

AWARE

**OVERCOMING DEPRESSION.
CHANGING LIVES.**

**LET'S TALK
ABOUT..**

**HELPING
SOMEONE WITH
DEPRESSION
AND 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 both hopeless and helpless.

Depression and anxiety are common, treatable illnesses, and the vast majority of people make a full recovery. With a good understanding, and a well-informed, caring and supportive approach, you can play an important part in this.

Help Speed Up Recovery

By working alongside the person who is ill 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 affect us in a variety of ways, but the symptoms can usually be grouped under four headings.

	Depression	Anxiety
Thoughts	They may be thinking things like 'I'm useless, nothing ever goes right' and 'life isn't worth living'. They might find it hard to concentrate, or make decisions.	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'
Feelings	They might feel unhappy, worried, guilty, and angry.	Anxious, fearful, worried, nervous, restless, agitated
Behaviour	They may cry a lot, avoid people, forget things, eat more or less, hurt themselves, and misuse alcohol or drugs.	Avoiding certain people, places, situations, not going out, only going to places at certain times or only going with someone else or leaving early, increased use of alcohol or drugs.
Physical Symptoms	They may experience aches & pains in their body, feel tired, have no energy, put on weight or lose weight.	Headaches, muscle and/or chest pain, sweating, tingling, numbness, shaking, dizziness, rapid or shallow breathing, rapid heartbeat or palpitations, dry mouth, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea.

Different people are likely to be affected in different ways, and have more problems with certain symptoms.

The link between Depression and Anxiety

These commonly go hand in hand. When you are depressed you often worry about the future and have a mixture of anxiety and depression. If you have been experiencing high levels of anxiety over a long period of time, it may well lead to depression.

What helps for Depression and Anxiety?

The two main treatments are talking therapy, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) and self-help strategies. Medication (antidepressants) 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 I help?

Try some of these.

- Talk to them. Ask them to tell you how they feel.
- Be a good listener, even if it means hearing the same thing several times.
- Remind them that depression is treatable and it is not their fault
- Reassure them that they will get better
- Encourage them to Exercise and to eat a balanced diet
- Try some relaxation techniques
- Reduce caffeine intake if they have anxiety
- Avoid alcohol, or take within recommended safe limits.
- Ask them to go and see their GP, and offer to go along with them to the appointment. You can help with describing their feelings and asking questions. But they must have time alone with the doctor too.



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.

“it can be
difficult,
stressful
& lonely”

You might feel...

- Impatient with the person's behaviour
- 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



Talking Care of Yourself

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



Other steps to take

- Avoid alcohol or keep it to a safe limit
- Maintain a regular sleep routine
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet
- Go and see your own doctor if you find it hard to sleep, or are anxious or depressed.
- Ask if a family support worker is available.

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



1. Be Active - Exercise acts as an antidepressant. Research has shown that 50 minutes of brisk walking 4 times a week significantly reduces depression'.



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 friend 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 to reach the goals you set, and get a real sense of achievement.

Who to contact for support



Lifeline

Lifeline is a telephone help and counselling service for anyone in distress or despair. It is available 24/7 and is free to call from your mobile phone.

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

You could also

- **See your doctor**
- **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.**

This is a confidential service that provides a listening ear to those in distress.

You can read our other guides for more information on help with depression, and looking after your mental health.

Find out how we can help and support you.
Please visit our website or contact us:

Visit: www.aware-ni.org.uk

Email: info@aware-ni.org

Call us: Belfast 028 9035 7820

Derry/L'Derry 028 7126 0602



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