

Talking with Students About Depression

Adolescents may feel depressed but don't want you to think they are crazy. They just want to be normal and in control of their situation. They may not be forthcoming with their true feelings. When talking about depression (or symptomatic emotions as hopelessness, sadness) with students, adults should try to support the student's autonomy while providing guidance and support. The key is to form a connection...a relationship so that the student is willing to disclose information to you. Students want information and truly want to solve their problems but need a trusted professional to

What to say to someone who is depressed



1. Actively listen & be available

I'm here for you – but you must really mean it

- Actively listen, validate their feelings
- Ask to give advice, don't just provide guidance
- Be available

2. Be empathetic

Acknowledge feelings – I may not know exactly how you feel but it must be very hard

- Normalize feelings - Say it sounds awful.... lousy
- Be empathetic, nonjudgmental and welcoming
- Use student's own words to discuss symptoms

3. Courage & Strength

Tell person you believe in them...

Build self-esteem; tell them it takes courage/ strength to talk about this

- Give hope...these feelings are temporary, but right now it may not feel that way
- Help them find something they can control – stay solution focused
- Ask what will work for you right now.

4. Follow Up with Help

Offer a referrals/options to appropriate mental health provider as needed



1. Don't Say...

- All you need is some therapy then everything will be alright
- Just take some medication, it will help get rid of your crazy thoughts
- Don't you want to get better – just go to the psychologist
- There are people worse off than you... Just deal with it



What Else Can you do?

- Develop collaborative trusting relationship
- Avoid negative feedback/interventions
- Find a buddy or two
- Encourage Exercise
- Safe place – It's ok to come here
- Plan for success
 - Build on Protective Factors
 - Reassure ... Be positive and optimistic
 - Point out strengths
 - Work on problem solving skills
 - Give Hope
- Refer