

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Being around someone who is depressed can make you feel sad, even angry at times. It's important to understand that depression is an illness, not a sign of weakness.

Making life as pleasant as possible can help your loved one feel better. Simple activities you both enjoy give structure to the day. Even a few minutes of pleasure lighten a sad mood.

Some suggestions:

- Listening to music
- Washing dishes
- Taking a short walk
- Gardening
- Playing with pets or children
- Looking at the moon, sunrise or sunset
- Going for a drive

BENJAMIN ROSE INSTITUTE

For nearly a century, BRI has worked to raise the standards of care for older adults. Founded in 1908 as a nonsectarian organization through the generosity of Cleveland industrialist Benjamin Rose, the Institute has been an innovator in service delivery, a leader in research, and an advocate for the elderly in Northeast Ohio and nationally. Supported by an endowment fund, grants, fees for services, and gifts, BRI assists older people and their families through collaborative efforts and through its:

- Eldercare Services Institute
- Margaret Blenkner Research Institute
- Katz Policy Institute
- Margaret Wagner Apartments

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DEPRESSION

INFORMATION YOU CAN USE
FROM THE BENJAMIN ROSE INSTITUTE



BEATING THE BLUES

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Everyone suffers from a bout of the blues from time to time. Older people feel sad when a spouse or good friend dies, if they are in poor health, or retired recently. It's not uncommon to feel down or discouraged when you are caring for an older family member.

Continuing feelings of emptiness, worthlessness or sadness may be signs of something more serious: depression.

Depression is a serious illness. However it can be treated successfully.



SIGNS OF DEPRESSION

- Loss of interest in enjoyable activities
- Fatigue, lack of energy
- Sleep problems
- Poor appetite, weight loss
- Crying spells
- Memory problems. Depression is sometimes mistaken for Alzheimer's disease

SUICIDE

Depression is one of the leading causes of suicide in older people – especially older men. If an older person talks about suicide, call a doctor or suicide prevention hotline immediately. Many older adults do not talk about suicide. Signs that an older person may be thinking about suicide include:

- Recent loss, especially of a spouse
- Sadness, apathy, fatigue
- Hopelessness
- Giving away favorite possessions
- Low self-esteem



TREATING DEPRESSION

Symptoms of depression can also be signs of physical or other mental illnesses. Schedule a doctor's visit for your relative if you think he or she may be depressed.

Most depressed older people can be treated successfully with medication, psychotherapy or a combination of treatments.

Medications improve physical symptoms of depression — sleeplessness, poor appetite, fatigue — and help your relative feel better. It may take two to six weeks or longer for the medicines to work. Make sure he or she continues to take the pills and checks in with the doctor regularly.