

Have You Made This Dangerous Mistake When Trying to Comfort Someone With Depression?

When people with depression bravely announce their condition, sometimes they receive the response, “You don’t look that bad!” However, that can actually be a very insensitive response and cause the person to shut down, says licensed mental health therapist Robert Vore. So, what’s the right approach?

“There are people with depression who are making it to work every day and just barely getting by; there are people with anxiety disorders who are making dinner for their kids because they have to,” Vore says. “So to say, ‘Well, you don’t really look like it’s that bad,’ I think, is potentially the wrong lens to use there and kind of limits the conversations that somebody can have.

“Because if you say, ‘Hey, I’m really hurting in this kind of way,’ and someone says, ‘Well, it doesn’t seem like that.’ Well, OK, then you kind of shut down that aspect of communication. And they say, ‘Well, OK, never mind; you’ve been dismissive.’”

It’s important that we—and especially church leaders—validate that hurting person’s feelings, Vore says on the *Charisma News* podcast on the Charisma Podcast Network. However, some leaders aren’t deliberately trying to be dismissive. They may just lack the training or knowledge of how to best respond.

“If you go to your faith leader, your church community or campus ministry and say, ‘I’m struggling with depression,’ and they say, ‘Oh my gosh, that’s so terrible,’ and then never ask

about it again, that's painful. But I get a little cautious when some people try to kind of lump everyone into the ... 'Everybody's kind of actively being mean about it' [category]. I think a lot of people just aren't sure what to do with that. And I think that's the kind of gap that we're trying to cover.

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"We have research that says this—that people are more likely to turn to a faith leader than they are a mental health professional when they're encountering some type of mental-emotional crisis, which makes sense because they tend to be more accessible, potentially. But if that's where people are going, then how do we equip them?

"Well, not to do all of the counseling, right? But to have enough information to feel OK with those conversations, to respond as helpful as possible. And then to build that trust to where they will say, 'Hey, I'll walk alongside you in this. And also, I would like to refer you to this treatment or counseling' or whatever it is."

To listen to the entire episode to gain more professional advice on helping people with mental illness, [click here](#).