

HELP SHEET: CONNECTING WITH YOUR LOVED ONE



MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER: TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS

As a caregiver, you know that some of the symptoms of major depressive disorder (MDD) may make connecting with your loved one difficult. Because your involvement is so important, here are some tips to help make it easier to work together:

Speak slowly and clearly

- Let your loved one know he/she has your support
- Be compassionate, even if your loved one is irritable
- Be friendly and encouraging
- Take time to listen

Keep things calm

Experiencing the symptoms of MDD can be very stressful for your loved one and for you. Here are some helpful ideas:

- Give your loved one the chance to talk when he/she is ready
- Understand that your loved one may find it difficult to talk about how symptoms make him/her feel
- Make and stick to routines if you can, like setting times for eating, taking a walk, and going to sleep every day
- Remind your loved one about how much he/she means to you and to others

Include your loved one

It's important for all of us to feel productive and have a say in our daily lives. To help your loved one do this,

- Spend time together doing activities unrelated to MDD such as watching a movie or visiting a park
- Offer choices so your loved one can feel involved and have a sense of control — even if it's just deciding what's for dinner
- Talk to your loved one about treatment — and encourage him/her to talk to you and the Treatment Team about how he/she is feeling



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A SAMPLE CONVERSATION

These are the kinds of topics that **loved ones** with MDD and their **caregivers** may talk about, along with some communication tips that can help. Of course, every relationship and situation is different, so one way to improve communication between you and your loved one is with the help of your Treatment Team, including your psychiatrist.

Taking medication

SON

"I'm not taking that. It makes me feel bad."

MOTHER

"Let's talk to the doctor. Maybe there is a different medication that would work better for you."

Tip: If a treatment isn't working or is causing unpleasant side effects, encourage your loved one to talk with the Treatment Team. Patients should not stop taking a medication without talking to the doctor first.

Dealing with a depressive episode

DAUGHTER

"I'm completely worthless!"

MOTHER

"You are a worthwhile person, and you mean a lot to me."

Tip: Sometimes simply listening is the best thing you can do. Remind your loved one that you are there to offer support.

Seeing signs of relapse

Tip: If you see signs of a relapse, acknowledge how your loved one is feeling. Try to be calm and talk about how important it is to reach out to get medical help. Meanwhile, do what you can to help your loved one feel more secure.

SISTER

"Seems like you're experiencing more symptoms lately. Let's talk to the doctor."



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FACING MAJOR DEPRESSIVE EPISODES

During a major depressive episode, your loved one may have feelings of unbearable sadness, guilt, worthlessness, and hopelessness. Sticking to a treatment plan may help depressive episodes from coming back quickly, but they may occur and it's best to be as prepared as possible.

One of the first things to do is call the Treatment Team immediately.

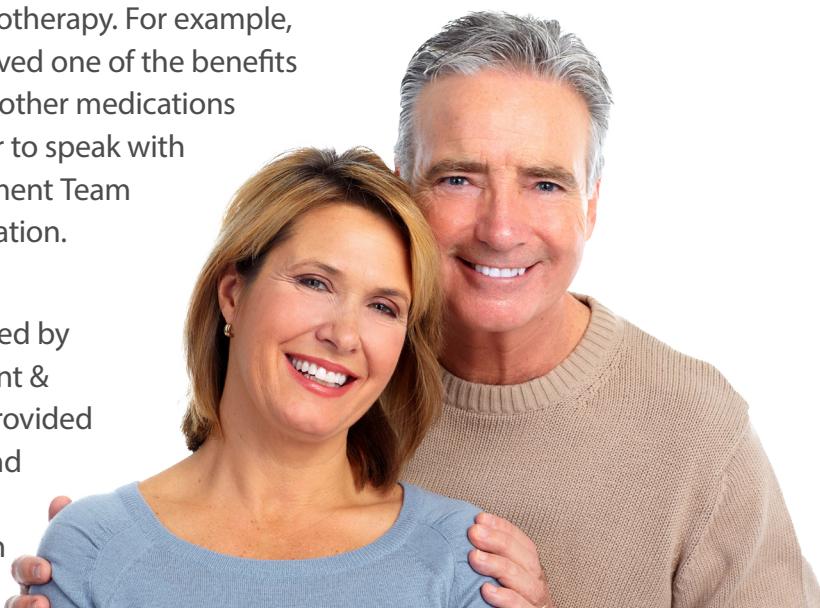
Meanwhile, here are a few things to remember:

- Practice being a good listener. Listening and talking through problems may help your loved one feel better and be motivated to continue treatment
- Offer to go for a walk or participate in a favorite activity such as going to the movies. If your loved one says no, don't push. But be sure to ask again in the near future
- Don't be hurt if your loved one seems like he/she doesn't want to pay attention to you. Remember, he/she still cares about you but may be unable to show it

REACHING MAINTENANCE

Reaching a Maintenance Phase, when depressive symptoms are very mild or may even disappear completely, is an important treatment goal. You can help your loved one reach maintenance by encouraging him/her to stick with the treatment plan, which may include medications and psychotherapy. For example, you can remind your loved one of the benefits of antidepressants and other medications and encourage him/her to speak with a member of the Treatment Team before stopping medication.

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