

ACTION STEPS FOR THE FAMILY CAREGIVER



KNOW YOUR LOVED ONE'S WELLNESS GOALS

Every treatment should support your loved one's idea of "being well." Health care providers should be working with the person living with depression—and you, as applicable—to identify and achieve your loved one's own defined wellness goals. Aim to resolve symptoms and recover the ability to function.

- What does wellness look like?
- What are your loved one's preferences and priorities in treatment and outcomes?
- Which symptoms are most important to resolve for day-to-day functioning?
- How can you support your loved one to be an active participant in their own care?

BE AN ADVOCATE

People with depression are often not strong advocates for their own care. Feelings of worthlessness and disorganized thoughts often interfere with self-advocacy. By voicing or reinforcing your loved one's preferences and priorities to the provider, you can help them get the best treatment available that fits their needs.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR OWN NEEDS, TOO

Practicing self-care is one of the most important things you can do to help your loved one. Blaming yourself, trying to do everything by yourself, and not setting boundaries are counter-productive.

- Acknowledge your own feelings
- Set realistic goals and amend as needed
- Take steps to reduce your stress
- Avoid using substances to cope
- Develop and use a supportive social or family network; ask for and accept help
- Be open to your loved one gaining independence as they progress
- Keep things simple
- Continue to educate yourself about depression.

HELP TRACK SYMPTOMS

People with depression often have trouble remembering the depth and duration of their own symptoms and don't always have an accurate perception of their level of functioning. Having a record of symptoms, activities, and treatment adherence (e.g., taking medication regularly as prescribed)

supports better clinical care because accurate data allows the doctor, psychiatric nurse, or therapist to develop a sense of whether or how well the treatment is working.

Use the ROAM Symptom Tracking Chart to record the problematic symptoms that your loved one is experiencing. They should bring the sheet to the clinician and review these concerns. The provider should be looking beyond mood to your loved one's overall wellbeing. Encourage the person with depression to discuss the difficulties they are encountering in their everyday functioning. Are the symptoms significantly impairing their work or school? Have they caused interpersonal issues, disrupted relationships, or led to communication problems?

BE UNDERSTANDING

Be sensitive to the possibility that your loved one may

- have a fear of being judged
- believe the thinking problems are personal failings
- feel guilty for not being able to accomplish what they think they should do
- Not remember or have a distorted view of how these issues are affecting them
- discount cognitive issues as trivial.

