

## How to talk to someone who is depressed

### What not to say...

This is a list of things that have actually been said to people who are depressed, and underneath (in brackets) we have put what this can sound like to someone who is depressed. Tick those that you have heard:

<b>What has been said</b> (What it can sound like to someone who is depressed, especially if they have been a Christian for a while)	<b>Have you heard this said?</b>
<b>Just give it to God!</b> (One quick prayer and it's all over, sorted, done and dusted!)	
<b>Have you tried praying about it?</b> (An assumption that you haven't picked up that prayer is a good idea, even though you have been a Christian for 20 years!!!)	
<b>Pull yourself together</b> (You need a stiff talking to and someone needs to tell you, disciple you, discipline you)	
<b>We all feel like that sometimes but you have to snap out of it</b> (You know you're not suffering anything else that no-one else doesn't feel now and then so why can't you just snap out of it like everyone else does?)	
<b>Are you reading your bible?</b> (Other people have been able to get great inspiration. It is full of great truths for your life. So you must be different/odd/broken... Or maybe don't you believe what the Bible says?)	
<b>I'm not being friends with you - you're full of self pity</b> (If I agree with what you are saying that would mean that I'll be helping you simmer in your self pity and I don't want to be classed as a negative person like you or be around negative people)	
<b>Just fight it!</b> (Just refuse to feel like that in the name of Jesus, refuse it, rebuke it, don't receive it!)	
<b>I'd never allow myself to get in that state</b> (Sorry but what's happened to you, will never happen to me, I'm fit, healthy and loving life, no way will what's happened to you happen to me!)	
<b>You're looking really well</b> (You look like there's nothing wrong with you, in fact I think you're making it all up, cause to me, you look like everyone else)	
<b>It's your own fault</b> (I was reading the book of Job the other day. What sin is in your life that you haven't confessed and dealt with yet?)	
<b>There's no such thing as depression, you're just feeling sorry for yourself</b> (What is all this poppycock about depression and illness? you need to get a grip and stop pretending you are ill. This is just moaning and unhappiness.)	
<b>You're a hypochondriac</b> (Honestly, there's people out there who are really ill, I think you enjoy it)	
<b>Why can't the doctors do anything?</b> (Why can't the doctors sort you out? I mean they've always sorted me out and everyone I know so why can't they sort you out?)	
<b>You should just stop taking all those tablets and just trust in God</b> (This isn't a real illness. If you stop taking your medication nothing will happen apart from you will be trusting God more and you won't have any side effects, so simple!)	
<b>It's a choice - you can change if you want to</b> (The fact that you are not getting any better means that you must be choosing to stay like this - you must be lazy and avoiding getting a real job.)	

## What to say instead...

This list is things you can say instead. Look at how they are different. Often they avoid talking about emotions directly, but look at practical help and support. Tick the three that you would find most helpful if you were/are depressed:

<b>What to say</b> (What it means to someone who is depressed)	<b>Your top three</b>
<b>If you want to talk, I'm here to listen</b> (I care about what's happening to you and need to listen to you as a friend to show you that. Then I can understand and help you. I realise this may take some time – and I am going to stand with you.)	
<b>I'm praying for you. Do you want me to pray for you now?</b> (I don't have any magic answers and I'm not trying to give you one but what I can do is pray for you. I know God hears prayers.)	
<b>I have some practical wisdom I can share with you.</b> (Because I've spent time with you and listened to you, I can see you need rest, space, food, spiritual advice etc and can help you.)	
<b>I have no idea what it must feel like because I've never suffered from mental illness but I can understand it better now. Thank you!</b> (I can't contemplate what it must feel like to be mentally ill and I can now have sympathy to anyone with mental illness because I understand it now.)	
<b>Could I help you spiritually in any way, perhaps share some scriptures that you may be able to draw strength from?</b> (I know it can be hard to get the help from the Bible you used to when it is hard to read for long periods or you are tired. Can I help by writing some scriptures out or reading from the bible for you, or get some worship CDs for you?)	
<b>Shall we go out together somewhere? Can I offer to pay if money is tight?</b> (Special times with friends help and if I can help take you out for a while it may help you escape from the same surroundings and focus on something else for a while. I know that sometimes money can be tight when you are not working, so please let me know if this is the case and I can pay this time.)	
<b>I can see your not feeling great at the moment, do you want me to go and come back tomorrow or another day?</b> (I can appreciate that if you're having a really bad day, I should come back another time and I'll be able to help better. You can decide. You don't have to explain – just say "Not now, thank you.")	
<b>Talk to them about something positive in their life, or an improvement that you've noticed</b> (Sometimes when you are so in the middle of something and experiencing it every day you can't see the small improvements that are happening or recognise an achievement or progress.)	
<b>Find out any likes, hobbies, what makes them laugh and work towards helping them achieve one of these</b> (Laughter's good medicine, we all need purpose in our lives and to feel we're achieving something. Would you like to help me with this jigsaw I am doing or go to the cinema?)	
<b>Don't give up on them; it can take along time and a lot of hard work to help someone recover. They need friends and loved ones to stick by them.</b> (It has to be a combination of things: medication, social support, friends, prayer, will-power and time. It takes time, but people do get better!)	

Talking to someone who is struggling with their mental health can be difficult at first, especially if we have not had personal experience of depression. But actually what most people want is just a good friend who will help them. People don't mind being challenged gently by someone whom they trust and with whom they have a relationship.

Who could you talk to this week?