



**How to be a  
good friend  
to someone  
who is  
depressed**

**Dr Pooky  
Knightsmith**

**It's not always easy knowing how to support a friend who is suffering from depression**

**We can be hesitant to help for a wide range of reasons...**

I don't know what to say

I don't understand

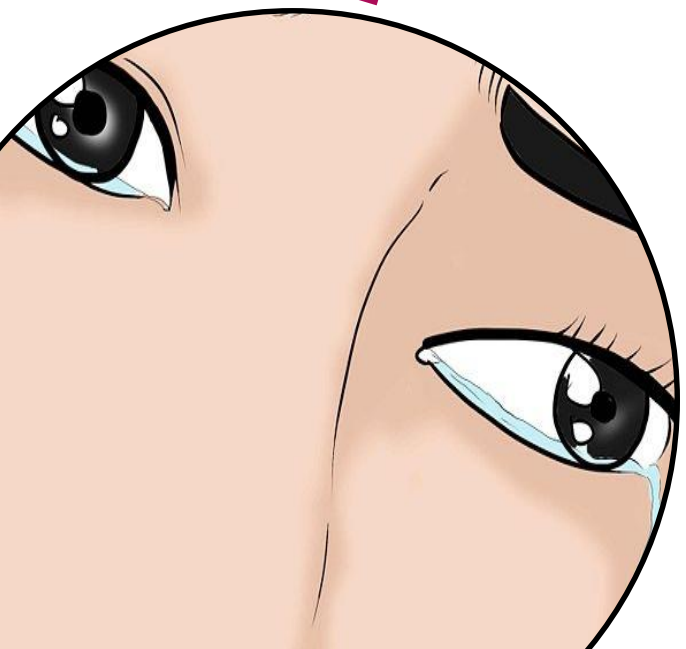
I'm worried I'll get it wrong

I'm not sure they want help



Sometimes it feels like your help isn't needed or wanted

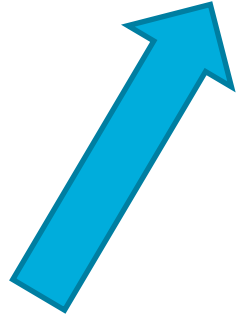
But often your friend will find it just as hard to know how to accept your help as you find it to offer it...



I feel  
so  
alone



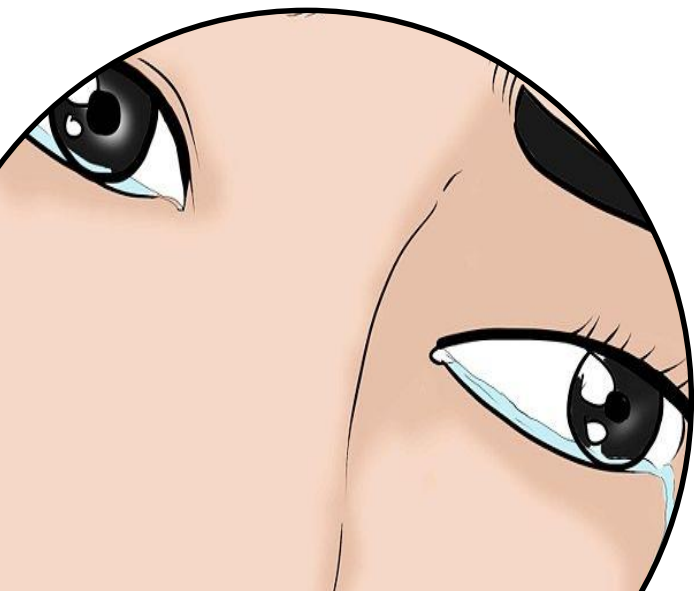
I want  
help  
but..



I don't  
know  
how to  
ask



Or how  
to  
accept  
help

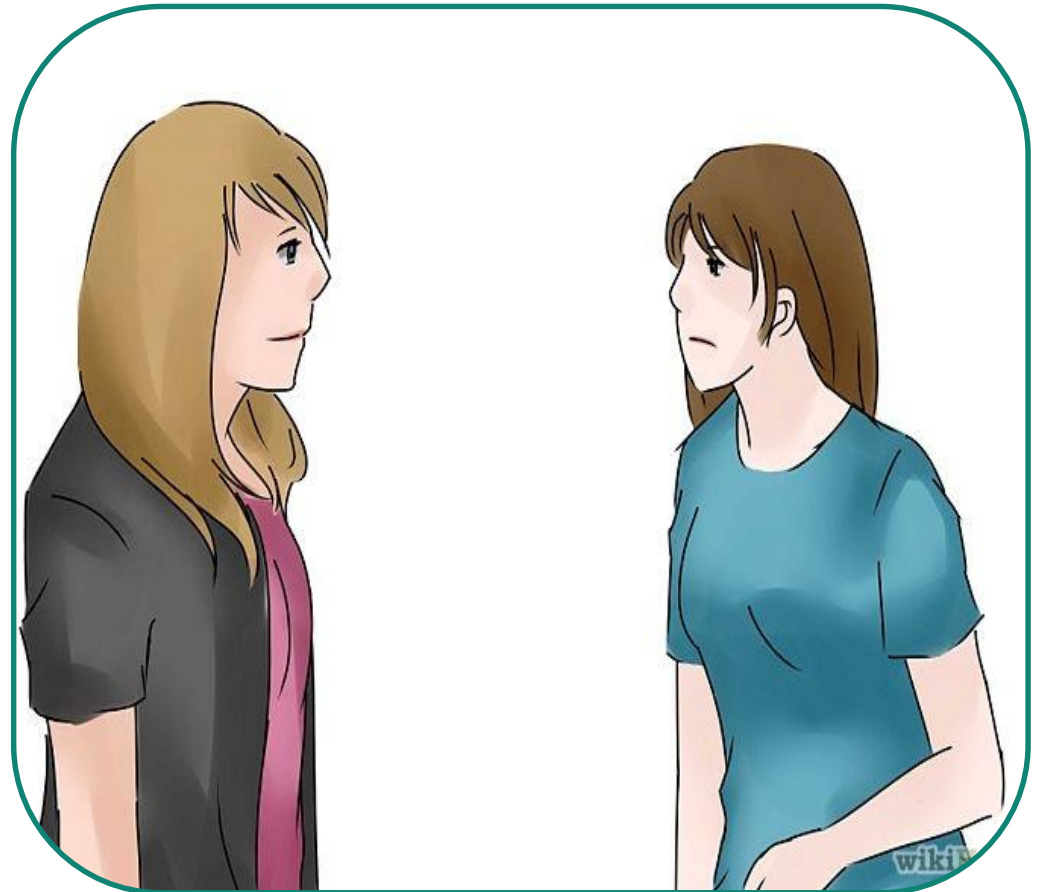


**But there are some  
ways you can  
support me...**

1

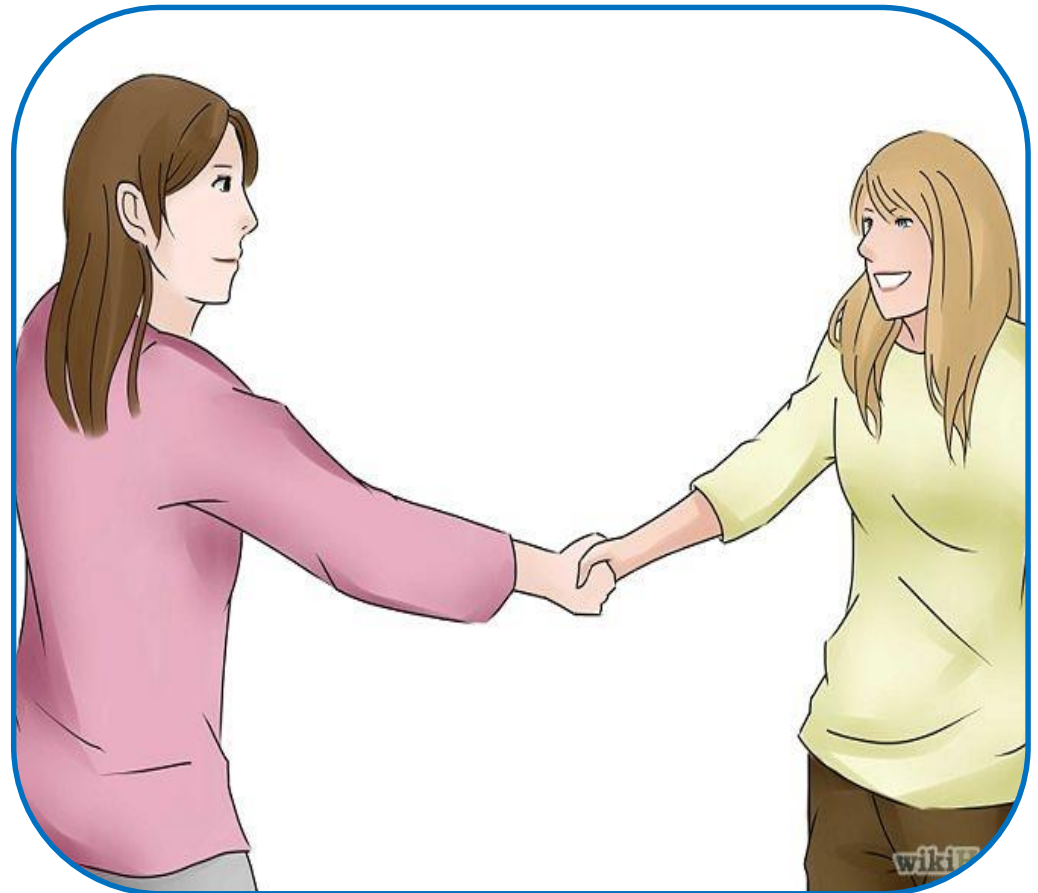
# Just be there

Never underestimate the power of simply being there. It shows you care which is something your friend needs to be reminded of right now.



## 2 Don't be scared of touch

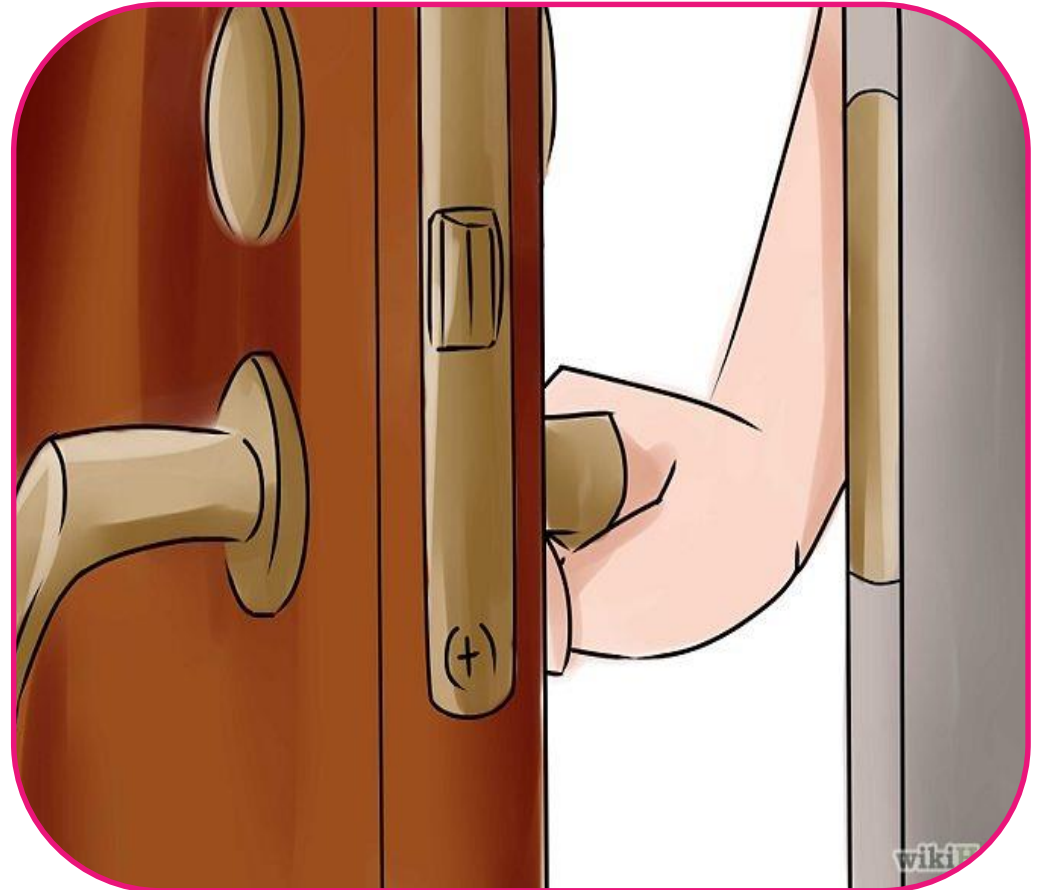
We can feel awkward around even our closest friends sometimes and may avoid physical contact. But a hug, a hand on their arm or holding your friend's hand can be very reassuring.





# 3 Keep the door open

Your friend may not be ready to see you or talk to you yet... but make sure they know you'll be there for them when they're ready.



# 4 Keep offering support

Keep reminding your friend that you're there for them. Even if you keep the door open to them, they will find it hard to proactively seek your support.



# 5

## Make time

Your friend may not feel able to join in with the activities you used to enjoy together. Make time to spend with them in a way they feel most comfortable.



# 6

## Be yourself

You don't need to be a counsellor or doctor to know how to help your friend. Just relax with them and remember how you used to act around them and act the same way. There's a reason you're friends!



# 7

## Keep in touch

It might feel like your friend is unwell for a long time. Don't forget about them – short messages via text or Facebook will remind them you're thinking of them.





# 8 Offer flexible support

Ask your friend how you can support them. This might mean things like accompanying them when they go out for the first time in a while or something more practical like picking up groceries.



# 9

## Never assume

Don't assume you know how your friend feels, even if you've been depressed yourself. Don't downplay their problems or expect a quick fix. Just continue to offer unconditional support, love and care.



# 10

# Keep supporting

When things start to get better, support will tend to drop away. This is the time when your friend may need more support than ever – just keep being their friend and asking how you can best help.





It won't be easy but it will be worth it.

Depression can make people feel very lonely and vulnerable and the support of a good friend can help someone who is suffering find a reason to continue fighting for recovery.

Good luck and thank you for trying – people like you, who care, make the world of difference to those of us who face dark days.

# Need more support?

Dr Pooky Knightsmith specialises in mental health and emotional well-being in the school setting. She can provide training sessions or workshops for school staff, parents or students on a variety of topics.

For further information and free resources visit  
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