

# World Health Day 2017 - Depression: Let's talk

The World Health Day this year focuses on 'depression'.

Globally, around 350 million people of all ages, from all walks of life, suffer from depression. It causes mental anguish and impacts on people's ability to carry out even the simplest everyday tasks, with sometimes devastating consequences for relationships with family and friends. At its worst, depression can lead to suicide, now the second leading cause of death in 15-29-year olds.

Depression can be prevented and treated. A better understanding of what depression is, and how it can be prevented and treated, will help reduce the stigma associated with the condition, and lead to more people seeking help.

Living with someone with depression can be difficult. Here are some tips on what you can do to help someone you live with who is depressed, while taking care of yourself at the same time.

## **What you should know**

- ◆ Depression is an illness and not a character weakness.
- ◆ Depression can be treated. What treatment is best and how long the depression lasts depend on the severity of the depression.
- ◆ The support of carers, friends and family

facilitates recovery from depression. Patience and perseverance is needed, as recovery can take time.

- ◆ Stress can make depression worse.

## **What you can do for people who are depressed**

- ◆ Make it clear that you want to help, listen without judgement, and offer support.
- ◆ Find out more about depression.
- ◆ Encourage them to seek professional help when available. Offer to accompany them to appointments.
- ◆ If medication is prescribed, help them to take it as prescribed. Be patient; it usually takes a few weeks to feel better.
- ◆ Help them with everyday tasks and to have regular eating and sleeping patterns.
- ◆ Encourage regular exercise and social activities.
- ◆ Encourage them to focus on the positive, rather than the negative.
- ◆ If they are thinking about self-harm, or have already intentionally harmed themselves, do not leave them alone. Seek further help from the emergency services or a health-care professional. In the meantime, remove items such as medications, sharp objects and firearms.
- ◆ Take care of yourself too. Try to find ways to relax and continue doing things you enjoy.

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