

Offer time, listening ear to someone going through rough patch



Posed photo of a person with depression. PHOTO: ST FILE

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I read with sadness about Ms Elaine Lek's story of her son's death (Breaking the silence on suicide, Feb 24).

Ms Lek's attempt to broach this taboo subject by opening up about her son's death and her family's efforts to help him contains many useful tips for anyone who comes into daily contact with colleagues, friends and students who may be struggling to find meaning in life and cope with life's overwhelming demands.

I would like to share some tips on how we can help someone going through a tough time too.

First, we can offer our time and a listening ear when a friend or loved one asks, "Are you free?"

Second, people can offer quick responses to phone messages or e-mails.

If one knows that a person is going through a rough patch, he should respond within a few minutes, if possible, rather than at the end of the day.

Third, when meeting with a person who is in despair, one should give him their full attention, with appropriate empathetic comments and body language, and with the mobile phone tucked away to minimise distractions.

While we might think that we may not be able to do much to help a suicidal person towards recovery, simply being an empathetic and accessible friend can help a lonely and despairing person to tide over a rough period.

Sabrina Lim (Mrs)

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