Friend is depressed — How to help?  

Dear Alice,

I am actually asking for a friend of mine since this situation is getting worse, and I don't know how to help. The problem is that my friend is very depressed, and has very, very low self-esteem. While sometimes able to be cheerful and "happy," he claims to rarely feel that way and mostly just hates himself. He has mentioned suicide, although I think this is more an expression of the extreme self-hatred he feels than anything. I comfort him and often tell him how wonderful he is — what a good person, good qualities, etc., but I suspect he does not believe me at all. This has been going on for a long time now, and I think it stems from a somewhat unhappy childhood and adolescence. I don't know how to help him and I don't know what to do. I feel like being strong for him is just not enough, and I can't quite convince him that counseling may do some good. It seems to me that, recently, he has been feeling even worse about himself, to the point where nothing will comfort him. He cannot afford counseling, and he has no health insurance. Is there anything you can suggest for me to tell him or suggest to him? Any help will be greatly appreciated, because I just don't how to help him. Thank you so much.

— A friend on-the-line

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Roommate seriously depressed — What to do?  

Dear Alice,

This is more of a coping question. I am a first-year who applied for a single room over the summer and was denied. I figured that everything would be okay nevertheless. I tried to look at the situation as a character-builder. Well, that is not the case. My roommate is very depressed. I talked to the RA on my floor, but she didn't take any action, except to talk with her. Unfortunately,
my roommate is so ashamed of what's happening that she denied the facts, and the RA believed her. No one except me has realized yet that she is sleeping most of the day and all of the night, and that it is indeed a real problem. I have expressed my concern to her and encouraged her to go to counseling services. She went a couple of times and then started canceling appointments left and right. I have worried about her, but I have no backup whatsoever, so there is really nothing I can do to help at this point. We get along relatively well otherwise.

Right now, the concern I have is that her depression is pulling me down, too. I literally have not been alone anywhere for more than two to three minutes in weeks. I wanted a single because it's a requirement that I spend some time by myself, and I'm going crazy these days. The lights are always out in the room, and I've noticed that I'm sleeping more than usual myself as the situation has progressed. Also, I am having to deal with some personal issues of my own this semester, and I simply don't have the energy to take care of someone else who desperately wishes that I would do so. Any ideas would be greatly appreciated.

— Wish I Were a Loner

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**Depressed and shy: Finding the courage to get help** [4]

Hi Alice,

I have been struggling with debilitating depression for ten years. I am finally realizing that I need help, but I'm finding it difficult to get the courage. I am very shy as well. What do you say when you call a psychiatrist or a psychologist's office? "Hi, I'm really messed up and I have no idea how this works. Do I make an appointment or what?" I'm really nervous about making the call, and what kind of questions will be asked during that first conversation. This is not an easy or comfortable topic for me to discuss, and I would have no clue about what to say after "hello." Any words you could offer would be of great help.

Thanks very much,
Worried & Confused

Read more [4]

**How is self-injury emotionally unhealthy?** [5]

Dear Alice,

The general consensus is that self injury is emotionally unhealthy, but I don't understand how. Are there reasons besides religious ones and that it is socially unacceptable?
My friend needs counseling

Dear Alice!

I have a close friend who has a number of rather difficult issues. One of the most important is a long history of abuse (largely psychological) from her mother during her childhood. (She is now 19.) It is incredibly difficult to talk to her about any of these things. I would like her to see Psych Services, but I am worried about the fact that there are only a limited number of sessions available — that is actually one of the reasons she has offered to me as to why it would be a waste of time to go.

Unfortunately, the only medical coverage she has is through her mother's medical insurance, she has no real money outside of her parent's control — it would be extremely difficult for her to pay for counseling, in other words, without alerting her parents.

What can she do? What can I do?

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