



Tips for Supporting Individuals with Depression and Autism

Direct Support

Helping someone manage depression may be different from person to person. This resource provides a variety of strategies that may help an individual experiencing depression.

Teach how to get help

- Help the person to make an appointment with their doctor or therapist. Let the doctor or therapist know there are signs of depression.

Teach ways to speak up for themselves

- Help them to recognize their emotions.
- Help them recognize triggers for low mood.
- Teach them how to find people who can help. Teach the person how to call, email, or talk with these people.

Help develop healthy habits

- Help them to use routines and alarms to sleep and wake up at the same times each day.
- Encourage the person to avoid taking naps during the day.
- Help the person to avoid using electronics (for at least an hour) prior to going to bed.
- Encourage the person to avoid caffeine and sugar in the afternoon and evening.
- Individuals should be encouraged to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. Try to limit foods high in sugar and fat.
- Follow the guidelines at choosemyplate.gov for more information on portions and how to choose foods.

Help to stay involved in activities

- Help them to complete chores and other tasks around the house.
- Invite them to go on a walk, play catch, lift weights, or engage in other forms of exercise.
- A good goal for most people is to exercise for at least 30 minutes every day.

Support them in developing and maintaining relationships

- Encourage participating in social activities to improve mood.
- Help set up times and activities so that they can be with friends and family.

Modify treatment and service plans

- If you have concerns about the individual's mood and it is not included in the plan, talk with a supervisor about how to get a new goal added to the plan.
- If there is a goal about improving mood, but it does not seem to be working, talk with your supervisor about how the plan could be updated. You may be asked to continue with the current plan for a few weeks in order to see if the plan just needs more time to work. However, the supervisor may also try including other ways of helping the individual to feel better.

Remove access to dangerous items if suicidal

- Put all sharp objects, weapons, and medications in a locked area. This locked area should be a place where the individual cannot get access.
- If there is no safe space, try asking other family members to store these items.
- Put emergency numbers somewhere the individual can easily find them. It may be helpful to hang them on the wall near a phone or to save them in a cell phone's contact list.
- Give the individual phone numbers for the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255), the local Crisis Intervention phone number, and 9-1-1.



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