

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP SOMEONE WITH DEPRESSION

The most important thing anyone can do for the depressed person is to help him or her get an appropriate evaluation and treatment by a professional. Once they have started treatment, it is important to encourage them to stick with treatment as improvement does not often immediately occur. Always encourage them to comply with their doctors orders regarding medication and the abstinence from illicit drugs and alcohol. The second most important thing is to offer emotional support. This involves understanding, patience, affection, and encouragement. Do not disparage feelings expressed, but point out realities and offer hope. Do not ignore remarks about suicide. Report them to the depressed person's doctor or therapist. Invite the depressed person for walks, outings, and other activities. Be gently insistent if your invitation is refused. Encourage participation in activities that once gave pleasure, but don't push the depressed person to undertake too much too soon. Don't blame them for their illness. Do not make comments that suggest the person is faking illness or being lazy, or expect him or her "to snap out of it." Depression is a real illness with biological causes. Someone who is depressed can't snap out of it any more than someone with diabetes or heart disease can snap out of it.

Depressive disorders make one feel exhausted, worthless, helpless and hopeless. Such negative thoughts and feelings make some people feel like giving up. It is important to realize that these negative views are part of the depression and typically do not accurately reflect the actual circumstances. Negative thinking fades as treatment begins to take effect. In the meantime:

- Help them set realistic goals.
- Help them set priorities and break down goals into manageable tasks.
- Encourage them to be with other people rather than isolate themselves.
- Encourage them to participate in activities that may make you feel better.
- Encourage them to exercise
- Encourage them to postpone important decisions until depression has lifted
- Promote optimism, hope, and positive thinking.

Finally, understand that your support is not the cure for depression. Don't blame yourself if their depression continues. You can only do so much.