

# Q & A

*“My friend seems really depressed, and I’m afraid she might even be thinking about taking her own life. What should I do?”*

## NEW ERA

**Y**our friend’s situation is a serious problem, one that you and she can’t handle alone. In addition to the Lord’s help, your friend needs professional help, which may include counseling and medication.

Those who experience depression feel hopeless and helpless. So they often hesitate to get help. Even if your friend has asked you not to tell anyone, telling someone who can help is one of the best things you can do for her. At the very least, talk to her parents. You can even get advice from a doctor, school counselor, or your bishop or branch president. Letting them know about her problem is especially urgent if she has mentioned suicide.

As she gets help, continue to be her friend. People who are going through depression often think that they don’t matter. So let your friend know you care about her, and remind her of the many others who care about her. Sincerely tell her what you appreciate about her. Invite her to do fun and uplifting activities with you. Service is especially good because it can help her focus on others, and physical

■ **As soon as possible, talk to your friend’s parents and other adults who can help, such as a doctor, counselor, or priesthood leader.**

■ **Continue to be a good friend by spending time with her and being a good listener.**

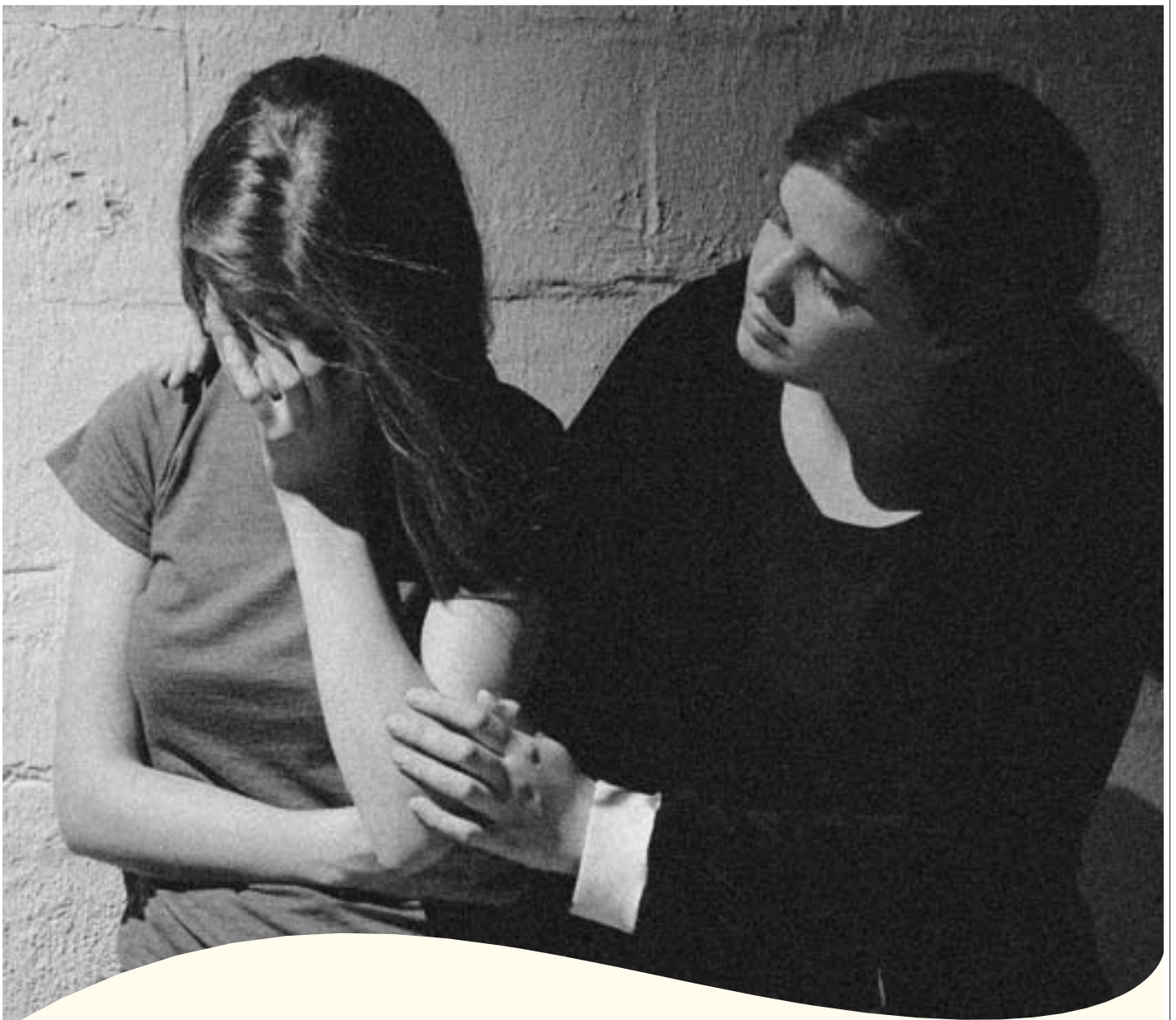
■ **Let your friend know that she is important, that you care about her, and that, with help, she can feel better.**

activities can lift her mood. Pray for guidance to know what would be best for her.

Your friend might feel depressed because she doesn’t think her life has a purpose. But Heavenly Father has a special plan for each one of us. He sent us here to have joy, to overcome trials, and to fulfill a purpose. You can share this testimony with your friend and give her hope that, in time and with the right help, she can enjoy life.

Remind her that it’s normal to have some worries. President Boyd K. Packer, Acting President of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, taught: “It was meant to be that life would be a challenge. To suffer some anxiety, some depression, some disappointment, even some failure is normal. . . . There is great purpose in our struggle in life.”<sup>1</sup> But it’s not normal to dwell on problems to the point that we lose our perspective. It’s best to work through them and try to become stronger because of them.

Also remind your friend that she has many sources of help. Depression is a symptom of mental or emotional illness. Just as she



## READERS

would go to a doctor to be treated for a physical illness, she can talk to a professional who can help her understand the nature of depression and teach her ways to cope with it. Whether she is a member of the Church or not, she can get spiritual help. She can pray, get a priesthood blessing, and find comfort by reading the scriptures. Testify to her that the Lord loves her and can bless her with peace (see John 14:27).

**NOTE**

1. "Solving Emotional Problems in the Lord's Own Way," *Ensign*, May 1978, 93.



*I would help her realize that her life is valuable, not only to me as her friend but also to our Father in Heaven, by*

*sharing my time with her. I would also help her realize other ways to relieve her depression by encouraging her to join in youth activities. This way she may be able to find other friends. Lastly, I would pray to our Heavenly Father to help her.*

Ryan S., 17, Philippines



*This is the time when you can help. Instead of overly worrying about her, you should just talk to her and be a good listener.*

*I am grateful for my Church friends, who always lovingly rallied around me when I felt depressed, frustrated, angry, or sad. I know I am loved because they are always there to lend a listening ear. Usually, I felt much better about the situation and about myself after I talked it out. So be supportive and*

**encouraging, and help her regain her confidence. Also, ask Heavenly Father to bless her with more faith and happiness.**

Yue-Min L., 16, Taiwan



**Tell her you see a marvelous future for her, and tell her how much Heavenly Father loves her and that He has a plan prepared for her. He has given her some work before**

**she came to this life, and she is the one to do it and fulfill His will. There are so many souls waiting to listen to the gospel from her and receive her warm love for them. I would especially tell her that she's one of God's beloved daughters.**

Elizabeth B., 20, Andhrapradesh, India



**If you think that she may actually take her own life, ask someone for help, such as a bishop, branch president, or another trustworthy adult. Next, let your friend know**

**that her family, friends, and her Heavenly Father care about her. Pray that she might feel that love, and pray for guidance that you might be able to help her. Also, talk to her and let her know that you are always there to listen, and invite her to uplifting activities that can help take her mind off of her feelings of depression.**

Olivia C., 19, Ontario, Canada



**The first thing you should do is tell someone. Tell an adult whom you know and trust. He or she can help you to figure out what to do. You can also help your friend. Sometimes the**

**best thing to do is just to listen; don't be the talker. People just want someone to listen to them.**

Alexandra M., 17, Quebec, Canada



**“I have dealt myself with the debilitating effects of depression. But I have learned from my own experience, and I learn from those I meet, that we are never left to our own resources. We are never abandoned. A wellspring of goodness, of strength and confidence is within us, and when we listen with a feeling of trust, we are raised up. We are healed. We not only survive, but we love life.”**

Kathleen H. Hughes, first counselor in the Relief Society general presidency, “Blessed by Living Water,” *Ensign*, May 2003, 13.

**As one who was depressed, I can give you advice from my experience. Let your friend know you are always there for her to talk to, and let her know you don't judge her. Let her know she is important to you. Having a roommate who listened to me and was willing to help me made the biggest difference to me. Priesthood blessings also helped.**

Name withheld



**Pay your friend a visit, and take her out to have fun, to help her feel happy and accepted in your circle of friends. Also pray for her, and sometimes pray and read scriptures**

**with her. Attend Church meetings and activities with her. Let her know how important she is to you and to our Father in Heaven. Encourage her to be fit spiritually and physically.**

Grace A., 20, Ghana

*Responses are intended for help and perspective, not as pronouncements of Church doctrine.*

## NEXT QUESTION

**“Sometimes my mom and I don't get along. We say things we shouldn't and end up with hurt feelings. I pray to love her, but the good feelings last only so long. What can I do to improve our relationship?”**

**SEND YOUR ANSWER, along with your full name, birth date, ward and stake, and photograph (including your parent's written permission to print the photo, if you are under 18) to:**

**New Era, Q&A, 3/07**

**50 E. North Temple St. Rm. 2420**

**Salt Lake City, UT 84150-3220, USA**

**Or e-mail: [newera@ldschurch.org](mailto:newera@ldschurch.org)**

**Please respond by March 15, 2007.**