Tips for Helping Others

If someone you care about has depression, the best and most important thing you can do is support them. In order to support someone else, you also need to look after yourself. Here are a few pointers:

- **Educate yourself**- Understanding what depression is and how it affects the person you care about will help you be less frustrated and more supportive.

- **Encourage your friend to seek help** - Having someone he/she can trust, like you, is so important. But someone trying to cope with a mental disorder also needs treatment. Encourage them to see a doctor or psychologist to get the help he/she needs. Even if the problems don't seem that bad yet, seeking help early can prevent problems from getting worse.

- **Listen** - When you listen to and acknowledge their feelings, it sends the message that you care. Knowing that you have people who care about you is an important part of recovering from a mental disorder.

- **Be positive** - Positive moods can be contagious! It's really easy for someone with a mental disorder to focus only on the negative aspects of his/her life. Sharing your positive mood may help them see things from a different perspective.

- **Be patient** - Sometimes it can be frustrating when they start acting differently and may not want to do anything they used to like. Take a deep breath and remember that depression is making them feel this way. He/she can't just "snap out of it". Getting impatient will only make the situation worse. Stay positive and be patient. Encourage them to participate in social events. He/she may feel like it's too much work or effort, but will probably feel better afterwards.

- **Don't blame yourself** - It is not your fault that they have depression. Many different factors, including his/her genetic background, environment, and life experiences are involved. No one can "make" another person have depression.

- **Put yourself first** - On an airplane, they tell you to always put your oxygen mask on first in an emergency before you assist someone else. You'll be no help to anyone if you're passed out. With someone with a mental illness, if you burn yourself out by always putting him or her first, you won't be able to help anyone. It's absolutely okay (and important) to take time away to take care of yourself.

- **Don't try to change your friend** - You don't have to solve all of their problems or turn him/ her into a different kind of person. Just be present and supportive.

- **Have fun together** - They need someone who can have fun, relax, and laugh with him/ her. These are all important parts of their mental health (and yours!).

- **Be aware of suicide risk** - If they talk about death or suicide, don't ignore it or keep it a secret. Talk to a responsible adult who they also trust (e.g., residence assistant, counsellor, coach, professor). Let them know that you care about him/her and his/her life. If they are talking about suicide, it may be his or her way of indirectly asking for help.

Adapted from: https://www.jack.org/resources/everything-you-need-know-about-depression