



A Purpose

When I was in the depth of my Depression, I liked being alone, rather insular. I became obsessive about cleaning/gardening and having everything "just so". It was the only thing I could hold onto, that gave me purpose. That, and my dog. She was a responsibility I took very seriously with walks, grooming, affection and a good diet. She became my life and consequently, my saviour, at my lowest, most darkest point.

You can assist us by giving us a purpose, a "job" to do...may it only be a small one, it can help in rebuilding our confidence and self esteem.

It's a long tunnel; it's harsh, it's dark with only occasional glimpses of light. But after all this, please remember there IS light at the end of the tunnel we have found ourselves in and we need your help, your kindness and compassion to just keep walking.

Thank you.

Beck

Beck can be contacted by submitting an enquiry on the FOCUS website :
www.focushealth.com.au

Do you know someone whose behaviour has changed?

This leaflet is designed for family and friends of those of us who suffer from Depression with some simple points on how to recognise the illness and be more compassionate and helpful in everyday actions.



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Depression



My Story

To Help Your Family & Friends

How You Can Help

Depression is a daily thing - not sometimes, but always. It doesn't just come and go.

When we are depressed, we feel like we are in a deep, dark hole in which there is no light, no ladder, no way out.



Some Symptoms

If you feel someone you know may be suffering from

Depression, here are a few of the symptoms:

- ~ change in social behaviour and personality
- ~ change in dress
- ~ loss of interest in the things and activities we used to do
- ~ loss of appetite for food and sex/ weight loss
- ~ sleeping more than usual
- ~ avoidance of people and places
- ~ feelings of hopelessness, despair, sadness
- ~ unable to cope with a daily routine
- ~ unable to make decisions
- ~ thoughts of suicide or simply of "not being here"
- ~ lack of self-esteem and self-care
- ~ slumped posture/shoulders

When we are depressed, we do not communicate as often or as effectively as we would otherwise.

We feel misunderstood, alone, negative, unwanted and have no enthusiasm for Life.

We feel lethargic, unworthy, guilty.

We apologise a lot.

We cry a lot.



What Doesn't Help

I have lived with Depression for 10 years now and have recognised what it is that people do or say, which is unhelpful or hurtful. Saying things like:

- ~ come on, you'll be right
- ~ get over it
- ~ get out of bed/are you still sleeping?
- ~ tomorrow will be better
- ~ I don't get it
- ~ asking 'why' with an attitude
- ~ saying things that could make us feel guilty

Also:

- ~ being in a bad mood
- ~ being tough does not work for us
- ~ being blasé about our feelings - they are, after all, *our* feelings
- ~ please don't push us or demand a response or reaction from us. There will be little appreciation for asking us to be strong.



Instead Try

- ~ being kind and gentle with us
- ~ be compassionate
- ~ understand that we are highly sensitive
- ~ try to re-focus our mind on good/pretty/happy things and memories
- ~ tell us a **good** joke (a bad one will only make us cry),
- ~ listen to an up beat tune and have a little dance
- ~ take us for a walk in the garden if the outside world seems too big or scary.



Communication

Even today, I sometimes feel that the outside world is too big and scary for me to venture into. I may need to ask a friend to accompany me or just to give me strength and courage in order to accomplish my tasks. It helps. It's comforting to know that someone else believes in me.

- ~ you can talk to us about your day/life...but nothing too tedious, we can't cope with more stress as there is enough of that in our own mind
- ~ ask us if we wish to talk about anything, anything at all - a memory, a wish, a feeling, but don't judge us or our feelings we are in a very dark place already.
- ~ also, the many things we used to do such as, baths, food, nail polish, shaving (for men), nice clothing, jewellery, make-up, hair, magazines ... have all become little luxuries, of which we feel we are now no longer worthy. So therefore, you will hear "no thank you" many times.

"Mostly I find I can't justify my feelings; they just are."

- ~ ask if there is something we need or you can do for us. If the answer is 'no', then go about your day, as usual.
- ~ be affectionate even if we don't seem to like it. It's difficult for us during that time to show affection. Your hugs and kisses will not be in vain. They will be expressed with gratitude at a later time. Trust my Mum, she knows.
- ~ encourage us to seek a well informed diagnosis and treatment.
- ~ encourage us to take the medication regularly as a break will cause confusion to body and mind and we will have to start at the beginning again.
- ~ gather as much information about Depression as you can. Familiarise yourself with this illness, its history and try to understand how your loved one may be feeling.