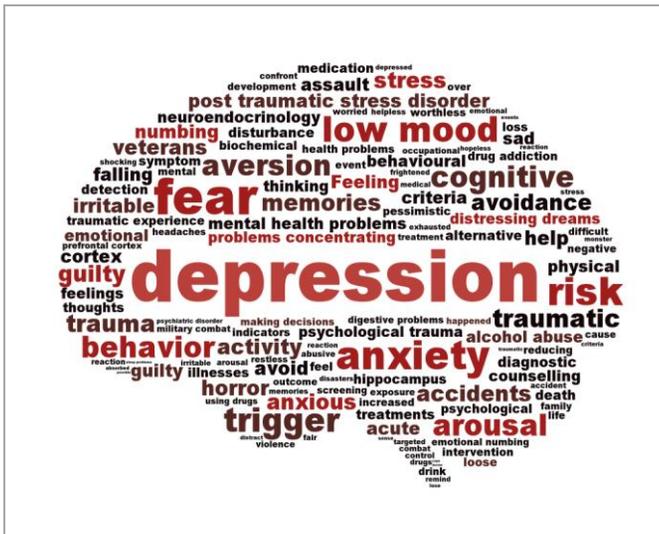




Depression: Friends and Family

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EUROPEAN DEPRESSION
ASSOCIATION

www.europeandepressionday.com

What is depression?

It is a Common Illness



Depression is a very common illness which affects around 121 million people. It is predicted to become the greatest cause of disability worldwide by 2030.

It is Treatable



Depression is a very treatable condition. Most people find that a combination of talking treatments, self-help and medication work best. Early diagnosis, treatment and information are key to getting better more quickly.

Friends and Family Can Help



Friends and family are often the first people to spot the signs of depression and can encourage people to seek help and support them through the process of diagnosis and recovery. Depression can make people feel very alone - this guide will help friends and family prove to them that they are not.

Symptoms of Depression

Everyone feels sad or low from time-to-time but if you know someone who has experienced four or more of the below symptoms for most of the day for over two weeks then it is time to encourage them to see a doctor:

“My sister came to see the doctor with me. I wouldn’t have gone without her”

- Tiredness and loss of energy
- Persistent sadness
- Loss of confidence and self-esteem
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Avoiding others and becoming isolated and lonely
- Not being able to enjoy things that are usually pleasurable or interesting
- Undue feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
- Sleeping problems - difficulties in getting off to sleep or waking much earlier than usual
- Finding it hard to function at work/college/school
- Change in appetite
- Loss of sex drive and/ or sexual problems
- Physical aches and pains
- Thinking about suicide and death
- Self-harm

It is important to get a proper diagnosis based on a person’s medical history and recent life events. This will help the doctor understand what treatments may be most helpful.

Common Treatments

Talking Treatments



Talking treatments involve understanding depression and learning ways to cope with, or, resolve any problems causing it. There are many different types from Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to Mindfulness. To find out more visit <http://www.counselling-directory.org.uk/counselling.html>

Self-help



Self-help techniques can involve a range of activities from joining a self-help group to following a self-help book. Self-help puts a person in charge of their own recovery and this can be very powerful. Visit www.europeandepressionday.com to find your local patient group.

Medication



Chemical changes in the brain are thought to cause the symptoms of depression. Antidepressants work by altering the levels of chemicals in the brain. There are many different types and, the doctor will work with the patient to find the right one for them.

Friends and Family

How You Can Help

Depression is a frightening illness that makes a person feel alone – just by being non-judgmental and listening you are already providing invaluable support.

Friends and family are often the first people to notice that someone may have depression and can encourage them to seek professional help. Depression can cause cognitive symptoms e.g. lack of concentration so by accompanying your friend or family member to the doctors you can ask questions and remember information that they may not be able to.

“I was in a prison on my own but the support of my friends helped set me free”

You can search out reliable information about depression and how to treat it. Reading pages and pages of information when you are depressed can be impossible so you could summarise the information into manageable chunks.

Diet and exercise are incredibly important in maintaining a healthy body and brain. Make sure your friend is eating regular, nutritious meals and encourage them to take gentle exercise e.g. gardening or going for a walk.

Depression can make a person overly self-critical. Gently encourage them to see their achievements and recognise their success. It may help for them to keep a diary.

If your friend or family member is talking about suicide do take it seriously and seek the advice of their doctor or another relevant professional.

Don't forget to look after yourself – providing support to someone affected by depression can be emotionally draining. See if you can share the supporting role with others and make sure you take plenty of breaks and talk about how you are feeling with your support network. Your local patient organisation may offer a carers group.

Finally, do remember that there is light at the end of the tunnel and your friend or family member will be well once again.

Who we are

The European Depression Association (EDA) is an alliance of organisations, patients, researchers and healthcare professionals from 19 countries across Europe.

Depression is already the most prevalent health problem in many EU Member States, and more than 50 million European citizens (11% of the population) experience mental disorders at some time in their lives. EDA raises awareness and promotes better understanding of the impact of depression on people's lives, to challenge stigma and discrimination, and to provide a voice for those who experience depression. By coming together in Europe, members of the EDA exchange research, information and best practices; co-ordinate pan-European actions, and extend the reach of their campaigns.

Each year EDA organises European Depression Day to raise awareness of depression across Europe. The theme of this year's campaign is Depression and the Family

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Visit www.sardini.it to buy EDA Italia Onlus Association's short guide to mood disorders.