

The Beginner's Guide to Living with Someone with Depression

Real world advice for those who care about someone struggling with mental illness

Written by Adam Weitz



SadRunner.com

About Sad Runner



SadRunner.com is a website and online community developed to support, encourage and inform friends and families affected by clinical depression and anxiety. Through raw personal stories, SR explores what it is like to pursue a positive life in the midst of a condition that produces so much negativity.

You don't have to run or have depression to read and be a part of Sad Runner. Many who stop by just want to better understand someone in their life. This community for everyone getting bruised and battered by mental illness. We're all climbing out of the valley together.

Posts that help you find hope and strength:

- ✓ Tips and tricks to help you tackle your depression
- ✓ Inspiring stories from others fighting their illness
- ✓ Intimate, first-hand accounts of what it's really like

For Those Who Struggle

Created by someone with depression for people affected by depression, Sad Runner is a community of others, like you, who are working to overcome their mental illness. Don't let your condition keep you from living your life. **You can still find positivity despite your condition, and Sad Runner is here to prove it.**

For Those Who Love Them

Whether you married someone with depression or your friend recently opened up to you about their anxiety, Sad Runner provides a look at what it's like to live and even thrive with a mental illness. **If you want to know what someone is going through so you can better love them, then Sad Runner is for you.**

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About the Author

Adam Weitz is the Founding Publisher of Sad Runner. A designer, Depression Hacker, and advocate, he was diagnosed with clinical depression in the Spring of 2003 when his girlfriend (now wife) encouraged him to visit a therapist after she saw signs something was wrong. Since then, the two continue to courageously fight Adam's depression hand in hand. **This guide is just glimpse at how they continue to survive the battle.**

Welcome

If you're looking for help living with someone with depression then you've come to the right place. This in-depth, no holding back guide will teach you and your partner how to live together and start to thrive despite the shadow of depression that crowds your relationship.

By the end of this guide, you will:

- Know how depression affects your partner
- Know how you can help
- Have a list of things you should do for your partner
- Know the things you should NOT do
- How to strengthen your relationship for the long-haul

Plus, there's a special section with advice to men who are helping their partner through this difficult time.

If you have depression

Don't just skip over this guide because you think it's not for you. This guide will help you better understand your condition and your needs. But, more than that, this guide will equip you and those closest to you, with helpful, actionable advice that will strengthen your relationship as well as help push you through your struggles. So follow along and learn more about yourself and your illness.

Please be sure to share this with your loved one(s) so they know how to help.

Alright, without any more delay let's get started.



Introduction:

It Starts with Commitment

My amazing wife and I have been together for nearly 14 years. Both of us became diagnosed with clinical depression in our teens, so our entire time together has been a college education in relationship management with an emphasis on depression care.

Still, despite the unending curve balls thrown at us because of our mental illness, our marriage is rock solid. It's always been this consistent safety net in our lives where our mental health tries to knock us down, but our relationship just comes in and holds us up. God gave us a gift when he put us together.

While I'll give all credit to God, and my wife's incredible patience, it's our commitment to holding this together despite our pain, with which I take great pride. The big picture drives us, the sunset of our lives where we are still together hand in hand. With that commitment to a life together, it's just become a given that whatever happens to one of us happens to us both. Whatever attempt the world or our mental illness makes to tear us apart falls short because it's just not an option. We're together till the end, ride or die.

I bring commitment up because you need it. Without commitment, your relationship won't survive, and your partner's condition will get worse. Unless you commit to the big picture TOGETHER then this whole guide may

give you tips and tricks, but it won't guarantee your success.

The goal of Sad Runner is to get people to thrive despite their illness and you can't thrive without a commitment to the big picture. Whatever that big picture looks like to you two, it's far away and barely in focus to many, but it's vital to keep in mind.

The power of commitment

Commitment to each other brings with it a lot of strength. Two are clearly better than one and, as you will learn in this guide, it will take two or more people to get through this situation. You need all the strength and raw power that you can find to survive this. At the darkest point in your relationship when you can't even spot hope, that's when commitment kicks in. Commitment is the backup power you need so take it seriously.

The comfort of commitment

I can say that, in my relationship, knowing we're committed to getting through this together has been a source of great comfort. Many people are struggling in their relationships because of mental illness (hence this guide). I hear stories every week from those who wish their partner understood their condition better or who would at least just cut them a little slack.

It breaks my heart to hear these stories because I know what its like to have a supporting and encouraging relationship built around getting through depression. I wish everyone had that.

There is great comfort in commitment. Knowing that both of you are fighting this together is empowering. If you aren't the one dealing with depression, knowing your depressed partner is committed to fighting and getting better allows you the chance to give them some grace. They can have their bad days because you know, in the big picture, they are committed to getting better. If you're depressed, commitment is huge because you know your partner isn't going to bail on you when things get bad.

When you have depression, you have so many horrible thoughts in your head; you don't need a thought like your partner leaving you or not caring about your condition to make things worse. So that's why there is a lot of comfort in committing to each other for the long haul.

Again, this guide can give you ideas and educate you on what to expect, but without commitment, neither one of you are going to get the most you can get out of this. So take a moment and really think about things and, when you decide to commit, verbalize it to each other.

Most guys don't like to talk and share their feelings. Screw it; we don't have time for crap like that, we're fighting depression here. So stop reading this for a moment, and commit to each other for the long haul. Express yourself and why this is important to you. I can't say this enough; commitment is everything here. We're already over 1,000 words into this guide, and I'm still talking about commitment.

Do you get the point yet?

You can't thrive without a commitment to the big picture, whatever that looks like to you two. Though it may seem far away, that commitment is vital to keep in your heart and mind.

A photograph of a man and a woman embracing in a snowy field. The woman is in the foreground, wearing a maroon jacket, with her eyes closed and a peaceful expression. The man is behind her, his face partially visible as he leans in to kiss her cheek. The background is a soft-focus, snowy landscape under a bright sky.

How This Guide Works

This guide represents some of the many things we've learned over the years when caring for each other and helping our marriage get through some insanely dark days. It's designed to give you a guide to the basics of depression (the Sad Runner version not some clinical one) and then teach you how to get through it and maybe even thrive together despite it.

How I Define Partners

In this guide, I'm going to refer to you two as partners. I've done this intentionally, not out of some general need to be politically correct, but because that's what you have to be to get through this. Whether you're married, dating, or close friends who care for each other, you have to be partners in this battle, so I want you to start thinking of each other that way.

So, now that you know what to expect from this guide, and you're committed to the cause, let's dive in.

Part One: The Basics

Depression is a condition that can be caused by a variety of factors. While some cases are situational, the majority are chemically based.

The cake between your ears

Just for a second, let's look at your brain like baking a cake. To bake a cake, you need a list of ingredients. It takes more than just having good ingredients to make a good cake. Sure, ingredient quality matters but there is basic science involved in baking a cake. You must have specific ingredients, at specific quantities, combined at specific times to create the chemical reaction that results in a delicious cake.

Same thing with your brain. Too much of one ingredient and things taste a little off, too little of another ingredient and your cake cries a lot. Do you get the idea? Your brain consists of specific components that all have to work together just right to ensure the optimum result.

Sometimes you're born with too much of one ingredient and not enough of another, and the result is depression.



It's not your fault they are depressed

We're talking clinical depression here so go back to the cake analogy. We've got some ingredients that are off in the recipe. You didn't bake the cake so why would you blame yourself if it turned out different than expected?

Partners blame themselves for stuff that they have no control over. This leads to excessive pain and frustration in the relationship.

You didn't cause this; it's chemical. So give yourself a break and chill out for a minute.



It's not their fault they are depressed

Okay, again, we're talking clinical depression here so go back to the cake analogy. We've got some ingredients that are off in the recipe. Your partner didn't bake the cake either so why would you blame them if it turned out different?

I'm sick and tired of families who hold ridiculous standards up to people with mental illness.

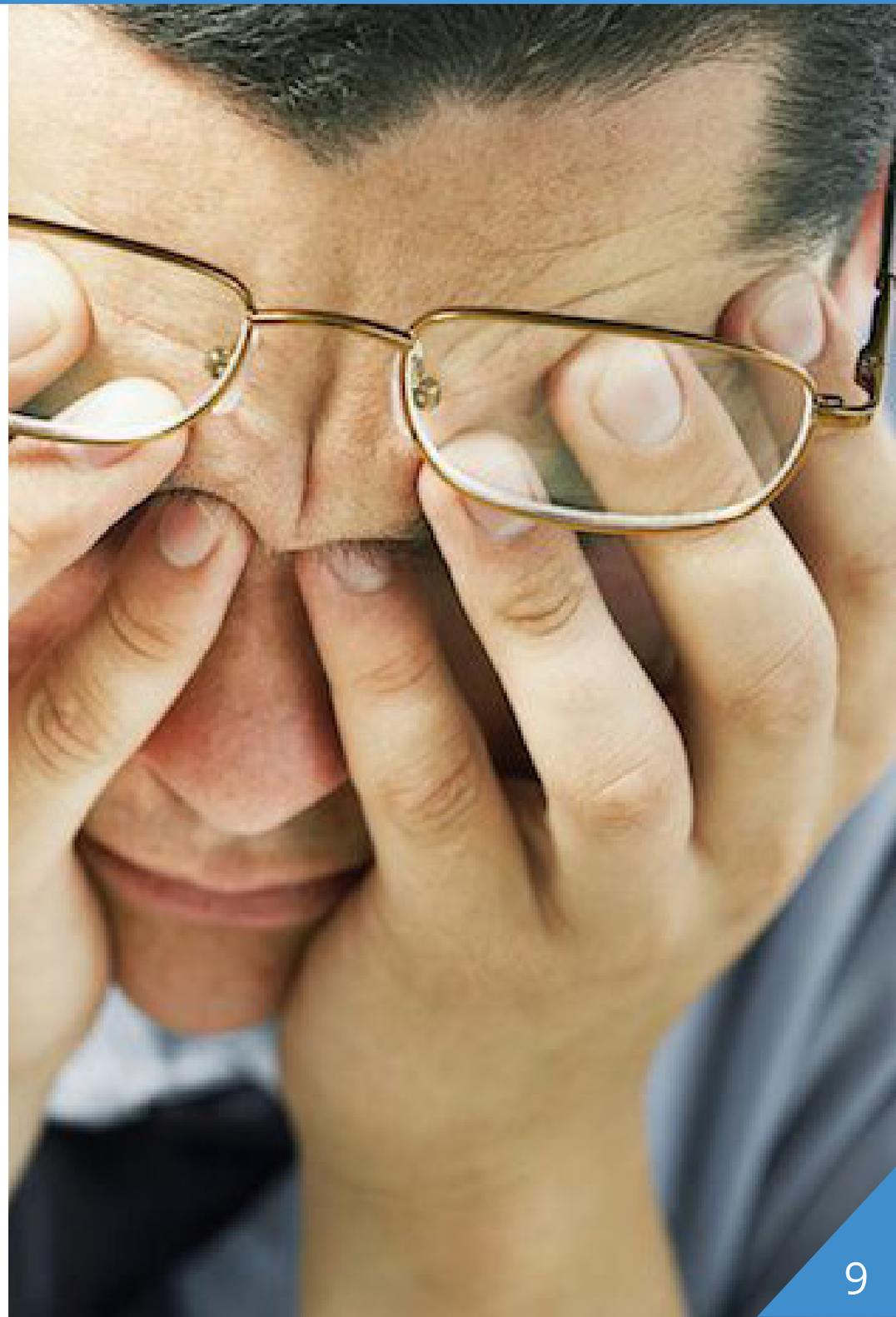
'Why can't they get over it?'

'They just need to power through?'

I refuse to put in print the expletives I have to describe these people. I'm intolerant of their attitudes, and I'm indignant toward their ignorance.

It's chemical, you morons. Take a cake recipe, bake it without a couple of the ingredients but add extra salt. Bake it, try it, now yell at the cake for not tasting or looking right. You see how stupid that is?

Blame ruins relationships. It's not their fault they're depressed, but it's your fault if your an A-hole. So cut it out.





Depression is not something they asked for

Nobody woke up this morning wishing they had depression. Nobody who struggles with suicidal thoughts is excited by the visions they get to have of killing themselves. Nobody asked for this. Too many people act like depression is a choice. It's not.

If you think your partner wants to be depressed, if you think she intends to act like that, feel like that, experience the hell that comes from depression, then just stop reading this guide now. You need to think really hard about some things.

They're not doing this to spite you

None of the things my depression causes is my first choice. Much of it is involuntary chemical reactions to life, and the result comes out all wonky. As you continue, through this guide you'll learn the different ways depression can negatively affect your partner but know that it's not their intention to piss you off or ruin your day. In fact, they often have a lot of guilt from it.

So please do both of you a favor and recognize that a lot of this is not intentional toward you. Be quick to forgive, remember it's the ingredients in the recipe, not the cake.

Cake sounds good right about now.

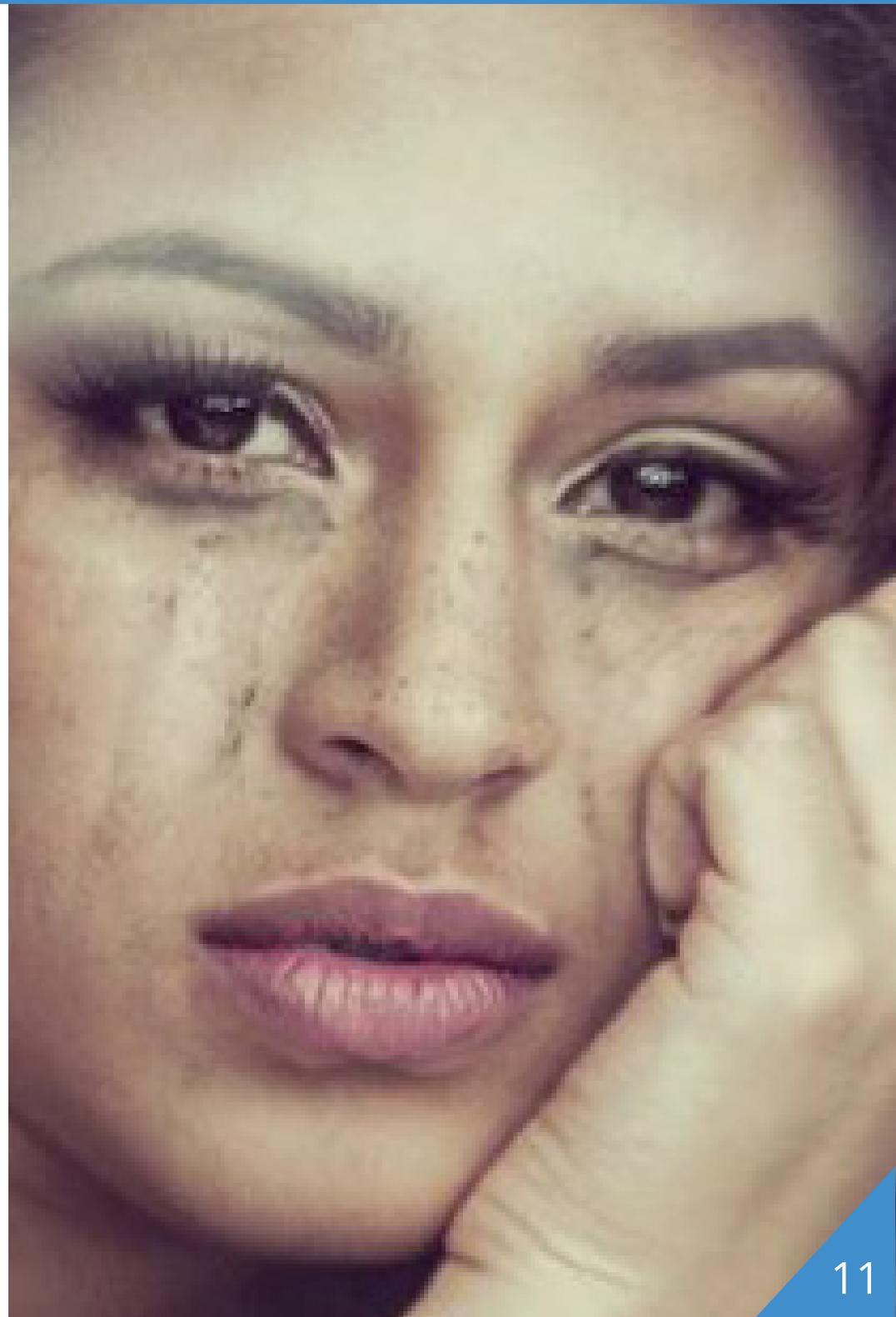
They're not giving up on life; they're fighting to preserve it

A lot of times it looks like people with depression have just given up on life. That's not true at all. The war that's going on inside their brain is so exhausting there is little energy for anything else. Treating someone with depression like they are giving up or like they are quitters helps nobody.

It is not just a bad day or mood

Comparing depression to a bad mood is like comparing stomach cancer to indigestion. Stop it.

I don't care if you don't get it. Nobody but a doctor understands cancer, yet we all respect it as a terrible enemy. You don't have to understand depression but appreciate the damaging effects of the illness.



Depression is not a weakness; your partner is actually pretty strong

I've been saying it for years that people with depression are not weak. They are warriors fighting a battle in their brain that you should thank God you don't have to endure. They have to do that every day and still get to work, take care of the kids, and put up with you.

Imagine doing everything you're expected to do each day but do it all one armed, out of breath and with someone telling you that you suck the entire time. That's what someone with severe depression would just call a Wednesday morning.

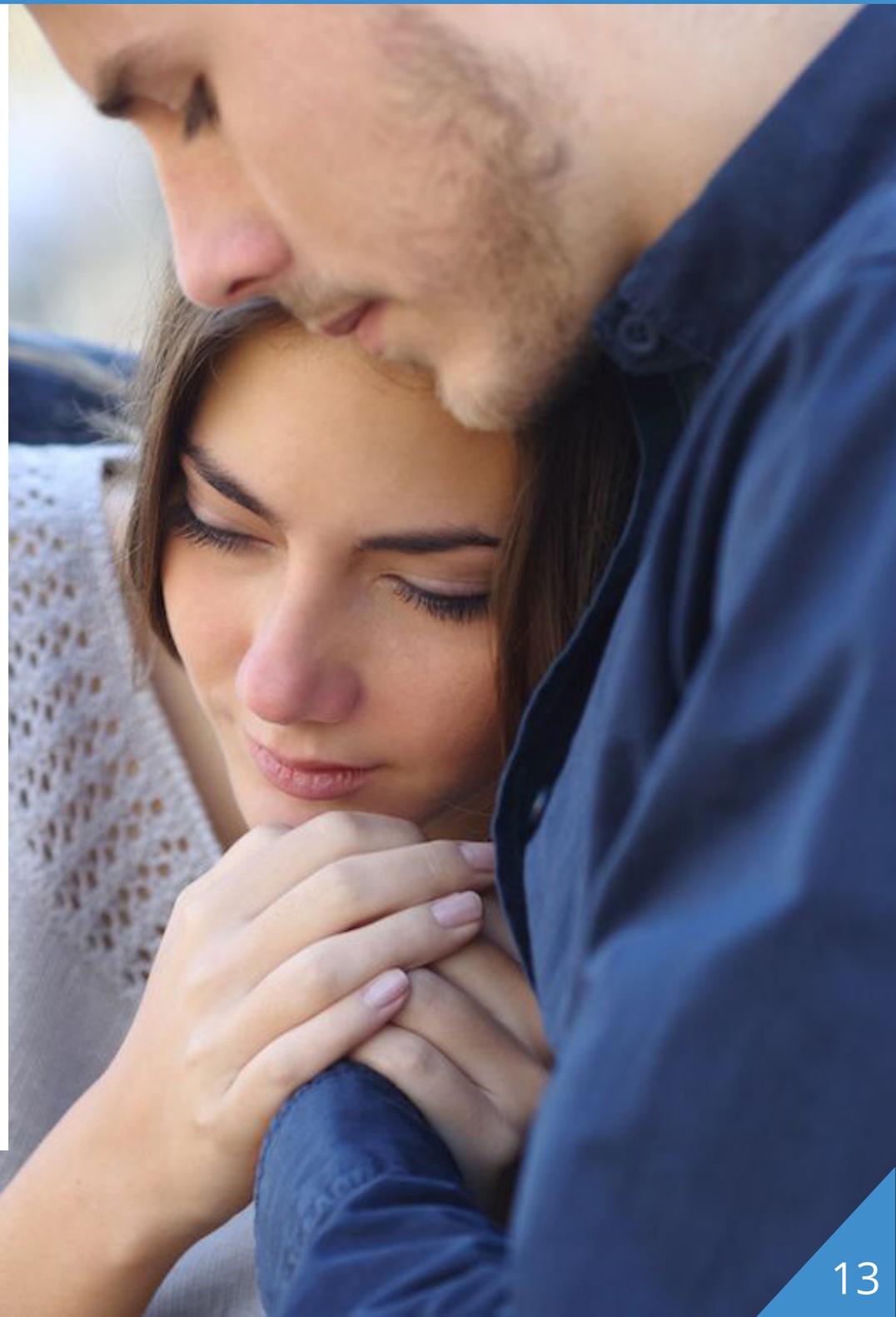
Enduring all of that and still managing to get even a handful of the 'normal things' done in a day is a sign that you've got a pretty tough person on your hands. Stop looking at them like they are weak. They deserve some respect.



This is common; relationships survive it all the time

43.8 Million American adults experience depression in a given year. Your relationship is not the only one to deal with this. Does it make it hurt less? Absolutely not, but it should help you keep some things in perspective.

First, other relationships have survived the discouraging effects of depression. Your situation is entirely doable. Don't feel like you're the only ones dealing with this. In fact, you're not the only people in your neighborhood dealing with this so just keep that in mind. Because depression is common, and many relationships face it, there is hope that we can get through it too.





It's a long process with ups and downs

Depression will not be over in a week. A year from now, you're still going to be dealing with this. It's been almost 15 years since my diagnosis, and I've had it for much longer than that. Depression is not the flu that your partner will get over after a week.

There will be ups and downs. You will have weeks where things seem back to normal, and you'll start to feel comfortable again, and that's when depression will strike again, and your partner will fall back down the hole. It happens all the time.

Expect that there will be good days and bad days. The good days don't mean there won't be any more bad days but the bad days don't mean you won't experience some laughs and fun along the way.

Your partner will laugh or smile sometimes. That's a good sign. Be happy about that. Enjoy it. But know that it's not forever and that it will go away at some point.

This illness comes in waves. I can be laughing one minute, and a half-hour goes by, and I'm a crying wreck. It happens.

Don't think you're out of the woods just because your partner is smiling. I've laughed for hours and faked many smiles while still trying to avoid the visions of killing myself that were bouncing around in my head.

It can always come back. Just like the tide, it goes in and out.

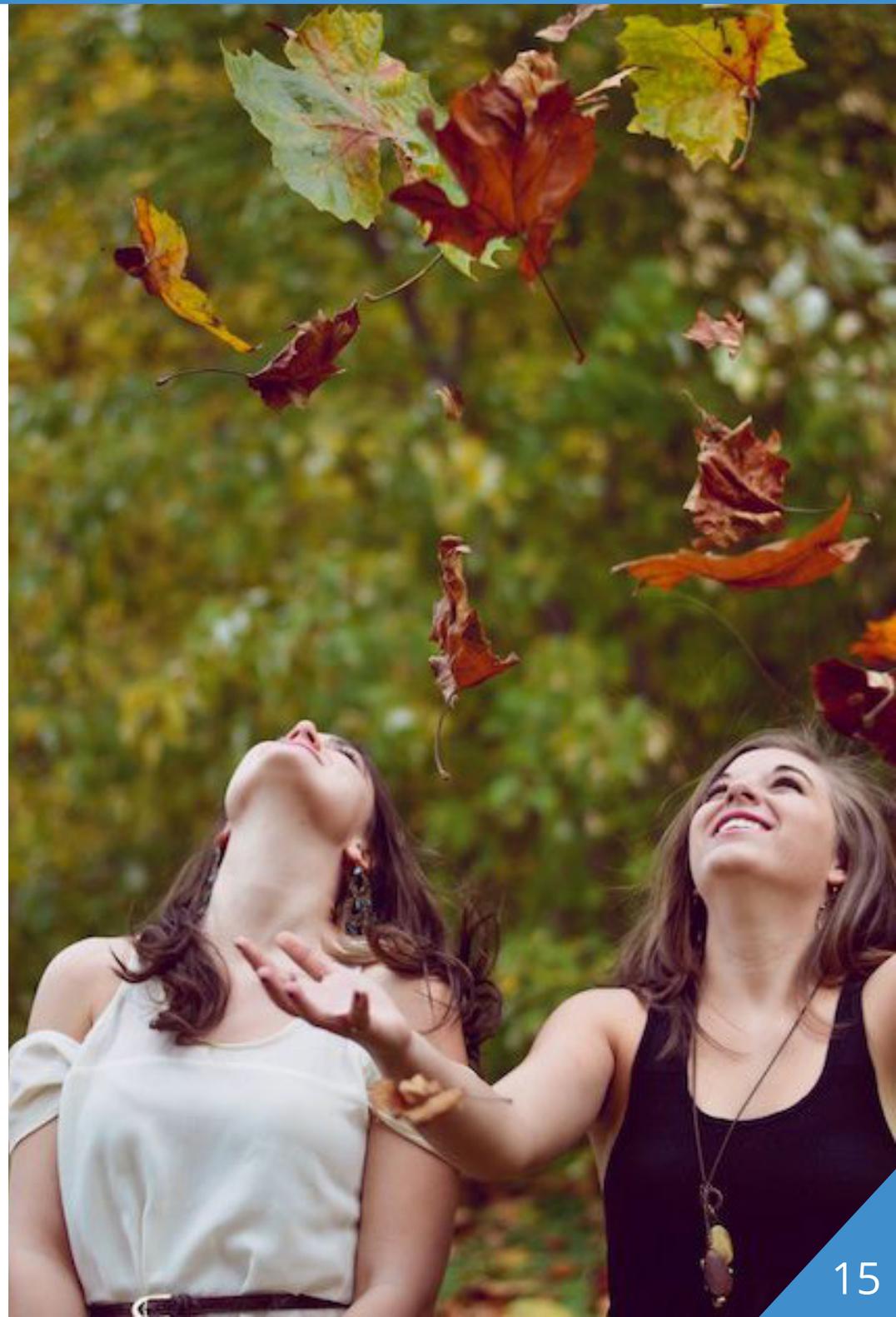
As hard as it is to live with me it's harder for me to stay alive

Please give them some grace. Whatever you're dealing with concerning them, it is nothing compared to what they're dealing with on the inside. Words can't express just how bad it can be in your head. So whatever you two are dealing with, just keep that in mind. They have bigger battles going on than just yours.

It wont all suck

I said depression comes in waves. That means so does happiness. You're going to have laughs and fun and smiles along the way. It's not all bad. Okay, the depression part is all bad, but life with depression is not all bad. You can still have some positives in your life.

There are some good things you should know about life with depression. [Here's a list of 5 positive things to keep in mind.](#)





Part Two:

How Depression Will Affect Your Partner

It is important to understand how depression will affect your partner. Each person is unique, so their course of treatment will differ from everyone else.

A lot of parts of fighting depression will require trial and error and a ton of patience. Some things will work and

some won't so you will need to make sure you set your expectations for that.

While every person is different, there are some similarities so we can go over some general guidelines.



Depression leaves you with very little energy

Think of energy as gas in a car. You can only drive so far before needing to top off the gas tank. To get through your day, you need abundant gas in the tank. From dull meetings to disagreements with coworkers to phone calls with clients, all of this takes gas.

People with depression burn 'gas' at a much faster rate than you do because they spend so much energy fighting the battle in their head. It's very inefficient to fight depression and do life at the

same time, so the result is often an exhausted partner.

It's common that someone with depression will get to the end of their day and not have much energy for life, they burned all their gas on fighting the illness.

Because of this lack of energy, you're going to have a tired partner, and you're going to see this manifest in a number of ways.

The little things may not always get done

With little energy left, it's not surprising that some things will slip through the cracks. Decisions may get put off longer than you may like, your partner may not be able to go out to dinner, or be social.

Think of you at your most tired. You don't want to do anything at all when you're that wiped out. Well, someone with depression feels like that regularly.

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They may not always be considerate

When you're at your most exhausted, do you want to hear about everyone's problems? Do you still sit on the edge of your chair and listen intently? Of course not, because you're exhausted. Someone with depression is fighting a battle in their head. The lies their depression tells them are unending, and the noise is deafening. It's hard to handle our struggle and every single one of your feelings at the same time.

That doesn't mean we don't want to. It doesn't mean we don't care. It doesn't mean we love you less. It just means we have a finite amount of energy and, for the time being, the majority of it is going toward fighting the illness. Please don't be offended when your partner doesn't remember everything or listen as intently, you're not the only one talking to them all day. They need a little grace from you.



They may be flaky

I spent the majority of my life with righteous indignation toward flakes. You know, those people you can't count on. The guys you can't make plans around because they may bail at the last minute. I despised those people until depression turned me into one. I blow off so many plans now because of my illness. It's overwhelming how often I delete appointments off my calendar.

Just like being a little inconsiderate at times, it's not our intention. We want to make our appointments and be there for you. We want to spend time with our friends. But it doesn't always work out that way.

I was supposed to visit some friends in San Diego one Saturday. I spent weeks preparing for it. I hadn't seen my dear friends for over a year, and I wanted to spend time with them. Thirty minutes

before leaving town, I was shaking on the couch in tears. The depression had me paralyzed, and I could not leave.

My wife had to end up going to San Diego to see our friends without me. That happens too much and we now just let friends know that I may or may not be there. Nobody counts on me showing up. I hate it, and it's frustrating beyond words. I just want to be 'normal' and spend time with friends. But I'm crippled by this pain.

Your partner may have every intention of doing something or going somewhere, but you will need to set your expectations that it may not go down quite as planned or if at all. You will need to be patient and understanding when these plans get screwed up.

They can be blunt at times

It's hard to say the right things consistently and have the right tone all to keep everyone in your life free of ruffled feathers but, with no energy, how are we supposed always say the right thing?

Remember what it's like when you're exhausted. You don't always say things the right way or in the friendliest tone when you're wiped out. Well, someone with depression may be wiped at 8 am on a Tuesday. So you have to let some of it roll off your back. Again, they don't mean to be that way; sometimes they're trying so hard just to communicate the facts to you that it comes out a bit rough. Trust me; we have a lot of guilt for that so don't add to it.

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They may seem like a different person from time to time

For years, my wife and I have had three people in our marriage, me, her and the depressed guy that screws up everything good. There will be times your partner seems like a different person. The depressed person comes out and messes with the day and then just disappears and your loved one comes back.

It's important to remember that it is the depressed person, not your partner who is causing all of this.

If you look at your partner as the source of all these issues, you will make a mess of things. Remember there may be a different person coming out and it's not your partner.

Mood swings are common

With this other depressed person inside them, it's common to see mood swings occur. You may be laughing together one minute and then find them crying in a room alone the next. It happens.

Just roll with it. Enjoy the fun for as long as they last and be supportive of your partner during the dark mood swings so that they don't last as long, so you can get back to those sweet moments.

Finances could take a dip and employment could get spotty

Let me be clear, the overwhelming majority of people with depression go on to live healthy lives. They hold good jobs and have wonderful families. Not everybody with depression loses their job, and wipes out their finances so don't panic.

But, I do want you to be aware that employment and paychecks often take a back seat to mental illness, and this can become an issue. It's not something to lose sleep over by any stretch but, in the spirit of a no-holds-barred guide, I want you to know what might happen.

The overwhelming majority of people with depression go on to live healthy lives.

They may need personal space

A lot is going on inside your partner. There may come a time where they need to be alone. It's not your fault; there's nothing you did to cause it. They just need to chill a bit, and you can help best by giving them the space they require.

There are plenty of times my wife, and I are in different rooms of our home even though we want to be together. I need the space to work through what's happening inside me, and she respects that and gives it to me.





There will be hand holding to get things done

I mentioned earlier that the little things may not get done when your partner's depression flares up bad. Well, the big things don't always happen either. So, if there's something important that needs to get done, you may need to help walk them through it and hand hold a bit.

For example, I struggle a lot with making phone calls. I hate being on the phone because it makes my depression anxiety go off the charts. So, when I have to make a phone call to the credit card company or make a doctor's appointment, it may take a couple of weeks to get it done. That may just be a 5-minute conversation for you, but I need a

couple of weeks to psyche myself up.

So, there are times my wife has to encourage me to make those calls sooner or ask me how I'm doing with a project. It's not that she's trying to bug me about it or that she doesn't trust me in the big picture. It's just that she knows how depression can screw up productivity, focus and momentum. So she's being a good partner in this battle.

Expect that the things that take you 5 minutes might take your partner, at least, five days. Set your expectations so that you aren't frustrated when it happens.

Part Three: The Truth About Lies

The more you spend time with someone with depression the more you will understand how much depression lies. I've already mentioned it multiple times in this guide because the lies are prevalent.

We're left to feel down, so utterly worthless, so unworthy of love, that there is no reason to exist.



500 Lies

Imagine, for a moment, that your loved one went off to work for the day. You said your goodbyes in the morning and then go your separate ways. Now, imagine that all day your loved one was told 50 lies. Each one of these lies varied in degrees of severity, but they were all directed at your loved one and how horrible they are.

From the time you left them, they were told a different lie throughout the day. By the time they came home, they would feel horrible about themselves and have no hope or energy for much else.

Now, you want to help your loved one and build them up. Well, you have to start by undoing those 50 lies one by one. You have to counter each one and remind your loved one that it's not true. That's for each and every lie.

So you've undone the 50 lies, but that's not enough, they're drained by what has happened. So, in addition to the 50 positive things you have to communicate to them, you probably have to throw on a few more good things too just to make sure the positivity sticks.

So let's just call it 50 lies vs. 60 truths. The reality is that these myths are so prevalent in your loved one's life that it's more like 500 lies on a constant loop, inside your brain. Sometimes they're whispered; sometimes they're screamed at you. Doesn't matter, they're still firing your way.

The toughest lies are not the loud ones. Those, you can see coming. **The most terrible lies are the subtle things, the little seeds that get planted over time. You never see them coming, but then you wake up, and it's been five years, it's no longer a seed it's a giant plant of self-loathing. You hate yourself, and you don't know why. It's because of the subtle lies that got planted when you weren't expecting it.**

These myths are so prevalent in your loved one's life that it's more like 500 lies on a constant loop

The trial for your life

The meanest lies are the ones that get wrapped in reality. You'll get haunted by something you said in your past or how someone had a rough tone with you years ago. That will all get brought up as evidence against you in a trial for your life.

Picture your brain as a courtroom, on one side the real you pleading for mercy. On the other side, is your depression, mounting a case against you giving the court reasons why you shouldn't exist.

You have to overcome the fact that they will feel unworthy of love

All of these lies, these cases mounting up against your partner, may occur every second of every day (Hence the exhaustion). If you want to restore any positivity to your partner's life, then you have to work over and over and over to undo the lies that get told.

You must be complimentary, encouraging, and more importantly, you must go out of your way to express those things. You can't assume your partner knows you're thankful for something they did. You can't assume they know you love them just because you told them yesterday. You can't expect that they know you want them in your life. In fact, I guaranteed their brain is telling them quite the opposite.

You need to speak up so the third person in the room, the depression, doesn't run away with the conversation. Take action, show your partner how much you love them. Build up the evidence against the depression's lies. **Show proof that they belong here and that you love them.**

Show proof
that they
belong here
and that you
love them

Part Four:

What You Should Do

Now that you have a better idea of what to expect from your partner's depression let's talk about some of the things you should do to make a positive impact on both of your lives.



Research and learn about depression

Take some time to learn about your partner's condition and what they are enduring. Doing this will do a couple of things. First, you might learn something so you'll be able to provide better support. Even more, you're showing your partner that you care enough to learn about what they're dealing with in their life.

I hear a lot of people with depression say that they wish their partner would take a more active interest in what they must fight. **Spend some time learning and show them that you care.**

Places you can start

- [How to Help Someone with Depression](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health](#)



Be supportive and encouraging

Your partner doesn't need anything other than positivity from you. So show them the support they need and encourage them through their struggles.

If you're their partner you should be their biggest fan and their loudest cheerleader. Anything less is unacceptable from a real partner, and it's completely ineffective when fighting depression.

Remain positive

There are going to be days where you just think all is lost, and that's when you need to stay positive. That positivity is a source of strength for both of you. Remember, there is always hope, there is always something else we can try, so let's stay positive and not give up.

Positivity is even more important when you have kids at home. They're going to need to see you upbeat and happy to help them feel okay about your partner's condition. I'm not saying put a fake spin on things; it's hard to cover up this pain. But everyone involved needs to feel like you're moving in the right direction and that the world isn't ending. Your positivity is a big part of that.



Be patient

I wrote about this extensively in the [Sad Runner Guide: How to Help Someone with Depression](#) because patience is vital to your partner's recovery.

You absolutely must be patient.

Consider a snail cruising along a sidewalk. You can stand there and scream at the snail all you want, but he will only be able to go so fast. Your partner can only do so much so quickly so often. You have to be patient with them and allow the journey to continue at their pace. Sure you want to encourage them along but know that there's a limit to how much they can accomplish, so you need to chill out and be patient.

People don't treat depression like a physical illness. They often treat it with shame as if it's a shortcoming, a sign of failure. That couldn't be further from the truth.

Treat it like a physical illness, like cancer, because that's what it is

People don't treat depression like a physical illness. They often treat it with shame as if it's a shortcoming, a sign of failure. That couldn't be further from the truth.

People dealing with cancer get endless compassion and support, yet those of us with depression have to hide our illness. **Don't further the stigma by treating depression like anything other than a physical illness.** Treat it like cancer, give your partner the support and compassion they need to get through the day just as you would if they became diagnosed with lymphoma or breast cancer.

Listen

When you live with someone with depression you're going to need to be there for them more than most people and that means you're going to need to listen to them about their illness from time to time.

Listening is one of the most important things you can do when living with someone with depression. Many of us who suffer from depression just need someone to hear us out.

For me personally, talking things through is how I figure things out and learn more about myself. Much of what I've learned about my depression has come from talking things through with others. If you can make it a point to listen to them when they need to speak you will go much farther than many in your relationship with your depressed loved one.



Ask questions

People don't ask enough questions. I don't know if they are scared of our answers or what. Whatever it is, it comes across as disinterest. If you've noticed that your loved one needs to talk about their illness, do them a favor and ask questions.

The benefit for you is that you will learn more about your loved one, and their illness which will help your education. But more than that it will help your depressed loved one. Not everyone is open about their illness, but those of us who do talk about our condition find encouragement from people asking questions. **It tells us you care and that you're interested in what we have to bare.**

Listening to someone talk about their depression takes a lot of personal strength because you're going to hear some things that will bum you out. But you have to understand that first, it's even worse for your loved one, and they can't escape it, but second, you're serving your loved one here. **You're providing support for them. So even if it bums you out, go with it and try and learn all you can about the person. It will help you both.**





Take care of yourself

Think about when you take care of someone with the flu. You're going to be a little cautious to make sure you don't get sick too. Depression can get a bit contagious, so you need to look out for yourself too.

Make sure you allow time for you in addition to caring for your partner. You need to be healthy and full of energy for both of you so be sure to do whatever you need to do to keep that up. *I have more on this a little further in the guide so keep going.*

You need to be healthy and full of energy for both of you so be sure to do whatever you need to do to keep that up.

Offload their plate

Energy is so finite, and depression is so draining, that we don't have much left for the things on our to-do list. Things like household chores or simple errands may not get done. If your loved one does manage to complete them, it might come after ample procrastination or delays.

In this situation, it is important to remain patient. **Don't make the situation worse by arguing or attempting to make your loved one feel guilty. That helps nobody and, frankly, you're making the situation worse.**

If you're able to, offload some of the items from their list. If you can take out the trash, please do it. If you can run to the grocery store, offering to without being asked will help your loved one tremendously. It will be one less thing in their brain that's weighing them down.

A word of caution, you don't want to offload everything. There must be some room for growth in your loved one. If you do everything, the depression will continue to own them. There must be a balance. Challenge them to try some things. But just know that, if you can take a good amount off their plate, it will make a huge difference.

For example, while I still take out the trash and do the majority of the household chores, one area of struggle I previously mentioned is making phone calls. Talking on the phone is one of the most draining things in my

life. I despise it and how it makes me feel. Any phone call I have to make gets delayed by procrastination and prayers. Once I finally manage to make a call, I'm so drained emotionally that I can't do much more. So, my wife does the overwhelming majority of the phone calls. I may do our finances, but if I need to call the bank, she will do it for me because she knows that it will remove an overwhelming weight from my shoulders, and it also means that it will get done promptly.

But, there are some situations where I still have to make the phone call myself. So I procrastinate and delay the whole thing, but she remains patient with me because she knows the process. Ultimately when I make the call, we both celebrate because we know that it stretched me.

There's a delicate balance here and, like most of the depression recovery, it will take some trial and error but you will get it. You'll learn what to take off their plate and what to leave on to help them grow. Recognize that this is a process and remain patience with it.

**Energy is so finite,
and depression is
so draining...**

Avoid sensitive topics

Whether you have depression or not, each one of us has a topic or two that pushes our buttons. **But these buttons can be a significant issue for people with depression because they end up as triggers that spark the fire inside them.** It won't be long before depression consumes them once again.

Try to avoid talking about topics your loved one is sensitive about discussing. There will always be subjects you can't avoid at times but, if you can, try and make an effort to steer clear of them.

Certainly, if you know a way to get under their skin and aggravate your partner, don't do it as this can be devastating. Avoidance is a good practice here.

Planning ahead helps

Depression and anxiety tend to dance together so it should not be a surprise when some general anxiety shows up in your partner. **One of the best ways you can help your partner through this is by planning ahead.**

Appointments, errands, visitors coming over, these are all cause for anxiety in your partner, so it's good to keep them in the loop and always give them plenty of notice before something happens. You will help keep their anxiety to a minimum, and because they are so closely related, it will help their depression as well.

I'm surprised how much of our life we've planned in advance. My wife and I have optimized things so much that I always know what's happening, and I have plenty of notice beforehand. We don't have visitors to our home often because that causes a lot of issues for me. But, when we do, there's plenty of notice and my closest friends know to text me before showing up, so I don't lose it.

But that's what you have to do sometimes. Keeping your partner on the rails can be a delicate endeavor. A little planning ahead will make a huge difference.

Find out what they need (even if they don't know themselves)

Your partner may have no clue what they need at times. All they feel is the pain, and they can't think about anything other than the negativity inside them.

That's where you come in. Through your education about depression as well as your observation of your partner, you can start to understand what's needed.

My wife knows when I need space and when I need quiet time even before I do. She'll be the first one to grab one of my depression remedies and encourage me to use it. Why, because she's observed me and gotten to know me a bit more through this struggle.

Just keep your eyes and ears open, find what makes things worse and what makes things better. Then, start doing more of the things that make your partner feel better.

People tend to complicate treatment because of the severity of the condition. While medical help is necessary, you can make a positive impact on your partner's life by observing the things that lift their spirits and encourage more of this stuff to happen.

Further, there may come a time you can challenge your partner. As you know them more and more, you will see when their depression is holding them back, and you can subtly nudge them toward a positive approach.

All of this is just give and take between you and your partner. There's not an exact science here. It's all very much an art form.

They may have no clue what they need at times. All they feel is the pain, and they can't think about anything other than the negativity inside them.

That's where you come in.



Hold onto hope (even when they've lost it all)

Nurture the hope in your life and your own heart. Do whatever you have to do to remain positive. It's possible you will have to be positive enough for the two of you.

Many times I will see something with the negative lens of depression. It looks yellow and ugly, and there's no hope. That's just the illness. I need those closest to me to remind me of reality and show me just how much hope there is.

I don't want to say, 'never let them see you sweat.' Because, based on your type of relationship, you

want to be honest, and real with your partner and not hold back the important things.

But, you have to work hard to be the positive one in the relationship. You can't let the negativity of depression bring you down too. I've experienced it before where one person's depression breeds so much negativity that both partners start to believe the lies.

Remain optimistic, don't give up hope. There is plenty of hope, and you're sitting with a better view of it than your partner. Help them see what you see.

Part Five: What Not to Do



This guide is all about taking action and focusing on ways to make a positive impact on your partner struggling with depression. Still, it's important to identify a couple of areas to be cautious of so that you don't risk making things worse.

Let's dive into a couple of things you should avoid.

Don't hold them to some standard, every person is different

Look, I can't say this enough. Your partner didn't ask for this, choose it, wake up one morning and try real hard to achieve it. Depression is not the result of effort or intention. It's just a crappy illness that screws things up.

So, do not compare your depressed partner to anybody else. I don't care if they have depression or not. Your depressed wife does not compare to someone else's wife who doesn't have depression. You can't look at your friend's son and compare him to your depressed child. That's not fair to anybody, and it will make things worse.

I'm not just talking about 'out-loud' comparisons. **I'm talking about the subtle ones you make on the inside where you wish you married someone without this illness.** The times you roll your eyes on the inside because depression made your partner act differently than your friends' partner.

I will not mince words. Your negativity is the flu to a person with an already shaky immune system. So cut the crappy comparisons. Your partner has depression, deal with it and stop comparing them to unfair standards.

There is no standard for depression. Doctors can discuss conventional treatments and textbook diagnosis but for the person living with it, there is no standard for how to deal with this. **So you can't compare your partner to yourself, your friends, or even someone else who might be handling depression a 'little better' in your opinion. You're making it worse.**

Your negativity is the flu to a person with an already shaky immune system. So cut out the crappy comparisons.



Don't compare problems

Don't compare my problems to yours or others saying, 'it could be so much worse.' No, it couldn't not right now.

When depression is at it's worst, and I'm getting punched in the face, and I'm up against the wall bleeding from the blows, the dumbest thing you can do is try to show me how much worse it could be.

I don't need to know about kids in Africa. I don't need to know about your friend with Postpartum Depression who almost killed herself. I'm sorry, but the depression is taking over my body at that

moment. Why would you expect that to help? Let's go into the skin cancer center and cheer those kids up by telling them about Leukemia and how much more screwed up that can be. 'You know the sickness from the radiation is a real downer but thank goodness Linda came by and told me about Pancreatic Cancer and how much worse things could be.'

It doesn't matter if they have it better than most. It doesn't matter if their life isn't all that bad. They have depression; they're dying from the brain out, and you're dismissive of the situation.

Don't let it bring you down too

I will say that the symptoms of depression are contagious. You have to watch out for yourself and do things to take care of yourself. We've discussed nurturing hope and taking time for yourself, but there may be situations where you need up your game a bit.

Consider getting help for yourself as prevention

Don't skip over this section. I'm sick of hypocrisy in relationships. People want their depressed spouse to get help for depression, but they scoff at the idea of getting help themselves. That means you believe there's a stigma. That means you agree there's something wrong with getting therapy. Re-read this guide from the beginning and let's try this again.

There's nothing wrong with preventative therapy

Therapy is like going to the gym. Why wait until you're fat and on the verge of a heart attack to sign up for a membership? Get in there now and do the work while it's easier and things aren't as severe.

Meeting with a therapist even occasionally will help keep you from falling down the hole too. But it may also give you some tools to help your relationship.

I remember a time in my relationship where I urged my girlfriend, now wife, to get help. I wanted us to do couples counseling to try and improve a few things. She finally agreed but only if I went to therapy on my own first. Within months, our relationship improved and we had yet to enter couples therapy. Just me being there, though I wasn't in horrific shape, improved things immensely for our relationship. So please don't think you need to be the screwed up one in the relationship to get the benefits of a little therapy.

Another huge benefit is the example you set for your partner. Many are reluctant to go to therapy. I know too many men and women with mental illnesses that won't see a therapist and their marriage is dying because of it. So, if your partner needs therapy and they are reluctant to, try going on your own. Experience the benefits and share how it's helped you. Be a positive example. Set the standard in your relationship and take the lead. By setting a good example, you're encouraging them to move in the right direction. And this approach is considerably healthier than how most people do it which is to scream, 'you need help' from across the room in anger.

Sometimes you have to take the lead and be that change you want. It takes humility and selflessness but it will make a huge difference.

Part Six:

A Message to Men

Alright, man to man, we need to get a few things straight. So pay attention because I'm about to make your life a little less comfortable at first but undeniably better in the long run. So stick with me, bro.

Stop it.

Right now. Just stop. Stop trying to be the man and fix this thing. You can't. You won't. You will never. You're not that good.

Depression is the sport you will never understand the rules to. Your partner's brain is the engine you're not even smart enough to pop the hood on. The program is so complicated that even geniuses still don't get it. So what makes you think you're the guy that's going to magically make this all work out?

You're not helping anybody. And I hear the stories from your partners. Many of you are just making it all worse. So stop it.

Look I get it. At least once a week I catch myself trying to fix a problem my wife has, and that's not what she wanted me to do. She just needed me to listen and understand her struggle. To say nothing of the fact that I probably can't fix all her

problems anyway. I start to give advice or try and motivate her, and she just doesn't respond. Then I get aggravated which never makes things better. So now, not only does she have whatever crap she's dealing with at work, but her husband is now pissed off because she won't fix it the way he wants her to.

I know that sounds familiar because you do it too. You're a guy. There's, at least, two things all guys have in common. We've all peed outside at least once. And we've all tried to unnecessarily fix something for a loved one and then gotten frustrated.

That's just how we roll. We show love by fixing stuff. We want to get to the source of the problem and make it go away. And on many levels, it pains us when we can't express that love the only way we want to.

Even more, many of us care so deeply for our partner that we don't always know how to react to what they feel. One moment we're horrified by the pain they're experiencing, and the next we're enraged because they have to endure it all, and we don't know how to handle that.

But please understand this, and I'm going to be

as plain and dude to dude as possible because it's important that you get this. Depression doesn't work like that. **I truly appreciate where you're coming from, and I wish it were something you could fix, but it is not.**

And, **stop thinking your partner can fix it either.** I'm sick of hearing about this from people. Look, I already told you that you can't fix it, so how ignorant do you have to be to assume they can fix it? **Don't you think they would have done that already? Quit adding unnecessary pressure on your partner. That's not how this works, man. It never has, and you're just making it all worse.**

The sooner you accept depression as something you have no control over, like gravity, the faster you can help your partner recover. Stop being dumb about this and start helping.

Your partner is drowning in the ocean, and you're just over there trying to fight the water. Not only is your partner going to go under but you're going to look like a moron the entire time.

So accept that the ocean is too big for you to fight, then start to help your partner learn to swim. Encourage them, *not like a coach or a drill instructor*, but carefully. They are fragile, don't push them too hard but do cheer them on. Your partner needs your encouragement and support if they are going to swim this ocean on their own because that's really what this is.

Imagine having to take a long swim from LA to Hawaii. Your friends and family may come by in a boat and cheer for you. They may give you food. They may patch up your wounds or sores. But they aren't swimming for you. In fact, from time to time you may come along another swimmer in the water making their way toward land. But they aren't swimming for you. Swimming the endless ocean of depression is a sole endeavor. The most you can do is reach out and hand them something they ask for or yell your support over the sounds of the crushing waves.

You can't speed up to them in the boat and drag them along. You can't hop into the water and swim it for them until they regain their energy. You just can't, sir. I'm really sorry about that. I know that hurts you. You feel powerless, weak and out of control. That may make you angry, and that may just make you sad. You may even feel a bit hopeless.

Well, that's a lot how your partner feels but amplified and played on a loop in their brain day in and day out. Do they hurt? More than you'll ever know. Do they feel powerless and weak? Oh, you bet they do. Does your partner fear they might lose control at times? Yeah, I'd bet money on it. And I'm sure they're angry and sad, and they feel hopeless and I bet they even feel alone and confused at times too.



So sometimes the best thing you can do is hold them and just support them. Be their biggest fan and cheer them on louder than any lie their depression tells them. When they see you, they should never feel ashamed of their illness they should feel strengthened by your love. That's really the only way you'll be able to help fight this thing. You smother the crap out of it with love.

I know that's not always the most satisfying answer for guys. But that's the real answer. So what are you going to do about it? I'm sorry you showed up thinking you were going to play offense, and instead you're only playing defense. But you and I both know that defense wins championships so let's just keep that in mind when you start to have a crappy attitude about your new role in this game.

But you must know that it is a vital role. Do not think you are powerless. **You have to accept that your power is going to look drastically different, and it will be applied in vastly different ways than you ever imagined. But you are on the team, and we can't beat this without your support and your strength.** But again, it's just going to look a little different than you wanted.

You may not get to be a wide receiver anymore. Touchdowns and points on the scoreboard aren't in the cards for you right now. Bummer, but I know a lot of wide receivers that wouldn't have a championship ring without that beast of linebacker who shared the field with them. So take pride in your role even if it doesn't look the way you planned. Because it is a crucial role, that makes a huge difference.

Part Seven:

Important Relationship Advice

We've explored a lot in this guide. You've learned a little bit more about your partner's mental illness and how you can help make things better. You've learned that depression is not the result of something you or your partner did. Depression is just a physical illness with some pretty severe emotional symptoms.

Still, when you're in a relationship with someone with depression, there can be a roller coaster of emotions at times. Things can get heated, and you can become frustrated.

You're both fighting the same enemy so don't fight each other

This fight is not you vs. your partner. This battle never has been, and it never should be, a struggle between you two. You're both fighting the same enemy, your partner's depression.

You're doing nothing to help your relationship by lumping your partner in with the depressed person inside them. I know it's hard, but we've learned in this guide that you have to separate the two and that is no more necessary than when you're in a relationship with someone with depression. Separate the two and then get on the side of your partner and fight the depression with them. **Don't fight your partner.**

There are times you will want to quit; your partner feels that way too

You have to keep your partner going even when they lose hope and want to quit. Be their strength; however you can, but don't let your personal feelings of wanting to stop everything get to your partner because they are already real shaky.

You must be a positive force in their life, and that starts with a fire inside yourself to never quit and to never let this illness beat you two.

Resentment is poison that kills you both

If you start to resent your partner, you've got some things you need to work on to make things better. Resentment is like little drops of poison in your relationship. It could be as subtle as a comment you make to yourself about how you are annoyed your partner, 'just can't get it together.' But it will grow into a major elephant in the room that will separate you both significantly. Do whatever you have to do to avoid resentment. **Always speak of your partner with positivity when talking to your friends and colleagues. Never paint a crappy picture of your partner because you're going to be living with that painting in your head for a long time.**

I see it daily. Someone just adds these little comments, these tiny thoughts to their life and before you know it, those seeds have sprouted into a full tree of resentment and frustration. You don't want that in your relationship. It's easier to avoid planting those seeds than it is to pull the tree out later in your relationship, so use some caution.

Remember that we're not trying to upset you

I can't say it enough; this illness isn't about you. It doesn't care about you or your partner; it's just destructive. **So don't think your partner is having a bad day just to frustrate you. If they could, they wouldn't because feeling like this is horrible.** To believe that they would do this to piss you off is both ignorant and incentive and I'm pretty sure you don't want either of those words used to describe you.

Neither one of you picked this so don't hold it against each other. You have to work as a team here. There will be ups and downs, mistakes and losses, but the point is that you work this out at a team.

We're hard on ourselves, don't add to it

Nobody is harder on us than our depression. Every shortcoming we've ever had, every embarrassing mistake we've ever made gets played on a loop back to us on the regular. **You can't be harder on us than our depression is already, but you certainly can make it worse.**

So ease up. Don't be so hard on your partner because that only separates you two and you don't want that to happen.

Encourage personal responsibility

We've learned at length just how this illness can mess with your partner. You want to make sure you still encourage a little bit of personal responsibility. **They have to own their recovery.** There will be days they don't have the strength, and you will need to be their strength. But, in general, they have to be a participant in their own recovery and you must, nicely, encourage that.

Help them accept their condition and start to identify the things in their life that they can control. They may not be able to control their illness, but they can control how they eat, the shows they watch, the people they spend time with, the doctors they see, the exercises they do, and so much more. **Taking some level of personal responsibility is important.** There will be days they slack off a tad, and that's okay, but they must remain committed to the fight themselves. That fire needs to burn so that it keeps them going.

One way you can help is by encouraging that fire. **Motivate them to do the helpful things in their life that will add up to alleviate their symptoms.**

Closing:

We Need You Now More Than Ever

Thank you for taking the time to read through this guide and learn more about how to make the most of living with someone with depression.

You may feel more than a little overwhelmed by all there is to consider and all there is to do on the road to recovery. That's okay; I'll give you the same advice I give you depressed partner: Keep moving forward.

Don't quit, don't give in, even if things look bad, just keep moving forward together in this fight. You'll get through it, millions of us do every day. But you must have an attitude to keep going because we need you.

For someone with depression, supportive and understanding people are few and far between. If you can commit to being that one person who, though you may never get it, tries to help and understand them, you'll make an impact.

We need you now more than ever in our lives. This depression is so painful, so dark and overwhelming that we just need someone like you who can be present and give us strong person to lean up against from time to time. You can be that person that, rock for your partner but it takes working through this guide with an attitude of patience and humility.

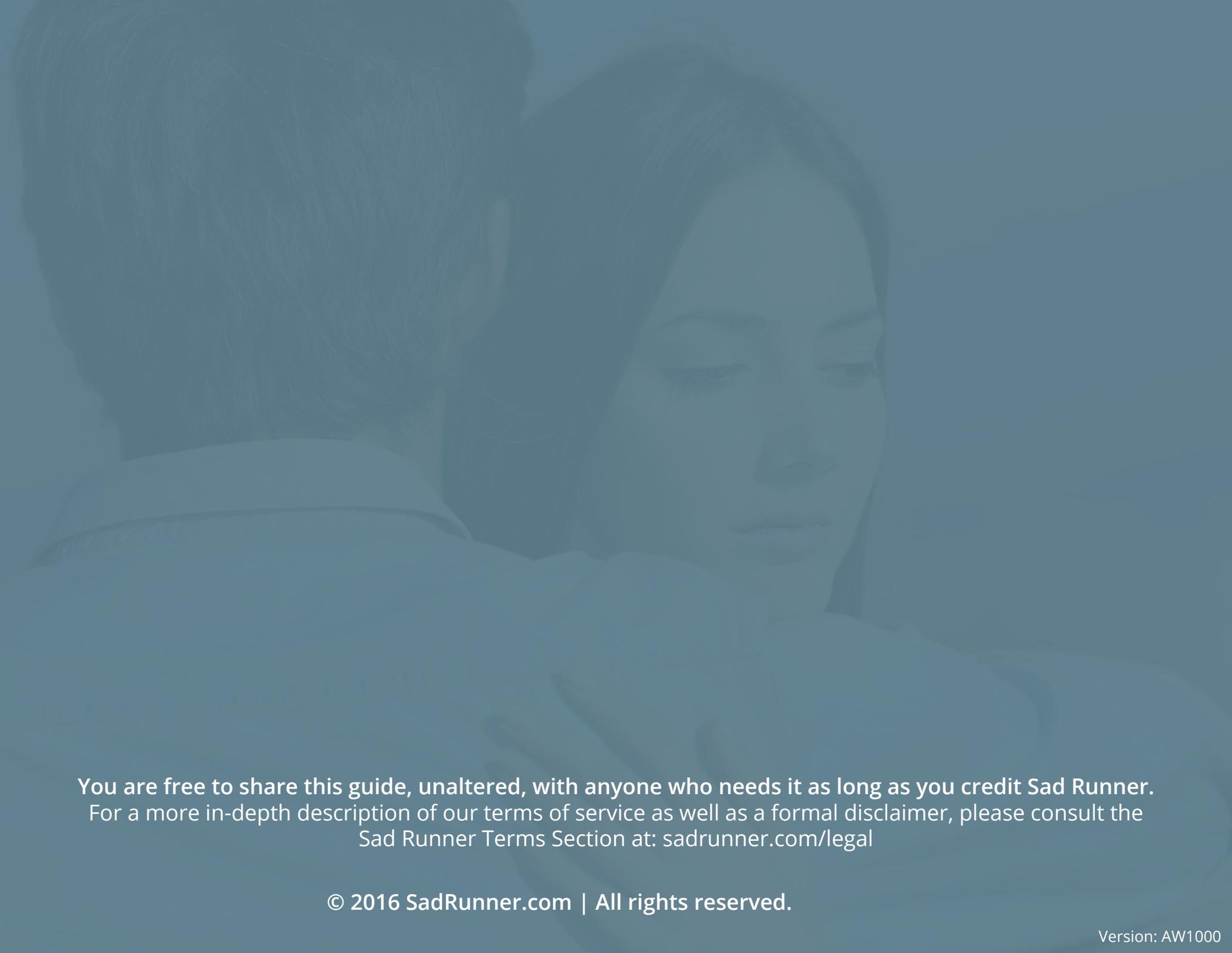
This illness isn't about either of you; it's just about destruction. So the only way you counter that is by love and encouragement and support. That's your job here. Be the overwhelming positivity in their life because it may just be the oxygen mask they need that day. This illness makes it so hard to breathe because you're choking on negativity. **You can be fresh air to their desperate lungs.**

We need you; please know that. Our attitudes, the tone of our voices may not reflect that always, but please know how much we need you and how much we're grateful for you in our lives. We can't do this alone; we need you and your love.

Thank you for reading through this guide but most of all, thank you for being an interested person who wants to know more about helping your partner. The fact that you have that attitude shows that this guide is in good hands, and it will be put to proper use to help your partner.



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