



# Global Wellness Monthly

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## Emotional resiliency – Hope and help for depression

### Coping with depression in a relationship

Depression can cast a dark shadow over even the happiest relationship. If your partner is depressed, they may find it hard to show affection, withdraw or seem uninterested in your life together. This can leave both of you feeling isolated and helpless. In this fact sheet you'll find advice on helping your partner through their depression and advice on how to cope if you are depressed.

### Help your partner get the treatment they need

Depression can be treated with counselling, antidepressants or a combination of both. So if you're concerned about your partner, encourage them to talk to their doctor about their feelings or seek counselling. A doctor can diagnose depression and prescribe them antidepressants. They can also look for any underlying medical problems that may be causing it. If your partner finds the idea of counselling too intimidating, offer to go with them.

### Other ways that you can help

Take depression seriously – don't dismiss your partner's feelings or tell them to "get over it". Try to show them that you are understanding and patient, not exasperated and annoyed.

Express concern gently – tell your partner how you feel in a calm, non-confrontational way. If you don't, they may become defensive and even more withdrawn.

Suggest different options – if your partner isn't yet ready to get treatment, help them find other ways to learn more about depression. Share helpful websites, books or magazine articles. Encourage them to do activities they enjoy. Offer to go for walks together, for both the exercise and feeling of closeness.

## At a glance

- Depression can be treated, so if you're worried about your partner, encourage them to speak to their doctor or seek counselling.
- Take your partner's feelings seriously, encourage them to talk, don't get upset if they say hurtful things and make sure you look after yourself too.
- If you're depressed, talk to your partner about your feelings, reassure them if they are feeling left out and get the treatment you need.

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Grow a thick skin – depression can make people angry and resentful, even when you try to help. If your partner says hurtful things to you, or blames you for their depression, try not to take it to heart. Being defensive may cause you both more aggravation and hurt.

Know when to get help – if your partner talks about suicide, call for help right away. Never ignore a threat about self-harm.

Take care of yourself – your partner's needs may feel all-consuming at times. Don't feel guilty about doing fun things on your own if your partner isn't able to share the experience. Get counselling yourself if you need to.

### What to do if you have depression

If you suffer from depression and are worried about how it's affecting your relationship, try to talk to your partner about it. Keeping your feelings bottled up makes it harder for family and friends to understand what you're going through or to help. Being open with them makes them feel valued, and can help you to feel better.

Depression may also affect your desire for intimacy. After all, if you're very sad or hopeless, you may not feel like being close to anyone. Let your partner know that you are still attracted to them, even if you don't act on those feelings.

It's also important to make sure you're getting the treatment you need – and sticking to it. Learning how to manage depression can bring interest and energy back to your relationship. If one method of treatment isn't working for you, talk to your partner and doctor about your options.

### Work together to get through this period

When you work together to help each other through difficult times, it can make your relationship stronger. So don't worry about being a burden on your partner when you ask them for emotional support. And make sure your partner doesn't feel like one either. Loving and supporting each other is a healthy part of any relationship. And hopefully one day soon, the dark shadow will lift and you can both enjoy your lives together once again.



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