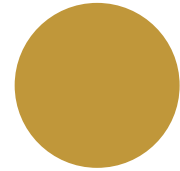
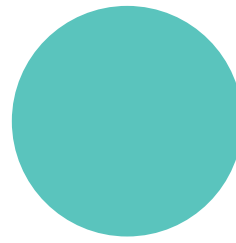


How you can help someone with depression



If someone close to you is depressed, you're probably wondering what you can do to help them.

Your support could mean a lot. Research shows that young people are most likely to turn to close friends or family for support, so being there for them could make a big difference.

Here are some tips on what to do (and what not to do) when you're in this situation.

Getting started...

It's not always easy to know how to help someone who is experiencing depression. They may feel that no-one can really help them, so be prepared for any kind of reaction.

But if the person is ready to talk, here are some tips on how to go about it...

Initiate the talk

Choose a time and place that's private, and where you both feel comfortable.

Listen more than talk

Often when a person wants to talk, they're not necessarily seeking advice, but just need to talk it through. Listening, rather than talking, is a way of understanding how someone feels. This is called active listening. You may like to save any suggestions, solutions or advice for a later discussion - and instead, offer neutral comments such as 'I can see how that would be hard'.

Use appropriate body language

Body language plays an important role in helping the person feel more comfortable. To show you are listening, try to maintain eye contact and sit in a relaxed position.

Use open-ended questions

Open-ended questions are a good way to start a conversation. They can't be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'. Some examples are 'So tell me about..?' or 'What's troubling you?'

Difficult conversations

Sometimes people may find it awkward to discuss their thoughts and emotions openly. They may even get angry with you when you ask if they're okay.

The following tips may be helpful when approaching a difficult conversation:

- Stay calm
- Be firm, fair and consistent
- If you are wrong, admit it.

Spend time together

Often, just taking the time to talk to or be with the person lets them know you care and can help you understand what they're going through.

Other practical ways to help.

People with depression often don't see the point of doing anything, and may feel that no one can really help them.

It's not easy to help someone who isn't willing to talk about it. So here are some common do's and don'ts for helping a person with depression.

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fact sheet

5

DO - You can help someone by:

- Spend time listening to them talk about their experiences (without being judgmental)
- Suggest they see a doctor or health professional
- Help them to make an appointment with a doctor or health professional
- Perhaps go with the person to the doctor or health professional
- Ask how their appointment went
- Help them to find information about depression
- Talk openly about depression (i.e don't avoid the subject like it's something to be ashamed of)
- Encourage them to become involved in social activities
- Encourage them to exercise and eat well
- Provide a change of scenery occasionally
- Maintain contact
- Encourage other close friends and family to adopt a similar, supportive approach.

DON'T - It's unhelpful to:

- Pressure them to 'snap out of it', 'get their act together', or 'harden 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.

What else do I need to keep in mind?

What you can do to help - and how much, and for how long - will really depend on your relationship with the person. Keep the following things in mind:

Take care of yourself

As a family member or friend of someone who is experiencing depression, it's important to look after yourself too. Take time to relax and enjoy things you like doing.

Sometimes you can help "too much"

If the person is relying on you as their only source of support - and you're finding it a bit overwhelming - it's a good idea to find other help. Remember you're not a counsellor, and your friend may need professional help.

Get advice from others

You don't need to do this on your own. There is help and advice available from other people. Check out the section below.

Where to get help:

If you want to chat about how you're feeling, or you've got any questions, you can;

Text The Lowdown team for free on 5626

Email The Lowdown team in the Chat section of www.thelowdown.co.nz. You can also ask them to give you a call back if you want to talk on the phone.

Call the Depression Helpline on 0800 111 757