[**Dealing with Depression**](http://en.allexperts.com/q/Dealing-Depression-1814/) **- Help understanding and how to help my fiance who is very depressed**

**Expert:** Sandra Shoup - 11/17/2004  
  
**Question**  
Hi,  
 My fiance, James, was hospitalized for 5 days a few weeks ago.  He basiclly had a mental breakdown.  He is on a few different types of meds now for his health problems and has just starting see a psychiatrist.  My question is, what can I do to help him? He doesn't want to do anything or go anywhere.  He has been out of work since his hospitalization and just sits at home playing on the computer all day.  I petsit for a living and have tried to get him to come with me on the dog walks, just to get him out of the house in the fresh air.  He has come with me once or twice, but I have to keep asking and asking him to come.  I don't want to push him or have him feel rushed into anything, but I really need him to get back to work since we are very very low on money.  Is this being selfish?  I thought maybe if he tries to start doing things outside of the house it might help him and get him on the road to recovery.  I don't have him do anything in the house, although i've asked him to do small things like dusting and he says he will do it but just stays at the computer.  I feel like he is isolating himself and that can't be a good start on the road to recovery.  There aren't any problems in our relationship, except his lack of interest in sex since he has become depressed.  Please advise me on how to help him.  I love him very much and want to do what I can to get his life back on track.    
  
Thank You   
  
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**Answer**  
Dear Dawn,  
 The sad reality is that there is nothing you can do for him.  Depression is a disorder that shuts out everyone and everything that ever mattered.  It is a black hole that wraps itself around the patient.  It is mental and emotional paralysis.  Recovery is determined by the patient's own desire.  Medications, combined with Cognitive Therapy have been proven to help many, but the key is the patient's willingness to take the medications and work with the therapist.  It is the loneliest of illnesses.  
 What you can do is educate yourself about Depression through the Internet and books.  Websites such as www.nimh.org are helpful.  A search through Google, keyword Depression will turn up enough material to earn a Phd.  Autobiographies by people who have suffered from depression, such as Patty Duke and Mike Wallace can offer help from a personal perspective.  Learn all you can so that you will better understand what your fiance' is enduring.  
 The most difficult aspect of loving someone who suffers from Depression is the frustration of wanting to do something, anything to get him to "snap out of it".  All the love in the world is of no use until the medications start to stabilize and the patient commits to therapy.  Until then, you can do nothing except be there, quietly supportive, waiting for the door to open and the healing to begin.  Your most important task is to look after your own health and wellbeing.  
 The fixation with the computer is a fairly common symptom as it is completely devoid of personality.  It offers a connection to the outside without requiring any emotional response.  To a depressed person it is much safer than human contact.    
 Your financial situation is going to depend on you and your ability to increase your income.  Depending on the severity of your fiance's illness, he could be eligible for disability income until he is well enough to return to the workforce.  His psychiatric evaluations will determine his readiness for employment or qualification for disability payments.  
 You must bring yourself to realize that James' illness did not come upon him overnight.  Depression evolves over many years.  The various medications available to treat depression are not fully understood and no one medication works the same for everyone.  Medications generally take 8 weeks to show improvement and more often than not several different medications will need to be tried and constantly monitored.  Therapy is a long process that can sometimes take years to be effective.  
 I am truely sorry not to be able to paint an optimistic picture.  This experience may, in fact, be a turning point in your life and you will have to examine your own innermost feelings as to which path is right for you.  
 Best wishes,  
 Sandra

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