shame and blame to depression. Many depressed people feel like failures. They blame themselves for feeling sad. They think it is their fault that they are depressed. Sometimes a person makes bad choices that end up making life more stressful. There are ways in which a person's behavior can increase depression. But it is important, when helping someone who is depressed, to avoid adding shame to the depression.

Support your friend in getting the right kind of help. Help is available from many sources. Your friend might want to start with his primary care doctor. Another place to ask for guidance and referral is the church, temple or other religious organization that he attends.

Keep your expectations reasonable. When your loved one is depressed, she will not feel like doing everything she used to enjoy. Try not to get too disappointed, or to expect too much while the depression is bad. On the other hand, keep in mind that a depressed person often enjoys things more than she thought she would. With some encouragement and cheerleading, you can still do things together.

Support healthy habits. Your friend is probably neglecting himself in lots of ways. You can help by encouraging him to take good care of himself. Avoid being a nag or a pest about it, but praise your friend when he makes the effort to get enough sleep, eat a healthy meal, exercise, get to the doctor or therapist, or make time to enjoy being with people who care about him. If he is not careful about taking his medications because of how bad he feels, he will not benefit from taking them.

Let him know that sticking to good health habits, including taking his medicine as he is supposed to, is important. Reducing stress is another way that your friend can help himself. Encourage and support him in finding ways to make his life simpler and less stressful.

Support helpful treatment. If your loved one needs treatment and has found someone to provide psychotherapy, medications, or both, your encouragement is important. Talking about depression or taking medications for it can be helpful, but these treatments take time to work. You have to stick with them long enough. You have to get to the therapy sessions, and you have to take the medicines as you are supposed to do.

If there are problems like feeling that the therapist is not helping or that the medicines are causing bad side effects, it is important to let the person treating the depressed person know. You can help your friend get the most benefit from treatment by encouraging her to let others know if she is not getting enough help, or the right kind of help, from what she is doing.

©2012-2016 Beacon Health Options