

## Supporting a Loved One With Major Depressive Disorder

Knowing how to support your loved one on their major depressive disorder (MDD) treatment journey can be a daunting task for any caregiver. Depression can be a difficult and overwhelming experience for people with MDD, as well as their loved ones. As a caregiver, you want to be there for your loved one every step of the way on their treatment journey. Fortunately, there are many ways to support them, and resources are available to help with this.

### YOU ARE IMPORTANT!

Understanding your loved one's journey with MDD can help you gain insight into their symptoms and experiences.<sup>1</sup> Evidence shows that social support from caregivers may help protect against depression.<sup>2</sup>

Experiencing symptoms of depression can be distressing and can impair your loved one's ability to function in society, at work, or during their everyday activities.<sup>3</sup>

*Recognizing depression symptoms in your loved one can help you stay informed and can help you support them.*

### OFFERING PRACTICAL SUPPORT:

Having someone to help with chores or be present during a crisis, also known as practical support, may indirectly benefit the mental health of your loved one by providing relief from chronic and acute stress.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 Help with everyday tasks and responsibilities.
- 2 Assist with appointment scheduling and medication management.<sup>4</sup>
- 3 Offer transportation to appointments.
- 4 Provide financial support if necessary or possible.<sup>5</sup>



American Psychiatric Association. 2013. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (5th ed.)

## TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

When caregivers have less of a burden to bear, it's expected to positively impact the course of the depressive disorder in their loved ones.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, taking care of yourself not only benefits you as a caregiver, but it also benefits your loved one.

- 1 **Practice self-care and stress management techniques.**
- 2 **Seek support for yourself, if needed.**
- 3 **Set boundaries and manage expectations.**
- 4 **Maintain a positive outlook and seek help when necessary.**<sup>5</sup>

## FIVE WAYS TO HELP SOMEONE WITH DEPRESSION INCLUDE



- 1 **LEARN** more about depression: Depression is a medical condition, rather than a personal weakness.



- 2 **RECOGNIZE** signs of depression early: Early warning signs may include lack of motivation, trouble sleeping, or feeling fatigued.



- 3 **COMMUNICATE** and listen actively to your loved one's concerns, avoid judgment, and offer empathy.



- 4 **REACT** with composure and reason.
  - i. Remain calm as much as possible.



- 5 **SEEK** out the assistance of others for support.
  - i. Seek out appropriate healthcare providers.
  - ii. Connect with emotional support groups.

### More Information and Resources

There are other helpful resources available for caregivers and family members of patients with MDD. By offering support, family members can connect those in need with resources to optimize their recovery journey.

#### Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)



DBSA is a well-known mental health organization. It provides informational resources and online and in-person local support groups for patients with depression or bipolar disorder and their caregivers<sup>7</sup>

#### DBSA Wellness Tracker



Family members may be more likely to notice when their loved ones are experiencing changes in mood or behavior. This downloadable resource can help you keep track of mood symptoms and treatment goals<sup>8</sup>

### Planning for a Crisis

People with depression are at an increased risk for suicide. As a caregiver, taking the time to prepare yourself for the possibility that your loved one may be having suicidal thoughts could be lifesaving.

#### 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline



988 Chat and Text connects individuals with crisis counselors at accredited centers in the US and certain territories. Counselors are available 24/7 to provide emotional support or direct individuals to specialized support services<sup>9</sup>

#### DBSA Crisis Plan



Family and friends want to be there for loved ones experiencing a mental health crisis, but people in crisis can't always say what they need. Fill out this form to describe the help you might need during a severe depressive or manic episode<sup>10</sup>

#### Life Action Plan



Individuals with depression or bipolar disorder can fill out this interactive plan for life form to formulate the steps they will take if they have suicidal thoughts or are otherwise in a state of crisis<sup>11</sup>

### References

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