

A BLUFFER'S GUIDE TO DEPRESSION

What does it feel like to have Depression?

Unhelpful phrases to avoid

Here are a list of potentially hurtful phrases. Try to avoid saying these. Explanations are in parenthesis.

- ◆ "I know how you feel, I have felt really sad before."
- ◆ "Sometimes I get tired too, I think everyone has those days."
- ◆ "Depression is just an emotional thing."
- ◆ "You just need to pray more to get your relationship with God back on track" - (The prophet Jeremiah had depression, this isn't just a spiritual problem.)
- ◆ "This isn't something that doctors can help you with, you need to do this."
- ◆ "I think you are being a bit lazy."
- ◆ "We all need to do things that we don't like, so get on with it."
- ◆ "It isn't a real illness."
- ◆ "You need to chill out and stop being so angry."
- ◆ "Get over it."
- ◆ "You'll be fine, toughen up."
- ◆ "You're just being ungrateful."
- ◆ "This isn't what depression looks like. (insert friend) dealt with it a lot better." (comparisons are hurtful and dangerous)
- ◆ "Just be more positive."
- ◆ "How can you be so forgetful?"

Language can be hurtful if not used properly. If ever in doubt please ask someone with depression for help. We are all a team and we can't do this without each other.

Depression is different for everyone, but there are many similarities. Here are ways which it makes people feel.

- ◆ We might feel tired all the time, regardless of how much sleep we get. It is as if someone has tied weights to every part of our body.
- ◆ We have wildly varied emotions, swinging from not bothered about anything to passionately angry very quickly. It is uncontrollable.
- ◆ Other times we are completely apathetic and don't care about anything. It is not possible to care about family, marriage, winning a football match etc.
- ◆ Usually there is despair and a lack of hope. At these low times there is nothing worse and even death may seem preferable to the pain we are in.
- ◆ We often feel guilty about being depressed. We feel bad for being a burden on others and constantly second guess ourselves. This leads to tough insecurities.
- ◆ We can be anxious or worried, leading us to struggle with relationships.
- ◆ We stop enjoying life and start finding fun things pointless and frustrating.
- ◆ We don't have any motivation to do anything. We can't be bothered with life.
- ◆ We feel worthless and a burden to others. We start to blame ourselves for being ill and causing problems.
- ◆ We might be totally overwhelmed and unable to articulate our struggles.
- ◆ We feel isolated because no one else seems to be struggling and it is difficult to reach out to others. Getting help seems pointless and is extremely difficult.

There are a lot of other symptoms which are not here. For more information see: [nhs.uk/Conditions/Depression/Pages/Introduction.aspx](https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Depression/Pages/Introduction.aspx)

I (Aneurin Howorth) write on these topics at noggybloggy.com

What can I do if I have Depression?

Depression is isolating and there are no easy solutions for it. However, we can fight it. Here are some tips.

- ◆ Remember you are never alone, even though it feels like it. God and others love and want to support you. We need a team to get through this.
- ◆ Always try and do exercise, even though it can be challenging.
- ◆ Try and talk to someone about it, even though it sucks to do so. Once someone knows you are struggling they will be able to help more.
- ◆ Get professional help, both from a GP and a counsellor if possible. Therapy and medicine can both be effective, especially together.
- ◆ Eat well. A healthy diet will help fight the symptoms.
- ◆ Learn about depression. You are fighting a massive battle. Feel validated in the struggle and remember that most people recover significantly from it.
- ◆ Be wise about who you hang out with. Some help and others hurt (accidentally).
- ◆ Make time to spend in nature. It reduces the stress the body is under.
- ◆ Remember, there is nothing wrong with asking for help. Everyone needs it.
- ◆ It might feel like God has deserted you, He hasn't. Not experiencing God like others do (or we did) is totally acceptable to God. It happens a lot in the Bible.
- ◆ Get lots of rest. If you can't sleep spend lots of time resting none the less.
- ◆ Never compare yourself to others. It will only hurt.
- ◆ Pray! It might not feel like it is worth anything, but it is. We need to fight this on a physical and spiritual level.

It is not our fault that we have depression, it is an illness. That doesn't mean that we can't fight it! For more info see:

Mind.org.uk or samaritans.org or familyaware.org

What can I do to help someone with Depression?

Depression is complicated, but here are some tips for helping us out. Remember, no size fits all with depression.

- ◆ Depression is a serious illness, take it seriously. It needs a holistic approach, both physical and spiritual.
- ◆ Humbly and gently ask questions. Show that you aren't afraid of depression.
- ◆ Talking about depression is difficult when you have it, so be patient.
- ◆ Be honoured if someone tells you that they have depression, most people never tell a friend because of stigma and the symptoms. Respond with love!
- ◆ Don't try to relate to the person unless you have experienced depression. It is more likely to ostracize us than to make us feel comfortable.
- ◆ Regularly affirm us. We are often insecure and second guess ourselves.
- ◆ Set clear and generous expectations. This will take the pressure off of the person with depression.
- ◆ Do research into depression. This will stop us having to explain it to you.
- ◆ Encourage us to seek professional help and to exercise.
- ◆ We often struggle to ask for help, but we may need it with the dishes/cooking meals/cleaning/getting a lift places/having someone to go to the doctor with.
- ◆ Help fight the stigma. Make it so we never feel ashamed or a burden.
- ◆ Depression may be physically disabling, bear that in mind.
- ◆ Pray!

It is not our fault that we have depression and we need a lot of help. We need a team to get through this. For more info see

Familyaware.org or noggybloggy.com