

Supporting an older person with depression is far from easy. The illness will drain your loved one's energy, optimism and enthusiasm. They are likely to feel sad a lot of the time and lose interest in the things they used to enjoy. It won't get better overnight, nor can they just "snap out of it". You will need to muster up all the sensitivity and patience you can to get them (and yourself) through this difficult time.

The best thing you can do to support your loved one is be there for them and listen to them. Keep on reminding them that depression is an illness that can affect anyone, so they are not to blame for feeling down.

You can also reassure them that things will get better with time and help so they won't feel this way forever.

Here are some useful tips on how best to support your loved one and how to avoid becoming depressed yourself.

Contact us

Many Age Concerns provide a range of services that support older people such as:

- ◆ Information and advice
- ◆ Day centres and lunch clubs
- ◆ Befriending schemes
- ◆ Bereavement support
- ◆ Transport to activities
- ◆ Exercise programmes
- ◆ A benefits check

For more information please contact our free National Information Line on 0800 00 99 66, or your local Age Concern.

Your local Age Concern



AGE
Concern

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Registered Charity no 261794

December 2008
PA021/11/08 50,000

Supporting an older person with depression



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Encourage them to get help

Sounds easy enough, but this can be tricky. If your loved one is reluctant to see the doctor about their depression, gently suggest they go for a physical check-up instead. The GP will be able to spot underlying problems. Ask if they would like you to go along with them for moral support.

Learn about depression

Find out as much as you can so you understand what you are dealing with and what you can expect.

Your emotional support will help



Be willing to listen

Encourage your loved one to share their feelings and try to be a good listener. Avoid offering advice unless they ask for it and saying things like, "I know how you feel".

Encourage activity and a healthy lifestyle

Exercise and healthy eating go a long way to relieving depression. Suggest things you can do together like go for walks, take up a hobby, join a group or class. And remember to lead by example!

Support their treatment

It can be weeks before your loved one feels the benefits of treatment so you need to encourage them to follow through with their therapist appointments and take their medication. Treatments should not be stopped, or doses changed, without speaking to the doctor first.

Offer practical help

Pitching in where possible will be a big help, particularly if your loved one is low on energy. Things like organising appointments and transport, picking up prescriptions, and household chores like cooking, cleaning, buying food and paying bills are a good example.

Try to do things together as much as possible; being included will be good for their self-esteem.

Look into befriending schemes

If your loved one feels lonely or isolated, they may benefit from a befriending scheme. This is especially good if you don't live together and are worried they have no-one to talk to. Someone will visit them at home or call them regularly on the telephone. This could be a trained volunteer or a similarly-aged person also experiencing depression who could do with a chat too. Many rewarding friendships have come from this.

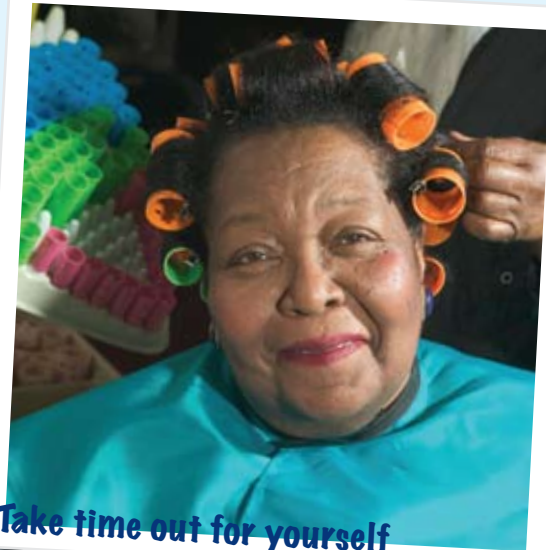
Get a free benefits check

Money worries can be a trigger for depression and can stand in the way of your loved one affording things that can help them to cope (e.g. taxis or a cleaner). Not all benefits are means-tested; some are based on difficulties you have carrying out everyday tasks often because of health conditions, or the fact you are a full-time carer. Many Age Concerns offer free checks.

Take care of yourself!

Make sure you look after yourself and get plenty of support, or your health and welfare may begin to suffer too. And if it does, you won't be in a position to help anyone. Try to eat well, get enough sleep and exercise regularly.

Be sure to share your feelings with a trusted family member or friend because talking about it can help you see the situation more clearly. If it's all getting too much, take a break or ask for help. Your GP or local Age Concern can refer you to Social Services for an assessment of your needs as a carer, to make sure you are getting the support and respite you need.



Take time out for yourself