

Depressed Persons May Need Help To Get Help

The very nature of the illness can interfere with the person's ability or wish to get help. Depression saps energy and self-esteem and makes a person feel tired, worthless, helpless, and hopeless.

Therefore:

Enlist the help of friends, your Residence Assistant, or Staff to get your friend the necessary help.

Contact the college counselor for advice on getting your friend to counseling.

If they threaten suicide, stay with the person and send someone for help.

Some things NOT to do:

Do NOT ignore him/her.
Do NOT criticize or shame.
Do NOT sympathize and claim to feel the same way.
Try NOT to get angry with the depressed person.
Do NOT think you can "cheer up" the person.

REMEMBER:

You are a **friend**. Be accepting without criticizing and available without being overly sympathetic. Get help to handle the situation if your friend will not agree to get help.

What Help Is Available On Shepherd's Campus?

Counseling Services, located on the ground floor of Gardiner Hall, are free to all students enrolled at Shepherd University. To access services, call the **Health Center at (304) 876-5161** or stop by the front desk to schedule an appointment.

The Counselor can assess the level of depression and assist the person in getting the appropriate care.

Please see our website at: <http://www.shepherd.edu/safweb/counseling> for additional information and on-line screenings (keyword: RAMBLER).

Shepherd University Counseling Services

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DEPRESSION:



What To Do

For A

Friend

Shepherd
UNIVERSITY

Over 17 million adults suffer from depression annually. Their lives as well as the lives of their families and friends are affected, but nearly 2/3 of depressed people do not get treatment because:

- Symptoms are not recognized
- Personal weakness is blamed
- So disabled that they can not reach out for help
- Misdiagnosed

What is a Depressive Illness?

A depressive illness is a “whole body” illness, involving the body, moods, thoughts, and behavior. It is *not* a passing sadness and cannot be wished away. People with a depressive illness cannot merely “pull themselves together” and get better. Without treatment symptoms can last for weeks, months, or years. Appropriate treatment, however, can help over 80% of those who suffer depression.

Depressive Illnesses Come in Various Forms

They can:

- Appear suddenly for no apparent reason
- Be triggered by a stressful event
- Be a “one-time” episode
- Be recurring episodes
- Be severe enough to limit functioning
- Be ongoing and chronic, but not stop a person from functioning

College Stressors That Can Lead to Depression:

- Greater academic demands
- Being on your own in a new environment
- Exposure to new people, ideas, and temptations
- Awareness of sexual orientation and identity
- Changes in social life

Symptoms of Depression Can Include:

- Persistent sad mood
- Loss of interest in ordinary activities
- Decreased energy, fatigue
- Sleep disturbances (insomnia, early wakening, oversleeping)
- Eating disturbances (loss of appetite and weight or weight gain)
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, making decisions
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness
- Thoughts of death, suicide, suicide attempts
- Irritability
- Excessive Crying
- Chronic aches and pains that do not respond to treatment
- **Use of alcohol or other drugs to deal with stressors**

A thorough diagnosis is needed if 5 or more symptoms persist for more than two weeks.

What can you do to help?

Friends and relatives are vitally important when one is going through a depression. Sit down with the depressed person and try to help them understand that depression is a blameless illness for which help is available. Your continued warm, friendly, support is essential, even if the depressed person seems to reject your help.

The most important thing you can do is encourage the individual to get into treatment. It is appropriate for friends to go along for moral support.

The second most important thing is to offer emotional support and encouragement for the person to remain in treatment until symptoms begin to abate (several weeks).

Invite the depressed person for walks, outings, to the movies, and encourage participation in activities that once gave pleasure. The depressed person needs diversion and company. Be gently insistent if your invitation is always refused, but be aware that too many demands can increase feelings of failure.

Do not ignore remarks about suicide. Most people do not commit suicide, but do have suicidal thoughts. If someone talks about suicide (has a plan, knows what they would do), seek professional help immediately!