

HOW TO SUPPORT A PARTNER WITH DEPRESSION

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is caused by many different factors, including biology, genetics, trauma, and/or hormones. When you're depressed, the nervous system is in a shutdown freeze response, which is an important survival mechanism for responding to danger (along with fight-or-flight). This means that there is very little a person can do when they're depressed, making it extremely difficult to move, walk around, or do daily tasks.

People with depression also tend to have a lot of self-criticism, guilt, and shame surrounding their symptoms, which only makes the depression worse. It's important to be there as a partner to support someone who is depressed, without making them feel like it's their fault. Luckily, depression is treatable, and with the right tools, can absolutely improve over time.

WAYS TO SUPPORT PARTNER WHEN DEPRESSED:

1. **Validation of feelings**

Recognizing and naming the underlying emotion that someone is experiencing, without judgment or blame. Emotions are always valid! (i.e. "I can imagine how hard this is" or "that sounds really heavy.")

2. **Ask them what they need, and offer options**

Your partner just wants to know you are there for them. By asking them what they need, you give them the opportunity to share that with you. Remind them that it is ok if they don't know- just being present is enough. Offer a few options such as: cooking dinner for them, offering to complete a task, etc.

3. **Be patient with them**

People with depression are trying their best, and that might look different than when they're not depressed. Try not to take it personally, and definitely do NOT blame them for "not trying hard enough."

4. **Reinforce their progress**

When you notice any signs of progress or improvement in your partner- speak up! Giving acknowledgment of all the hard work they're doing is important and helps reinforce these new habits.

WHAT NOT TO SAY!

- "You have so much to be grateful for!"
- "Look on the bright side!"
- "You should try harder."

WHAT NOT TO DO!

- Self-abandonment of your own needs
- Think you're responsible for "fixing" them
- Try to reason their way out of feeling things