

Helping someone with depression

It's not always easy to help someone who may be experiencing depression. It can be hard to know what to say or do. Here are some tips.

Talk to the person about how they're feeling.

Listen to what they're saying – sometimes, when a person wants to talk, they're not always seeking advice, but just need to talk about their concerns. Make it clear they have your full attention and you are listening properly. You may like to save any suggestions for a later discussion.

Maintain eye contact and sit in a relaxed position – positive body language will help you both feel more comfortable.

Use open-ended questions such as 'So tell me about...?', which require more than a 'yes' or 'no' answer. This is often a good way to start a conversation.

If your conversation becomes difficult or the person you're talking to gets angry, stay calm, be firm, fair and consistent, admit if you are wrong and don't lose control.

Often, just **spending time with the person** lets them know you care and can help you understand what they're going through.

Encourage the person to seek professional help from their family doctor or a mental health worker.

Take care of yourself. Supporting someone with depression can be demanding, so make sure you take some time out to look after yourself.

For more information about depression, effective treatments and how to help someone visit www.beyondblue.org.au or call the *beyondblue* info line on 1300 22 4636 (local call).

For urgent assistance call Lifeline on 13 11 14 (local call).



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Practical ways to help someone with depression

People with depression often don't see the point of doing anything and may feel that no one can really help them. Helping someone who isn't ready to recognise they need assistance may be very difficult.

DO – You can help someone by:

- Spending time talking about their experiences
- Indicating that you've noticed a change in their behaviour
- Letting them know you're there to listen without being judgmental
- Suggesting they see a doctor or mental health professional
- Assisting them to make an appointment and/or going with them to see a doctor or mental health professional
- Asking how their appointment went
- Talking openly about depression and assisting them to find information
- Encouraging them to exercise, eat well and become involved in social activities
- Keeping in touch and encouraging close friends and family to do the same.

DON'T – It's unhelpful to:

- Pressure them to 'snap out of it', 'get their act together' or 'cheer up'
- Stay away or avoid them
- Tell them they just need to stay busy or get out more
- Pressure them to party more or wipe out how they're feeling with drugs or alcohol
- Assume the problem will just go away.

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