

## 5 Ways to Support Someone with Depression

**Help them keep clutter away.** A little help with dishes, laundry, sorting mail, etc. will help them maintain a calmer environment.

**Offer a healthy meal.** Depression may cause a person to eat very little, or overeat. Neglecting healthy eating only worsens a person's overall health and can cause deepening depression.

**Get them outside.** The benefits of going outside for a person with depression are huge. However, this may be the last thing a depressed person wants to do. Even a short walk or sitting in the sunshine can elevate a person's mood.

**Laugh with them.** Tell a silly joke, watch a funny movie, make faces - laughing releases endorphins which can counteract some symptoms of depression.

**Remind them why you care.** Talk about all the positive things that have happened, and will happen. Reinforce that they will get through this, and that you care about them.

**What not to say:** "You just need to think differently. Remember, happiness is a choice. You just need to suck it up. Be strong! Why aren't you trying harder? You don't even have anything to be depressed about!"

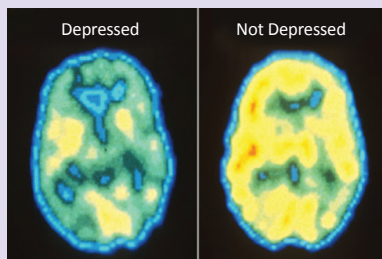
**MAINTAIN A TO-DO LIST.** Even the little things. This gives me tasks to do each day, and a sense of accomplishment when I complete them. Sometimes I might only be tricking myself by writing things down like, wash dishes, laundry, pick up my shoes or wash my hair. But it seems to work for me.

**GET OUT OF THE HOUSE AT LEAST ONCE A DAY.** This often feels like an impossible task. I may stand at the window looking at the outside and wishing I could go there. If I can, I make myself do it. If I can't, my husband will usually talk me into it.

**EXPRESS YOURSELF.** For me, that means painting or sketching. For others it might be journaling, cooking, sewing or running. Whatever it is put it on your to-do list. Having a hobby that allows me to

show my creative side helps keep me balanced. Personally, I don't let myself create pieces while in a deep depressive episode. I find I tend to focus on negative thoughts and images.

**HAVE SUPPORT** I am fortunate to have a great support team. This includes my husband, close friends, my doctors (my general practitioner and psychiatrist work together) and many others. Not everyone is so fortunate, I know. But find someone you can talk to and lean on.



Depressive illnesses are chemical disorders of the brain. Brain-imaging technologies, such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), have shown the brains of people who have depression look different than those without depression. The parts of the brain involved in mood, thinking, sleep, appetite, and behavior appear different. "Imaging research has confirmed that depression is, first and foremost, a brain disease," writes Helen S. Mayberg, M.D., a renowned neurologist, in the *Johns Hopkins Depression & Anxiety Bulletins*.

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