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Depression: helping a friend

When someone we know or care about is depressed, **it can be difficult to know what to say or do**. Unless you've experienced a similar type of depression, it may be hard to relate to their situation. In addition, people are often uneasy to be in the presence of intense pain.

The best things you can do as a friend is avoid making light of their experience, let go of trying to rescue them, and don't offer advice. Instead, ***just show them you care***. Being present to their humanity, even while they suffer, demonstrates that they are worthy of your attention and respect.

A depressed person may often want to be alone, but they don't necessarily want to be alone all of the time. Showing up, being present, and listening can let them know they haven't been abandoned. You probably won't be able to help a depressed person feel much better, but your caring attitude and a few heartfelt words of sincere acceptance can often help make their experience easier to handle.

When you're in doubt about what to say to a friend who is depressed, think back to difficult times in your life. Remember what you most wanted from people, what was actually helpful, and what you wished them to do or say. Use your own experience as a guide, and just be an accepting, positive presence. Some things, like depression, can't be "fixed", but your non-judgment and a few kind words can ease your friend's pain.

Some Helpful Things to Say to Someone Who is Depressed:

"I'm not sure what to say, but I want you to know that I care"

"I'm sorry you're in so much pain"

"I can't imagine how hard this is for you, but I can tell this is painful for you"

"I understand, I've been there"

"I don't need to be entertained. I'd like to just sit with you for awhile and read a book or watch television if that's okay"

"You may not feel like eating, but just in case I bought a few groceries and snacks. I'll put the food in the fridge if you want it later"

"I know you don't *want* to be feeling so miserable"

"it's good to see you. Do you want a hug?"

"I can tell you barely have enough energy to cope with the pain you 're feeling. Do you mind if I take care of a few things for you? I could put your clothes away or dust. I know you'd do the same for me"

"I bought you a sweater and sneakers. Do you want to come for a walk on the beach, or just sit and talk at the beach for awhile?"

"Do you want to see a movie with me? There are a couple of movies out that might help you take your mind off things for awhile"