



H O P E & L A U G H T E R

Care Plan

How to help a loved one manage their mental health and depression.

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WHO THE CARE PLAN IS FOR

This free care plan is for the warriors whose loved ones have a mental health challenge and provides information on how to help them manage their mental health and depression. You will discover a step by step action plan to care for them and yourself during this difficult time.

Hope & Laughter is a nonprofit organization born out of a gap in overall mental health care for believers. We are navigating mental health through the lens of a Christian worldview.

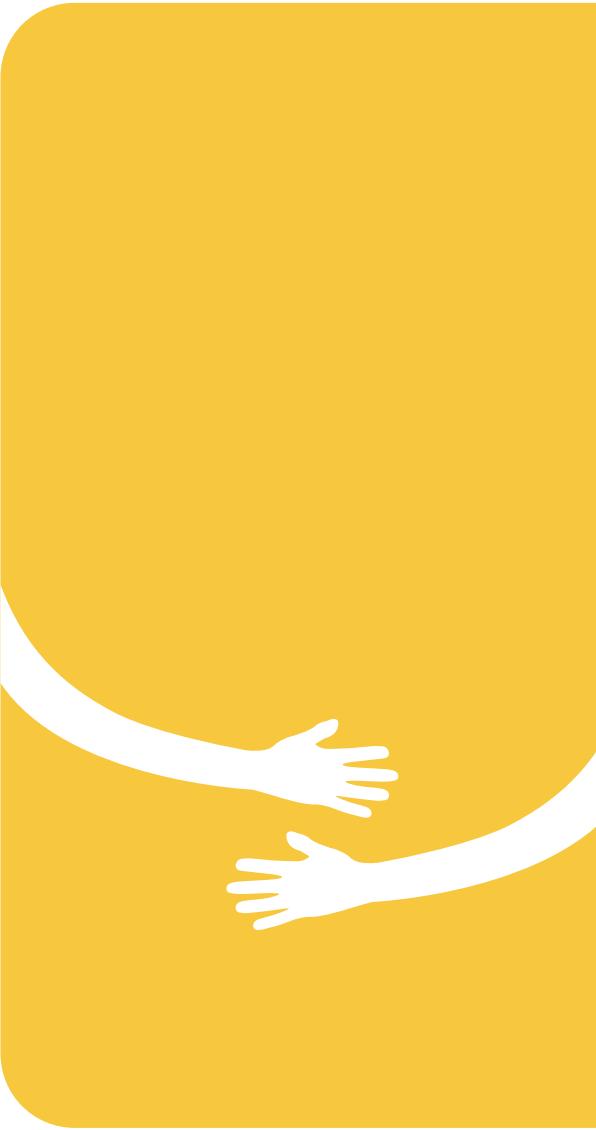


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INFORMAL PLAN

Think of the informal plan as a first step and a conscious continued effort. The initial conversation is important, but it's equally essential to have follow-ups.

No one likes to be bombarded right away with information and attention – it can feel stifling and elicit a defense response. However, everyone likes to know they're consistently cared for.



CHECK-IN WITH YOUR LOVED ONES

General welfare is always vital but being aware of situational stressors in the lives of your loved ones is also helpful when mental health is involved. A **situational stressor** is anything that could act as a pinpoint for emotional distraction. They could look like parenting, marital, or work challenges, or come in the form of a big life change like a sudden grief period.

These check-ins will help you clearly identify if the individual is in alarming emotional trouble or if they're experiencing a normative integration of that stressor into their lives. Either way, reach out and let them know you see them, acknowledge their distress, and are happy to provide an outlet or counsel if desired.



RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS

People in distress are not always conscious of their coping mechanisms. It could be up to you to steer those difficult discussions toward healing.

Avoidance Behaviors

- Cancelling plans or not coming to things
- Being unresponsive to phone calls, texts, or other interactions.
- Personality shifts such as a general extrovert being more reserved or distant.

Coping Behaviors

- Heavy alcohol usage
- Oversleeping
- Emotional escapism through heavier media usage (tv, movies, games, social apps, etc.)
- Overeating

Hygiene/ Appearance

- Weight loss or gain
- Unkempt grooming
- Lack of regard for self-care
- Lethargy or general fatigue

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FORMAL STEPS

If things do not improve over time, it's time to take the next steps. Encourage your loved ones to seek professional help.

Although you are invested in their wellbeing, you may not be equipped for their best care. It's important not to put that pressure on yourself for your health as well. Seeing a licensed professional counselor or psychologist provides a safe space, and a neutral party to evaluate emotional needs, and can develop a comprehensive treatment plan to achieve goals and head towards long-term healing. If needed, a therapist can then refer the individual for medication from a doctor.

Everyone's needs are different, and no treatment is a one-size-fits-all, but the right combination can create lasting change.



YOUR ROLE

As a good friend or family member, your role is to encourage and support. You are not there to fix or solve everything. Trust God to water the healing seeds and allow them to flourish.

Don't get discouraged if your efforts aren't initially effective. Remember to keep praying and keep connecting. God nurtures those when they are ready.

ENCOURAGING PRACTICES

If you're concerned but not sure where to start or how to go about a follow-up there are many simple ways to express that you care.

- Offer to bring them a meal or coffee if going out has become a little difficult.
- Make plans to pick them up if they struggle following through with plans.
- Invite them on walks for quiet company or a venting session
- A simple activity can take pressure off the individual if they're feeling lethargic, emotionally drained, or overwhelmed.

If they're starting therapy, offer to drive them to and from their first appointment. Meet them at church and offer to sit together. Your time and attention are what's going to be most valuable, so let them know it's always available.





RESOURCES

We are here to help those who are struggling with mental health issues together. You are not alone and we will continue to provide you with the armor needed to battle mental health issues.

Additional resources:

- Questions To Ask To Find The Right Therapist
- Austin Stone Counseling
- The Agape Center - Faith-Based Substance Abuse Counseling
- Hyde Park Counseling

Apps to download:

- Calm Harm
- Headspace
- The Check In
- Chats for Life
- eMoods Bipolar mood tracker
- Recovery Record

Please visit www.hopandlaughter.org for more resources and information to connect.



Founder, Sara Soenen



Dr. Nicole Fitzpatrick, PhD

Hope & Laughter

Hope & Laughter's key focuses are to educate, equip, and empower those who are struggling with mental health as well as the people that walk alongside them with resources founded upon a Christian worldview.

Communication will always be a valuable tool in life, and when you cannot find the words, let alone the right words, to explain how you feel - having hard conversations can feel impossibly exhausting. You are not alone on this journey; God loves you and you have a purpose.