

AWARE

OVERCOMING DEPRESSION.
CHANGING LIVES.

LET'S TALK ABOUT

HELPING SOMEONE
WITH DEPRESSION
& ANXIETY

There is hope. You can help.

If a friend, family member or someone else you care for has depression or anxiety, you may at times feel helpless or hopeless.

Most people can learn to manage depression and anxiety with appropriate treatment and support. You can play an important part in this with good understanding and a well-informed, caring and supportive approach.

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By working alongside the person who is unwell and their doctor, you can help speed up recovery, prevent relationship and family breakdown, and avoid other potentially negative consequences of the illness, such as unemployment, alcohol abuse, financial difficulties, or even suicide.



Look Out for the Signs

Depression and anxiety can affect us in a variety of ways, but the symptoms can usually be grouped under four headings. Different people will be affected in different ways.

DEPRESSION

THOUGHTS

They may think things like “I’m useless, nothing ever goes right” or that life isn’t worth living. They might also find it difficult to concentrate or make decisions.

FEELINGS

They may feel guilty, unhappy, worried, or angry.

BEHAVIOUR

They may cry more often, avoid people, become more forgetful, eat or sleep more or less than usual, misuse drugs or alcohol and/or hurt themselves.

PHYSICAL

FEELINGS

They may experience aches and pains with no obvious cause, feel more tired and have less energy than usual. They may gain or lose weight.

ANXIETY

They may think things like “Something bad is going to happen”, “I won’t be able to cope”, or “I feel bad so it must be bad”.

They may feel nervous, worried, fearful, restless or agitated.

They may avoid certain people, places, and situations, avoid going out at all or only go to places at certain times or with someone. They may misuse drugs or alcohol.

They may experience aches and pains, sweating, tingling, shaking, numbness, dizziness, dry mouth, nausea, diarrhoea, rapid/shallow breathing, or rapid heartbeat/palpitations.

THE LINK BETWEEN DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

These commonly go hand in hand. When you are depressed, you often worry about the future and experience symptoms of anxiety. Experiencing symptoms of anxiety over a long period can lead to depression.

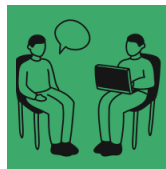
What Can Help?

The two main treatments are talking therapy, such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and self-help strategies. Medication such as anti-depressants are effective for moderate or severe depression, or when depression is accompanied by anxiety.

See our guides “Helping You with Depression” and “Helping You with Anxiety” for more information about the different types of treatment.

How Can You Help?

- Talk to them and ask how they feel.
- Be a good listener, even if it means hearing the same thing several times.
- Reassure them that depression and anxiety are treatable and it is not their fault.
- Encourage them to exercise and eat a balanced diet.
- Try some relaxation techniques.
- Reduce caffeine intake if they have anxiety.
- Suggest they avoid alcohol or keep it to a safe limit.
- Encourage them to speak with their GP.
You can offer to go with them to their appointment for support, but they must have some time alone with the doctor too.



The only thing more exhausting than being depressed is pretending that you're not.

Let's Talk

Take Them Seriously!

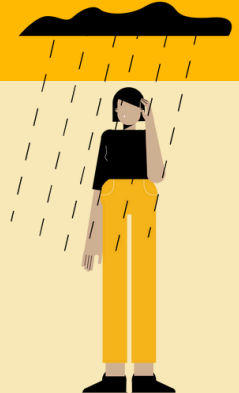
Above all, take them seriously; if they talk about feeling hopeless or suicidal, seek professional help straight away. Caring for someone with depression or anxiety can be difficult, stressful and lonely, but help and support are available.

You Might Feel...

- Impatient with the person's behaviour.
- Compassion fatigue - exhausted by listening and caring.
- Isolated from your friends.

You May Worry About

- Losing the person you know.
- Coping and asking for help.
- The future including money problems.
- Stigma, what other people might be thinking or saying.
- The person's safety and the risk of suicide.



Taking Care of Yourself

- Talk to trusted friends and family, but do respect the person's right to privacy.
- Don't struggle alone and ask for help when you feel you need it.
- Make time for yourself, and do something you enjoy.
- Search AWARE NI for support and information about our range of services available.



Other Self-Help Methods

- Avoid alcohol or keep it to a safe limit.
- Maintain a regular sleep routine.
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet.
- Check in with your own GP if you find it hard to sleep, or feel anxious or depressed.
- Ask if a family support worker is available.



The 5 most evidence-based steps to improving your mental health are:



1. Be Active

Our bodies release feel-good hormones when we're active that can also reduce anxiety and stress, and help us sleep better.



2. Take Notice

Savour the moment, be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling. Reflecting on your experiences will help you appreciate what matters to you.



3. Give

Do something nice for a loved one or stranger. Smile, volunteer your time, or consider joining a community group.



4. Connect

With the people around you - family, friends or neighbours. Building these connections will support and enrich you every day.



5. Keep Learning

Do not be afraid to try something new. Rediscover an old hobby or interest, or simply set a challenge you will enjoy.



Do One Thing:

Sometimes you may feel overwhelmed when taking steps to help yourself. But remember to focus on doing just one thing at a time. It will help you reach the goals you set and give you a real sense of achievement.

Who to Contact for Support



Lifeline

A telephone help and counselling service for anyone in distress. It is available 24/7 and free to call.

They can give you immediate support, offer face-to-face appointments, or give you information about other services in your area. **Call Lifeline on 0808 808 8000.**

You could also:

- See your GP or call the out-of-hours GP service
- Go to the A&E department
- Call emergency services on 999
- Call Samaritans on their freephone helpline 116 123 - a confidential listening service for those in distress

AWARE NI

You can read our guides for more information on depression, anxiety, and looking after your mental health. **Contact us by emailing info@aware-ni.org and visit our website at aware-ni.org**

AWARE NI also have FREE mental health support groups for anyone aged 18 or over. You can find your nearest one by searching: aware-ni.org/support-groups/

