

SUPPORT FOR MANAGING DEPRESSION

Depression impacts mood in a negative way; unhelpful thoughts can lead a person away from things they like to do, and leave them feeling irritable, sad and hopeless. Depression can include biochemical changes that lead to fatigue and reduced energy; even less energy for the things that could help a person feel better. In short, fighting depression requires energy that the depressed person just does not have. But if we break things into smaller steps things can seem more manageable.

- A person who is depressed might not see their past success or remember the good things in the day.
- It is an easy habit to forget to notice the small things that go well. PRAISE your child for things they do, even the things that seem simple, like getting dressed or having a smile on their face.
- Point out all the steps that went well, instead of focussing on the one step where they needed help.
- Keep a positive attitude yourself; this can be a challenge as a parent. Your own self care is vital.

Getting people moving again and doing things that might help them feel better is called **BEHAVIOURAL ACTIVATION**. However, just telling someone to 'find something fun to do' is often not helpful; a depressed person needs help making it happen.

- Remember a person with an Intellectual Disability will need support with *all* their leisure skills, including:
 - Choosing a simple activity: perhaps one that they liked at one time.
 - Setting up the activity, gathering materials or starting it off
 - Coaching to stay with the activity
- Sometimes, even talking about the activity ahead of time, having someone *picture it in their mind*, can make it seem easier to make happen.
- Using "remember when" encouragement or even photos of past happier times may help.

You may need to start with **BASIC ROUTINE ACTIVITIES**, such as getting washed and dressed, sitting at the table for a drink or leaving the house for a drive. Try to maintain a predictable routine for eating, sleeping and hygiene.

- Choose activities that are PLEASUREABLE: something the child enjoyed or wanted to try with help.
- Think of tasks that have an obvious ACCOMPLISHMENT or end result: baking, colouring or even 'look how far we walked'
- Choose tasks where the child has PAST SUCCESS and you know they have the ability to do the task.
- Natural mood boosters include FRESH AIR, EXERCISE, and COMPANIONSHIP, which can mean playing at the park or taking the dog out.
- Break things into SMALL STEPS, such as sitting together outside before going for a walk.

Managing depression can be very discouraging. Gains can be slow, so be sure to praise all involved for any forward progress! It is a move in the right direction.