

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

*You are getting this letter because you are an important person in my life, and I want you to understand more about what I'm going through. I know that I can be difficult and I'm sorry for that. I know that I probably don't need to be sorry, but I am. In fact, I feel guilty for feeling sorry in the first place. Ridiculous, I know. That's how my brain works because I have depression... and yes, my mind is an exhausting place. I want to give you this letter to help you understand a little more about what I am going through, ask for some grace as I work this crap out, and to suggest a few ways that you can best support me if you are willing.*

*The first thing I want you to know is that I am trying. Or, rather ... I am trying to try. You see, 1 and 1 don't always add up to 2 with depression. There are legitimate biological differences between me and someone who doesn't live with depression, which makes this a really difficult uphill battle. I am literally fighting against my biology which tries to tell me that none of this is worth it and that I shouldn't even try. When people say things like, "Just think positively," or "It's all in your head," it does not help at all. I know it's in my head, but unfortunately it is not as easy as flipping a switch and suddenly feeling better. I know that probably have 1000 reasons to be happy, and sometimes I feel like the worst person ever for being so down all the time despite them.*

*Fighting off depression is not a simple task. If it was, I would have done it already. Trust me when I say that I am so tired of feeling like crap all of the time. I am actively trying to take steps to better myself and steal some of my life back from this depressive monster that has crept in like a black cloud raining over all of my thoughts and feelings. The process will involve challenging my negative thought patterns, pushing myself to re-engage with things that I used to enjoy, working to forgive myself for letting things get so out of hand, and finding people that I trust to be on my team. That's why you are reading this. I want you to be on my team. I know that I have not been the easiest person to be around recently. Maybe my actions or inactions have even hurt you in some way. The thing is, I need support to dig myself out of these patterns. I don't need a yes or no answer from you right now, but I want to share a few things that do and do not help me in case you are ever willing to lend a hand.*

*For now, this has to be on my terms. I am feeling more broken and fragile than I would like to admit. Down the line, I might need a bit of a push, but for now, tough love is not what I need. That means that unsolicited advice that worked for you or someone else is probably not helpful. Unfortunately, there is no one size fits all approach to depression. It's a very individualized sort of beast. Also, being told that what I am going through is not that bad is very hurtful for me. I know that it might not be logical for me to feel this way given my life circumstances. I know it could be worse and that there are many others in the world who have it worse. That's just how depression works. Intellectually knowing something and feeling it are two very different experiences. I'm working to make them more in sync.*

*Though my instinct tells me otherwise, it's probably not the best idea for me to be alone all of the time right now. So, please have a little grace and forgiveness with me if I get irritated or act in off-putting ways. I do want you to be here, and I really appreciate you continuing to try. I feel like a lot of people have given up on me. I don't want you to be one of them.*

*Probably the most helpful thing that you can do for me is to let me know that you are here. I forget sometimes, so please don't assume that I already know. Tell me that you are here if I need you. I won't always know the best ways that you can help me, and you don't have to either. I mostly just need to know that I'm not on this journey alone.*

*Like I said, a big part of this process of recovery is finding ways to fight back against these unhelpful patterns of thinking that I have fallen into. Sometimes, it can be really helpful to have someone that I can rely on as a "logical barometer." Basically, I can tell you what my train of thought is regarding a situation, and you can tell me whether you think it makes sense or not. You can share how you, as a non-depressed person, might interpret it. That helps me to practice reeling in the overgeneralizing, personalizing, and overall amplification of negative thoughts. My thoughts usually start out rooted in reality, but they get way blown out of proportion, and you could definitely help me out by nonjudgmentally letting me know how far off my thinking has gone. You don't have to be "right" to help me out with this. There are really no right or wrong answers, but I will be much better off if I have a few people that I can get input from when I am doubting my initial interpretation of things.*

*I am trying to do more. This might mean that I am trying to get back to doing things that I used to enjoy, because everything feels very bland right now. It also might mean that I am trying to get off of my butt and be more physically active. It is so incredibly hard to find the motivation inside myself to do these things. One change that can give me more motivation to follow through with plans is when I have a buddy to do them along with me. Maybe you could be that person. I don't mean that you need to do everything with me, but if there is something that you enjoy that I might benefit from, maybe consider inviting me along. Speaking of inviting me along, I won't always say yes. Even if it is something as simple as going to dinner or the movies, sometimes it feels like the weight of my symptoms are literally crushing me, and I will pass on almost any invitation. Please keep inviting me. You don't need to waste all of your time trying to convince me, just don't give up on me. Keep offering, please.*

*Finally, I would be so grateful if you would help other people understand what I am going through. Hopefully at this point, you "get it" a little more. Depression is something that we are told to keep a secret, and it is really hard for me to share my feelings sometimes. You are reading this letter because I trust you and want you to be on my team. It is exhausting for me to reach out to each person and ask for help, so if you could help other friends and family understand when they ask what is wrong with me, I would really appreciate it.*

*If you are reading this far, that means that I was right about you. You are amazing and a perfect addition to my depression fighting team. Like I said before, I really am trying. This is a tough battle, and I don't know how long it will take, but having allies like you will certainly make the process that much easier. I am not asking for a blank slate. I know that I can sometimes say or do things that make me not so pleasant to be around. That's the nature of the beast. You are allowed to be upset, angry, hurt, or annoyed at those things. I just ask that you try to understand that these things are an expression of my depressive symptoms. They may be a part of me, but they are not the whole me. I hope this letter helps you to understand a little more about the other part of me that is dying for a chance to get out into the world.*

*Sincerely,*

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*PS: Please feel free to ask questions. I'm sure this is a lot to take in. It's not the easiest thing to explain. I may not always have the answers for you, but you are welcome to ask.*