

# When Someone You Love Is Struggling

## A Family Guide to Supporting a Neurodivergent Person Living with Depression

Loving someone who is neurodivergent and struggling with depression can feel overwhelming — especially when you want to help but aren't sure how. Depression in neurodivergent individuals often develops after years of feeling misunderstood, exhausted by trying to fit into a world not built for them, or hopeless after repeated struggles. Your presence, patience, and willingness to learn can make a profound difference. This guide offers practical strategies to help you support your loved one — and yourself — through this season.

### HOW TO OFFER MEANINGFUL SUPPORT

- **Listen without fixing.**

Often the most powerful thing you can do is simply be present. Ask open questions like 'How are you really feeling?' and resist the urge to immediately offer solutions.

- **Learn about their experience.**

Neurodivergent individuals — including those with ADHD, autism, or learning differences — often feel misunderstood by those closest to them. Educating yourself about their specific challenges communicates that you take their experience seriously.

- **Help reduce daily friction.**

Depression makes even small tasks feel impossible. Offer concrete, specific help: a meal, a ride, help with a task. Vague offers like 'let me know if you need anything' are hard for a struggling person to act on.

- **Gently encourage professional care.**

You cannot be their therapist — and you shouldn't try to be. Encourage them to speak with a mental health professional who understands neurodivergence. Offer to help find a provider or even sit with them while they make the call.

- **Stay consistent.**

Depression can cause withdrawal and irritability. Keep showing up — a text, a check-in, a visit. Consistency tells them they are not a burden.

- **Watch for warning signs.**

Take seriously any talk of hopelessness, worthlessness, or not wanting to be here. These are not phrases to dismiss. Ask directly: 'Are you thinking about hurting yourself?' Asking does not plant the idea — it opens the door.

### WORDS THAT HELP — AND WORDS TO AVOID

**Say:**

- "I'm here with you."
- "You don't have to go through this alone."
- "I may not fully understand, but I want to."
- "Your feelings make sense given what you've been through."
- "Would it be okay if I helped you find someone to talk to?"

**Avoid:**

- "Just think positive."
- "Everyone feels that way sometimes."
- "You have so much to be grateful for."
- "You just need to try harder."
- "Pray it away / snap out of it."

### TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF TOO

Supporting someone in crisis is emotionally demanding. You cannot pour from an empty vessel. Seek your own support — a trusted friend, counselor, or caregiver group. Setting healthy boundaries is not abandonment; it is sustainability.

### IF FAITH IS PART OF YOUR LIFE

Your faith community can be a meaningful source of strength — for you and, when they are ready, for your loved one. Prayer, the support of trusted spiritual community, and the reminder that struggle does not mean abandonment can be sustaining forces. Faith and professional mental health care work together, not in opposition.

### IF YOU OR YOUR LOVED ONE IS IN CRISIS — REACH OUT NOW

**988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**

Call or text 988 | Chat: 988lifeline.org | Free, confidential, available 24/7

For anyone in emotional distress or crisis — including family members concerned about a loved one.

**Crisis Text Line**

Text HOME to 741741 | Free, confidential, 24/7

A trained crisis counselor will respond by text. Available in English and Spanish.

**NAMI HelpLine**

Call 800-950-6264 or text 'NAMI' to 62640 | [info@nami.org](mailto:info@nami.org) | [nami.org](http://nami.org)

Monday–Friday, 10 a.m.–10 p.m. ET. Free peer support, information, and resource referrals for individuals and families.

Not a crisis line — call or text 988 for immediate crisis support.

**The Society for ADHD and Co-Occurring Conditions**

[www.societyforadhd.org](http://www.societyforadhd.org) | [info@societyforadhd.org](mailto:info@societyforadhd.org)

Resources, education, and community for neurodivergent individuals and their families.

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**The Society for ADHD and Co-Occurring Conditions** is the only ADHD organization in the United States with a dedicated focus on the faith community. We are a faith-informed, community-rooted secular nonprofit providing science-backed resources, education, and community for neurodivergent individuals and the families, faith communities, and professionals who support them.

[www.societyforadhd.org](http://www.societyforadhd.org) | [info@societyforadhd.org](mailto:info@societyforadhd.org)