

STRATEGIES for MINDFUL LIVING

Courtesy of UAB Employee Assistance & Counseling Center

Supporting a loved one with DEPRESSION

Depression is a serious but treatable disorder that affects millions of people. It gets in the way of everyday life, causing tremendous pain, hurting not just those suffering from it but also impacting everyone around them. If someone you love is depressed, you may be experiencing any number of difficult emotions, including helplessness, frustration, anger, fear, guilt and sadness. These feelings are all normal. It's not easy dealing with a friend or family member's depression. And if you neglect your own health, it can become overwhelming. That said, your companionship and support can be crucial to your loved one's recovery. You can help them to cope with depression symptoms, overcome negative thoughts, and regain their energy, optimism, and enjoyment of life. Start by learning all you can about depression and how to best talk about it with your friend or family member. But as you reach out, don't forget to look after your own emotional health — you'll need it to provide the full support your loved one needs.



1. RECOGNIZING DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS

Your loved one may be experiencing depression symptoms if they...

- » Doesn't seem to care about anything anymore.
- » Expresses a bleak or negative outlook on life.
- » Frequently complains of aches and pains.
- » Sleeps less than usual or oversleeps.
- » Eats more or less than usual, and has recently gained or lost weight.
- » Drinks more or abuses drugs.

2. HOW TO TALK ABOUT DEPRESSION

If you don't know where to start, the following suggestions may help. But remember that being a compassionate listener is much more important than giving advice. You don't have to try to "fix" your friend or family member; you just be a good listener. Often, the simple act of talking face to face can be an enormous help to someone suffering from depression.



WAYS TO START THE CONVERSATION:

- » "I've been feeling concerned about you lately."
- » "Recently, I have noticed some differences in you and wondered how you are doing."
- » "I wanted to check in with you because you have seemed pretty down lately."

QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK:

- » "When did you begin feeling like this?"
- » "Did something happen that made you start feeling this way?"
- » "How can I best support you right now?"
- » "Have you thought about getting help?"

Remember, being supportive involves offering encouragement and hope. Very often, this is a matter of talking to the person in language that they will understand and can respond to while in a depressed state of mind.

3. ENCOURAGE THE PERSON TO GET HELP

While you can't control someone else's recovery from depression, you can start by encouraging the depressed person to seek help. Suggest talking to a therapist, consulting with their doctor, or joining a support group.



4. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

There's a natural impulse to want to fix the problems of people we care about, but you can't control someone else's depression. You can, however, control how well you take care of yourself. It's just as important for you to stay healthy as it is for the depressed person to get treatment, so make your own wellbeing a priority.

