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## Depression

Factsheet for parents and teachers

### How you can help a person who is depressed?

*Because depression destroys self-esteem and confidence, family and friends can take a key role in helping a depressed person feel worthwhile again.*

*Perhaps the most important thing family and friends can do is to encourage the depressed person to get appropriate treatment. The very nature of depression -- the feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, and worthlessness -- can keep a depressed person from seeking help.*

*When symptoms linger beyond a reasonable time, or if there seems no apparent reason for their persistent feelings of unhappiness and gloom, the observant and caring friend or relative should assist the depressed person to get professional assistance.*

*If they are receiving treatment for their depression ask the helping professional for specific things that you can do that will help to speed up their recovery.*

Family and friends can also provide much needed support, love, and encouragement by applying the following "Do's" and "Don'ts":


#### DO

- ✓ Maintain as normal a relationship as possible.
- ✓ Point out distorted negative thinking without being critical or disapproving.
- ✓ Acknowledge that the person is suffering and in pain.
- ✓ Offer kind words and pay compliments.
- ✓ Express affection.
- ✓ Show that you care, respect, and value them.
- ✓ Encourage and support them to be proactive about their health ie eating healthy food and getting adequate exercise.

#### DON'T

- ✗ Blame the depressed person for his or her condition.
- ✗ Criticise; pick on, "put down" or voice disapproval until the depressed person is feeling better.
- ✗ Say or do anything to exacerbate their poor self-image.
- ✗ Bully or manipulate them into doing or saying things.

<http://www.trippin.co.nz>



In addition, friends and family can help by keeping the depressed person busy and active. Depression tends to feed on itself, and a moderately depressed person becomes apathetic and inactive leading to more depression, more withdrawal, and more inactivity, resulting in a vicious cycle. Gentle assertiveness may be required to stand by them, particularly if the individual is withdrawn and rejecting.

Depression typically involves strong feelings of guilt, and it is important that family and friends do not add to these feelings by blaming the individual for his or her symptoms. Depressed people often arouse anger in others, and it is tempting to become impatient, to tell them to snap out of it, or to indicate that depression is a sign of weakness. The depressed person is in pain and needs understanding and help.

Also, the possibility of suicide must always be considered in cases of depression. Though a depression may appear relatively mild, it does not exclude the possibility of suicide. Sometimes seemingly mild depression has much deeper roots. Nor is it true, as many people believe, that a person who talks about suicide will not attempt it. Those who attempt suicide often appeal first for help by threatening to do so. Even when there appears little or no danger of suicide; a mental health professional should be consulted when a serious depression is suspected. The earlier the depressed person receives help, the sooner the symptoms are alleviated and the speedier the recovery.

Depression is the most treatable of all the mental illnesses. Individuals no longer have to suffer its debilitating symptoms. With modern treatment methods, they can return to full and productive lives.