



THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY GROUP

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Helping a Depressed Friend or Loved One

- **Help the person to find out what their mental illness is and get treatment:** Go with your loved one to a clinic, doctor or counsellor to find out what is wrong and how you can treat it.
- **Support:** Find out if there are any support groups in your area. Sharing fears, worries and feelings with other people who are in the same situation helps – tell the person that asking for help is a sign of strength. Remind your loved one that he can always get treatment for their illness. Remind the depressed person that they WILL recover in time.
- **Learn about the mental health illness:** Depression is a disease. Learn about the illness. The more you know, the more you can help your loved one.
- **Care and support your loved one:** Being with family and friends is very important for the person to get better. Always tell the person that you care and love them.
- **Let the person be part of your life and events:** Invite your loved one to come with you and the rest of the family for walks, church and other activities you would normally do. Encourage your loved one to join in fun activities – both new events and things that the person enjoyed before they got depression.
- **Don't force the depressed person to cheer up:** Depressed people have REAL feelings. The depressed person can't just feel better. They are not weak or lazy.
- **Listen!:** Listen to what your loved one says. Most depressed people want someone to listen to them. DO NOT leave the person out of family discussions because you think that it would be less stressful for them. Treat the person as normally as possible. Ask the person what they hope, fear, feel and need.
- **Don't treat your loved one like a child:** Remember that the depressed person is not feeling their best and try to help out where you can. Don't do everything for them – it is good for the person to do some things for themselves.
- **Suicide:** If your loved one or friend talks about having thoughts of suicide, take it seriously and ask for help straight away.