

Depression: Suggestions for families

Children with depression may see the world as hopeless and themselves as helpless. Ordinary things often seem too hard. They tend to feel bad and don't know how to feel better.

How you can help

Parents, carers and school staff can help children with depression by being understanding and supportive. They can show they care by listening and by helping them to sort out problems. They can spend time together with children and let them know they are confident that things will get better.

Provide time and space to talk

Make time and space for your child to talk to you. It works best when you can be unhurried and uninterrupted. Often children find it easier to talk when doing something with you. Doing ordinary things like playing with you at home, going on a shopping trip, or going for a long drive might provide opportunities for them to open up.

Listen fully

If you want your child to talk, it is best not to judge what they say or offer advice. Allow crying or whatever else helps get out whatever is on your child's mind. Help the child feel understood by listening carefully before responding.

Help them think again

When the child reports a negative experience, gently ask whether there might be another explanation for things happening the way they did and try to help the child see that it's not as awful as he/she thinks. Help them find other ways to solve the problem.





Encourage contact with others

Friends can help to reduce unhappy feelings – it helps to know you're liked, loved and appreciated.

It can help to think about others and not just yourself. Friends can also suggest better ways of thinking about situations.

Do fun things

Having fun can be very helpful. Although children who are depressed may be reluctant to participate at first, fun activities can be extremely helpful for lifting their mood.

Encourage relaxation

Having quiet time is important. Time out for your child to relax can reduce nervous tension.

Don't wait to seek help

Depression in children is serious and usually does not get better by itself. If you are concerned about your child, don't wait for things to change. Talk with school staff about how your child is going at school. Ask the school about speaking with the school psychologist or visit your family doctor and if necessary get a referral for treatment.

This resource is part of a range of KidsMatter Primary information sheets for families and school staff. View them all online at www.kidsmatter.edu.au



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