

## What Helps and What Hurts

### When Someone You Care about has Depression or Bipolar Disorder

People living with depression or bipolar disorder (manic depression) often cope with symptoms like feelings of hopelessness, emptiness or worthlessness. You probably want to say something to help the person feel better. But what can you say? Why does it seem like many well-meant comments hurt more than they help?

Here is a basic list to use as guidelines when you talk to a friend who has symptoms of depression. Put the statements into your own words. What's most important is that your friend understands your support. You didn't cause your loved one's illness and you can't control the person's feelings. You can only do your best to offer help.

*If the person is actively threatening suicide, don't try to handle the situation on your own. Call a mental health professional or take your friend to the nearest emergency room for treatment.*



### What helps

I understand you have a real illness and that's what causes these thoughts and feelings.

I may not be able to understand exactly how you feel but I care about you and want to help.

When you want to give up, tell yourself you will hold on for just one more day, hour minute - whatever you can manage.

You are important to me. Your life is important to me.

Tell me what I can do now to help you.

You might not believe it now, but the way you're feeling will change.

You are not alone in this. I'm here for you.

### What hurts

It's all in your head.

We all go through times like this.

Look on the bright side.

You have so much to live for – why do you want to die?

What do you want me to do?  
I can't change your situation.

Just snap out of it.

You'll be fine. Stop worrying.

## Talking to Others

- Choose a time that is relatively calm and free of distractions. You may need to make an appointment to sit down with family members and talk about something important.
- Begin your statements with yourself: "I feel," or "I need." Avoid "you" statements like "You always criticize me," which can make a person feel blamed or defensive.
- Tell them what they **can** say or do that will help you. This includes practical things like helping with housework or taking you somewhere.
- Ask for help when you need it. If you feel better, thank the friends who helped you.

DBSA does not endorse or recommend the use of any specific treatments or medications for mood disorders. For advice about specific treatments or medications, individuals should consult their physicians and/or mental health professionals.

# Please help us continue our education efforts.

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730 N. Franklin Street, Suite 501,  
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4/05 20-3-HELP

The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) is the leading patient-directed national organization focusing on the most prevalent mental illnesses. The organization fosters an environment of understanding about the impact and management of these life-threatening illnesses by providing up-to-date, scientifically-based tools and information written in language the general public can understand. DBSA supports research to promote more timely diagnosis, develop more effective and tolerable treatments and discover a cure. The organization works to ensure that people living with mood disorders are treated equitably.

Assisted by a Scientific Advisory Board comprised of the leading researchers and clinicians in the field of mood disorders, DBSA has more than 1,000 peer-run support groups across the country. Over four million people request and receive information and assistance each year. DBSA's mission is to improve the lives of people living with mood disorders.

Download this brochure and find important information,  
breaking news, chapter connections, advocacy help and much more at  
[www.DBSAAlliance.org](http://www.DBSAAlliance.org)

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We've been there.  
We can help.



Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance

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