



THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY GROUP

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What to say to Someone who is Depressed

When you are talking to someone who may be feeling Depressed or who may have been diagnosed with Depression, it is important to **not** dismiss what the person is feeling **or** make the person feel that their feelings are not important. It is important to make the person feel heard and like you understand what they are going through. By being more mindful about how we react to someone who is going through a difficult time, we can make a big difference in how they feel.

“I’m all alone”

Don’t say: “No you’re not! I’m sitting here with you right now. Doesn’t my caring about you mean anything?”

Do say: “I know that you’re feeling alone right now. Is there anything I can do to help? I’m just glad to be with you – together we’ll get through this lonely feeling.”

“Why bother? Life isn’t worth living. There’s no point in going on”

Don’t say: “How can you think that? You have a great job and people who love you. You have everything to live for”

Do say: “I know it feels that way to you right now, but I want you to know that you matter to me and you matter to others who love you. We’ll get through this hopeless feeling together”

“I’m dragging everybody else down with me”

Don’t say: “No you’re not! You see, I’m fine! I had a good day today. And besides I’m doing everything in the world to help you.”

Do say: “I know it feels that way to you right now, and yes, at times it is difficult for both of us – but remember we’ll get through this hopeless feeling together”

“What would it be like if I wasn’t here anymore?”

Don’t say: “Don’t be silly – what’s wrong with you?”

Do say: “I would miss you terribly as you’re very important to me. I want to grow old knowing you’re around. We’ll get through this together”

I'm expendable."

Don't say: "If you felt better about yourself, you wouldn't say stupid things like that."

Do say: "I know you're feeling worthless right now, but we'll get through this."

"Nothing I do is any good. I'll never amount to anything"

Don't say: "What are you saying? You're a highly respected (engineer), you're a good (father). You're blowing everything out of proportion."

Do say: "I know it's upsetting when things don't work out the way you want them to – it's upsetting for me to! Failure feelings are really painful, but we'll get through this together"

"How long am I going to feel this way? It's as if I'll never get better"

Don't say: "Come on. Nothing lasts forever – you know better than that"

Do say: "I know it's scary to be in so much pain. Feelings come and go. We'll get through this together"