

## What to Do When Your Loved Ones Are Depressed



Depression can affect anyone regardless of their age, gender and social status. A [WHO](#) statistics revealed that about 280 million people suffer from depression worldwide. This shows that depression is a major health issue and anyone can suffer from it.

As a partner, parent or friend, it can be very difficult to handle the effects that depression has on our loved ones. This is because when a person is depressed, they might do things that seem unusual and totally different from what we are used to e.g

sleeping all day, hoarding, self-isolation, skipping school, lack of concentration etc. In extreme situation, drugs could even be involved.

It becomes even more difficult for us when we realize that there is little or nothing we can do to make it all go away. We might even end up reacting in the wrong way or even overreacting.

In this article, I am going to talk about five steps you can take when your loved one is depressed.

Before we go on, here are some signs or indicators to know or identify if your spouse, children, parent or friends may be depressed.

## **15 Signs your loved one may be depressed**

- Skipping classes or school.
- Self-Isolation
- Lack of focus or concentration
- Loss of interest in hobbies and pursuits.
- Binge-eating.
- Reduction in weight without exercising or dieting.
- Sudden Increase in weight.
- Having suicidal thoughts.
- Bursting into tears at random moments.
- Sudden change in personality e.g an extrovert suddenly becoming introverted.
- Distancing from friends and family.
- Sleeping all day.
- Mood swings.
- Alcohol Dependency.
- Drug use.

**NOTE:** The signs and symptoms of depression varies depending on the person. Just because a person exhibits these signs above does not automatically mean they are depressed and just because a person shows none of them doesn't mean they are not depressed.

## **Five Steps to Take when your Loved One is Depressed**

## **Step One: Get more knowledge on depression, its effects and how you can provide support.**

When your family member or friend starts showing signs of being depressed, the first thing you need to do is to get more information on depression and other similar mental health issues. You can do these by reading books on mental health or finding information on mental health on the internet. Mental health resources like books, blogs, publications, podcasts etc will help you know what to expect, what not to do and how to support them.

Do not just listen to your friends or neighbors. Do your own research. Examples of places where you can find online resources on mental health are: [Happiful](#) ,[OC87 Recovery Diaries](#) etc.

## **Step Two: Join online mental health communities and groups**

The Internet has made it very easy for people with same needs to gather together, share experiences and learn together. There are online communities on mental health which you can join. Some of them can be found on Instagram, Facebook, Quora etc.

On these groups, you can read mental health articles, share ideas and get specific answers to your questions. Examples of such online communities are Quora mental health spaces, [Mind](#), [Together all](#),etc.

## **Step Three: Listen without being judgmental**

People get depressed for various reasons like grief, debt, breakups etc. When this happens, they tend to blame themselves and experience feelings of guilt and shame. They find it difficult to talk to people about their feelings because they are afraid people might judge them or mock them.

I know a man who got scammed of a large sum of money. Because he thought an adult man like him should not have fallen for such a scam, he didn't tell anyone. Although he was suffering inside, he kept quiet about it and became depressed.

There are a lot of depressed people who find it hard to talk about their feelings and decide to keep it in. As a concerned partner, colleague or friend, you need to let them talk about their feelings and listen to them without being judgmental; Not in words, not in actions.

## **Step Four: Provide companionship**

Self-isolation is one of the most dangerous symptoms of depression. When a person gets depressed, they tend to self-isolate. They stop hanging out, go silent on social media. (if the person is an extrovert). In short, they just close down. If you really care for them, you shouldn't allow that happen. I do admit that this can be very difficult and you can get insulted or shut down but do not allow this faze you

Visit regularly. Call them. Tell them about interesting things happening. Go for a walk together. In fact, if it is possible, you can decide to move in with them.

### **Step Five: Seek professional help for your loved ones**

The truth is that what you can do for your loved one who is depressed is little compared to what a professional can do. Getting help from a professional will not only help your loved ones get to the root of the problem but would also help you.

This is because when you take care of a depressed person, you experience feelings like anger, guilt and other symptoms of caregiver stress. Therefore, you need the services of a professional. Check around you. There are therapists, health clinics that offer mental health counselling that you can meet with. There are even online therapists and counsellors you can speak with and employ their services on the internet.

### **Step Six: Be patient**

I added this step because I know how frustrating it can be when you are doing all you can to help your spouse, child, parent, friend who is depressed. You get tired and frustrated since it sometimes feels like nothing is working.

Don't give up. Keep doing what you are doing. Depression improves. Yes. But it always takes time. So do not give up on your family or friend who is depressed.

**Know This:** Anybody can be depressed and your sincere support and assistance will go a long way in making sure they get better.