

Helping Someone Who Might Be Depressed

Individuals who might be depressed could use: attention, support, a conversation, an outing, and more. However, something that isn't needed is for someone to say, "It could be much worse", "Some people can't get out of bed", or "People in third-world countries don't have clean drinking water". All of these things might be true, but none of these things have anything to do with an individual who feels depressed. These evaluative comments are a comparison about the legitimacy of someone's depression relative to something that isn't a justifiable reference point.

Suggestions to help an individual who might be depressed:

- Don't Make Assumptions – An individual might have something that bothers their mental well-being, but might not be ready for help or to disclose their feelings. An interested party might have a concern that something is wrong, but an emotional disclosure about the source of an individual's pain cannot be forced. However, you can let someone know that you're available to provide support.
- Offer Assistance - Ask, "Is there anything you want to discuss?"; then, wait for a response. This type of inquiry demonstrates that someone is interested in their well-being. Then, if an individual doesn't want to answer or doesn't respond, don't force the communication; instead, wait until a later time to ask again, but don't harass them to disclose something there isn't a readiness to discuss.
- Don't Be Judgmental - A challenge with disclosing emotional challenges can be related to others' judgments or the stigma sometimes associated with depression. Affected individuals can be incorrectly labeled as being weak, lacking coping skills, or some other evaluative comment. Therefore, don't provide any commentary that might make anyone feel evaluated; instead, make an individual feel comfortable that there isn't anything that can't be or should make themselves feel ashamed to discuss.

- Allow for Disclosures on Their Own Time - An individual might not be ready to disclose information about something that makes them feel depressed at that moment, but that doesn't mean that there won't be a desire to do so in the future.
- Let Them Tell Their Story – It can be difficult for someone to move past the challenge(s) to disclose a personal struggle with depression or something else; therefore, once someone starts to tell their story ... try to be an extra good listener. This will allow an individual to share anything that there is comfort in sharing without having to think through responses to questions - -- at least at that moment. This approach will allow an individual to freely release information as much as desired, as questions can be delayed until a later time. Also, an inappropriate question may cause an individual to stop disclosing information and even worse might prevent further information from being shared.
- Nothing but Unconditional Support – The goal is to help someone who is depressed, which means providing unconditional support without judging. The issues that caused an individual to become depressed might not be important to someone inquiring, but the issue is still significant to the affected individual. Therefore, once the conversation starts, remove any judgments, assumptions, analysis, or closed-minded thoughts to have an open discussion.

Depression is a personal battle, but it doesn't have to and shouldn't be fought alone. An effective strategy to help someone who faces a personal challenge is to provide unconditional support to resolve any issue(s) during their recovery.

Anyone who needs assistance should contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org> or 1-800-273-8255.

Additional information about dealing with depression can be obtained in Beyond SPRH's book "[Choosing to Take a Stand: Changed me, my life, and my destiny](#)".