Things to Consider When Dating Someone With Depression

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Dating Someone With Depression

My experience and advice in regards to depression and dating, it essentially comes down to this: communication. Communication is important in every relationship, but it's especially important when dating someone with depression.

Depression is an illness that involves a lot of different emotions, physical symptoms, and the various side effects of both so it's important that both people in the relationship fully understand the situation. With proper education, your partner can offer more substantial support and encouragement.

When Already in a Relationship

I've found that depression can manifest itself differently in terms of emotion; there can be feelings of anger, sadness, frustration, embarrassment, despair, etc. It can be difficult to explain how we feel or exactly why we feel that way and these negative emotions can cause strain and tension in a relationship. Talking about your illness and being open with your partner allows them to better understand what you're going through so that behavioral changes and emotions aren't taken personally.

Dating someone with depression may not always be easy, but having a partner who is supportive and understanding can be a huge help in your healing or in the way you cope in daily life. In my experience, having a partner that understood what I was going through made it easier for me to talk about how I was feeling and it meant so much to me that he was there for me on my good days as well as my bad days. Having a partner who understands the complexity of depression can bring encouragement to help make good days better and bad days tolerable.

Be patient with yourself and your partner and allow them to adjust and understand in their own time. If your diagnosis is fairly new there will be an adjustment period while you both get used to new needs and experiences. Open communication will make it easier to lean on each other for support and can help to create a feeling of being a team - especially when it comes to helping to find ways of dealing with the illness and its effects on the relationship.

If you are seeing a therapist and feel that the depression is taking its toll on the relationship, perhaps ask if couples therapy would be an option. This would be a good way to ensure your partner has the opportunity to fully understand the illness as well as ask any questions they may have on a more professional level.

When Starting a New Relationship

If you're about to enter a new relationship as someone with depression or starting to date someone with depression, here are a few things you should keep in mind:

Make Sure You're Ready

Opening your life, and inviting someone new to be part of it can have such a positive effect and feel so empowering but it's vital that you remember to look after yourself first. Always.

Your health and happiness should continue to be your number one priority, especially when starting to date. It's important that you feel comfortable and ready to date before putting yourself out there because dating and the beginning of a new relationship can involve being pretty vulnerable at times.

If you are still finding it difficult to take care of your health and your well-being then you will probably find it more difficult and even exhausting to try and take care of someone else and a new relationship as well.

You Don't Have to Tell Them on the First Date

While it's important that your partner eventually knows, it's not something you have to share with someone on the first date.

It's good to have that level of open communication but it's about comfort level as well; if you're enjoying your time with the person or it comes up in conversation and you feel comfortable sharing it with them then do so.

Just know that you aren't obligated in any way to tell them anything before you're comfortable.

Telling Your New Partner

Once you've spent some time together and you feel the relationship is becoming stronger, this would be a good opportunity to bring it up.

As with any serious illness, depression isn't something to discuss in passing, it's likely something that you'll want to sit down and have a conversation about. It doesn't have to be a heavy topic, but let them know that you care about them and that you feel comfortable enough to share something with them.

After telling them that you have been diagnosed with depression, ensure them that you are looking after yourself and your health with your preferred method of treatment. If you're willing, you can share your history and experiences with the illness and then offer to answer any questions they may have.

Re-enforce that you're sharing this with them because they are important to you and that you feel the relationship is heading in a positive direction. This lets them know that you're not relying on them to fix you but that you wanted to them to be aware of various struggles you may experience.

If they aren't familiar with depression, having resources available to share with them will allow them to do some research and find out more on their own time.

Accepting Help and Learning Patience

Now that your partner is aware of your depression, they'll likely want to help you or support you in various ways. This can be an adjustment for both of you as you find ways to cope together. It's important that you're patient with them as they learn what works and what doesn't, as well as continuing to be patient with yourself.

If you've been dealing with your depression on your own up until this point it may be difficult to accept the help and support from someone new. Instead of getting frustrated or offended if something doesn't work, try to understand that they're doing it because they care about you and gently share with them different ways in which they could help support you.

Conclusion

Dealing with depression in any relationship can be difficult. Patience and honesty can help to ease some of the tension between both people as they learn how to manage the illness.

Whether the depression is affecting an existing relationship or you're getting into a new relationship, it's important to have clear communication so that you and your partner have a good understanding of the situation. This will help to avoid potential conflict as well as giving your partner the opportunity to give you the support and encouragement that you need.