

HELPING SOMEONE YOU LOVE

When a loved one suffers from depression, your support and encouragement can play an important role in his or her recovery. However, depression can also drain you and wear you down if you do not take care of yourself in the process.



As you watch your loved one struggle, it may cause you to feel any number of emotions, including frustration, anger, helplessness and fear, to guilt and sadness. All these feelings are normal, so do not become discouraged. It is not easy dealing with another person's depression, so it's vital that you continue to take care of yourself. It is not selfishness to think of your own needs and emotional health—it's a necessity! You cannot help someone else if you are run down, overwhelmed and exhausted.

I know firsthand what it is like to suffer with depression, and I also know what it is like to deal with a loved one who is struggling. I am not a doctor or counselor, but through personal experience, I've learned some things about depression. It is through that applied experience I'd like to offer you some practical tips when dealing with depression in someone you love.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- **Do not underestimate the seriousness of depression** and assume your loved one will be fine. Depression, in my opinion, is far more than a disease or some type of mental illness, and it does far more than simply hurt. Depression is devastating and debilitating, it cripples the mind, heart, spirit and soul. Therefore, never tell someone to "just get over it." Telling someone, "*It's all in your head,*" or "*Look on the bright side,*" or "*Snap out of it,*" will not help. Your loved one cannot just "snap out of it" by choosing to get better.
 - **What you can say that may help** is, "*You are not alone, I'm here for you.*" "*I don't understand how you feel, but I care about you and want to help.*" "*You are important to me, tell me how I can help.*"
- **Don't ask generalized questions**, such as, "*How are you feeling?*" or "*Is everything ok?*" These questions are too vague and will only lead to vague responses.
 - **Ask open-ended questions** that will require more than a one word response. Instead ask, "*When did you begin feeling this way?*" "*Did something happen that caused you to feel this way?*" "*How can I best support you right now?*"



For more information, insight into depression, or practical tips, consider *Finally Free: Breaking the Bonds of Depression without Drugs*. Order at www.LibertyinChristMinistries.com or anywhere books are sold.

- **Avoid common communication barriers.** Don't say, "You're not thinking clearly," "If you'll calm down, I'll listen to you." "Stop talking nonsense, get that thought out of your head," "Why don't you..." or "Why did you do that?" These kinds of statement tend to shutdown communication.

- When talking with someone about the depression, remember **being supportive is about offering encouragement and hope.**



- **Be a good Listener.** Be patient, listen attentively, and when responding don't judge or criticize how the person feels. Being a compassionate listener is far more important than giving good advice. You do not have to try and "fix" your loved one, just be a good listener. So often, just having someone to talk to about how he or she is feeling can be a wonderful encouragement and help to battle the depression.

- **Watch for changes in behavior.** Take note if your loved one exhibits any changes in sleep patterns, loss or gain in appetite, withdraws from friends or activities he or she once enjoyed, turns to drugs or alcohol, anything that is completely out of the norm for him or her.

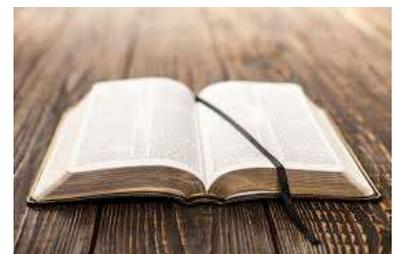
- **Do not take it personally.** Depression makes it difficult for a person to connect on an emotional level with anyone, even the people he or she loves most. Depressed people often withdraw, or say hurtful things and lash out in anger. Your loved one, at times, may push you away or say things that are cruel. Remember this is a symptom of the depression, not your loved one, so be understanding and try not to take it personally.



- **Seek Support.** Depression is overwhelming for everyone involved. Join a support group or a Bible study. Talk to a counselor, pastor, or confide in a trusted friend who can help you get through this difficult time. You do not need to go into detail or betray a confidence; rather, focus on your emotional needs.

- **Know when to get help.** There is no shame in seeking medical or professional help.
 - **If the depression worsens or you feel there is risk of suicide, do not panic and seek help immediately. National Suicide Hotline: 1-800-273-8255, or call your local prevention hotline number.**

- **Hold onto faith.** Above all, do not lost hope. Your loved one is encouraged best when those around him or her remain hopeful. Stay focused on Jesus and remain connected to Him through His Word and Holy Spirit. Assure your loved one often of God's love for him or her personally. Read Scripture aloud and play worship music in your home to help keep a positive atmosphere.



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