

## I THINK MY FRIEND IS DEPRESSED. HOW CAN I HELP?

### What is depression?

Depression is a disorder that affects someone's mental and physical well-being. It's not a weakness or character deficit. Commonly we think about depression as characterized by sadness, but it can also involve numbness of feelings.

Common symptoms of depression are:


- Bad mood and loss of interest of pleasure things in life
- Changes in pattern of sleep and/or eating
- Low energy
- Problems with concentration
- Anger at oneself and others
- Feeling guilty
- Avoiding other people and withdrawing to your room
- Negative thoughts and beliefs about self, others and the world around
- Suicidal thoughts
- Feeling worthless

If after reading this you think that Your friend suffers from depression do not remain indifferent.



## How to encourage your friend to seek professional help?

You may need to deal with such situations as the ones described below.




Only weak people seek for help.  
I'm not like this.

Looking for help shows that  
you are responsible for your life.  
It's not a sign of weakness.  
It requires strength to ask for help.



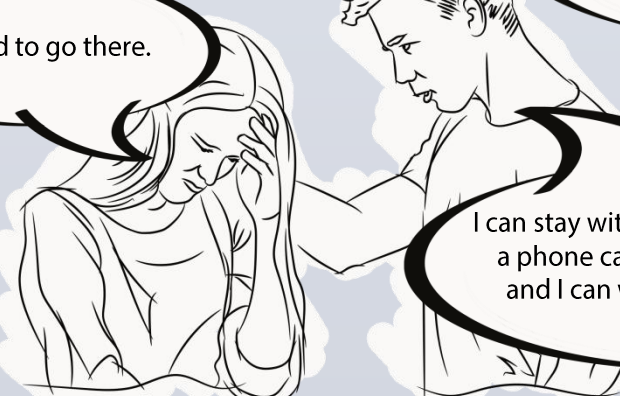
I don't think it will help me

C'mon, keep an open mind.  
There's nothing to lose.  
Maybe counselling has more  
to offer than you think.



I'm not going to see a shrink!  
I'm not crazy!

Lot's of people seek professional help.  
It doesn't mean that something is wrong  
with them. It's a disorder that can be cured

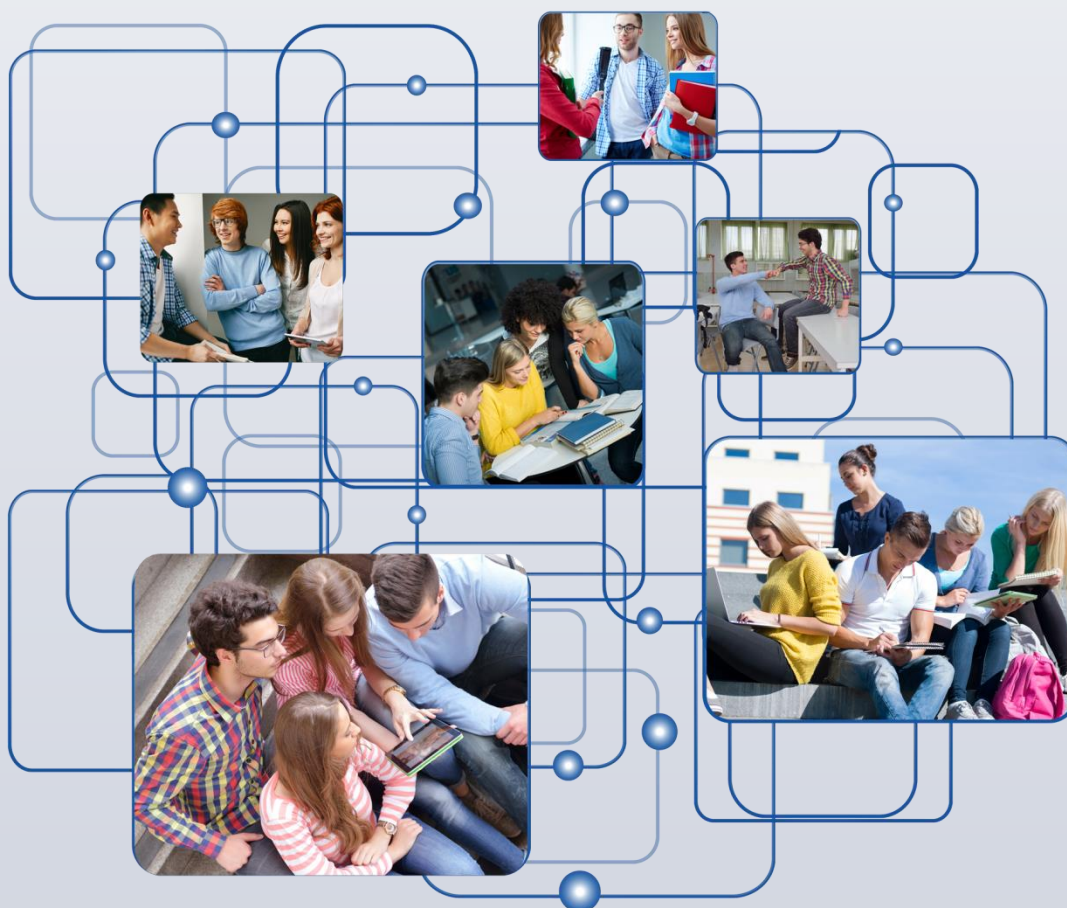


I'm scared to go there.

I can stay with you while you are making  
a phone call to Counselling Services  
and I can walk you to the meeting,  
if you like.

## Tips for students, who are helping others:

- Help build a support network. It is not a good idea for you to be your friend's sole or main source of support. The burden could be too great for you, and you could also lose objectivity. It is important he/she has others to turn to and that you have someone to confer with when needed.
- Helping can be draining. Don't forget about yourself.
  - Be realistic about your ability to help. You are not omnipotent, what you can do is sometimes just be with Your friend – sometimes it's only so much and so much.
  - Take care of yourself. Sometimes it can be emotionally aggravating (hard) to be someone's support.
  - Don't feel you have to prove what a good friend you are by always putting your friend's needs ahead of your own.



## What to avoid?



**Don't worry!**

**Cheer up!**

**Just get yourself together.**

*Depression is a disease. Cheering up is either not helping nor can make a person feel more guilty because he/she just can't „get himself/herself together“.*



*In a short term perspective, alcohol can influence our mood, make someone feel less anxious. In a long term however, it can only lead to addiction.*



*Don't suggest looking for medication on his/her own. Suggest contacting a psychiatrist.*

## What can help?

*Try to accept feelings associated with depression. Someone who's suffered from depression can be weakened, and even simple activities seem to be difficult.*



*Try to be warm, kind and empathetic.*

*Being convinced that depression passes, you can confirm to your friend that it is really so. Remember that this state is contemporary.*



**Looking for help for Your friend or for yourself?**  
Contact University Counselling Service for further guidance.