

## Top 10 Tips for Coping with Depression in a Relationship

By Nancy Schimelfening

If you are in a relationship with someone who has depression, these are some tips you can use to help your partner.

- 1. Educate Yourself.** You can learn everything you need to know about depression and its causes, symptoms and treatments.
- 2. Sort Out the Facts from the Myths.** While it may be very tempting to think of depression as laziness or weakness on the individual's part, it is a very real biologically-based illness, and, just like any other illness, it can be treated.
- 3. Remember to Take Care of Yourself.** It can be very stressful coping with another person's depression; and, if you aren't careful you may become depressed yourself. It's okay to take some time out for yourself. You'll both be better off for it.
- 4. Get Support.** When someone you care about is depressed, it's okay for you to feel frustrated, angry and upset. You are in a very difficult situation. It is very important, however, that you don't allow these feelings to fester and grow. Seek out a support group, a friend or a counsellor whom you can talk with.
- 5. Be There for Them.** One of the most important things you can do for someone who is depressed is simply to be there for them. Hold them close or just listen while they share their feelings. Offer to help them with making appointments or doing some of the daily chores that they are struggling to keep up with. Let them know that you are there for them in whatever they need while they make their recovery.
- 6. Don't Take it Personally.** Depression can make people behave in ways that they normally wouldn't when they are feeling well. They may become angry or withdrawn. They may not be interested in going out or doing things with you like they used to. Your spouse or significant other may lose interest in sex. These things are not personal and they don't mean that they no longer care about you. They are symptoms of the illness.
- 7. Help Out Around the House.** Just like when a person has any other illness, they may simply not feel well enough to take care of paying bills or cleaning the house. And, just like with any other illness, you may have to temporarily take over some of their daily chores until they feel well enough to do them again.
- 8. Treatment is Important.** Treatment is vitally important to a person's recovery from depression. You can help your loved one by helping them keep up with taking their medication and remembering appointments. You can also help them by reassuring them that asking for help is not a sign of weakness or something to be ashamed of.
- 9. Offer Hope.** Offer them hope by reminding them of their reasons to keep living, whatever they may be. Perhaps it's their children, a beloved pet who needs them or their faith? These reasons, which will be unique to the individual, can help them hold on a bit longer until the pain subsides.
- 10. Love Them Unconditionally.** Let them know that you realize it is the illness making them think, feel and behave this way and you love them no matter what.