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Feeling depressed about your child's diagnosis of autism is not abnormal. Receiving this difficult news rates right up there with any other major life crisis, if not moreso: stressors like divorce, loss of job, being diagnosed with a critical illness, death of a loved one. But all is not lost - autism is not the death of a child - only the loss of a dream of what your child might have been had he not been autistic.

Feelings of intense grief, loss, anger, sadness, pain, and exhaustion are normal. But at some point you need to move forward and discover the child with autism, who is also a soul, person, body, and precious living thing. You need to advocate for this child; or someone else does. Someone who feels up to it, and loves the child.

If you are the child's primary caregiver, and you are feeling hopeless, helpless, overly anxious, even suicidal, this is not time to consult with your friends or family who 'don't believe in depression,' or think you can 'snap out of it.' Nor is it time to ignore depression and let it deplete you. Clinical depression must be treated by doctors - not your pastor, rabbi, mother, brother, best friend, or anyone who is NOT medically trained in detecting and treating depression.

Learn the signs of depression (try National Institutes of Mental Health website, [www.nimh.nih.gov/](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/)). Please do not visit an herbalist, homeopath, psychologist, or non-MD (psychologists are great, but you need someone who can take a pharmacological approach if necessary; a psychologist cannot prescribe medication). Seek the advice of non-MDs only AFTER you meet with a medical professional. If you need a referral to have insurance pay for psychiatric help, talk to your primary care provider, or general practitioner, and tell them you need to speak to a psychiatrist or psychopharmacologist. If you don't want to take medication let your doctor know --- but unless you are a psychiatrist yourself you are not in a position to decide whether or not you need medication.

Don't wait for depression to go away, because it doesn't treat itself. If you cannot manage your child's situation because of your state of mind, you need to call a doctor, and/or confide in a trusted companion. Seek out people who have depression, have overcome depression, and are being treated for depression of any kind (general, bipolar disorder, anxiety, alcoholism, additions, etc.). They can help you get moving in the right direction.

You cannot help your disabled child until you are well yourself. First treat your depression, then you can help your child. I know many people who have depression and a child with a disability. Those who do not treat their depression are going through life miserably. It doesn't have to be this way. Seek professional, medical help; it is your obligation to yourself, and your child or loved one with a disability.