Health and Hazards

Today I am mentally and emotionally healthy. I practice good nutritional choices, take medication, see a therapist and sing in a choir that brings me a great deal of joy. I also volunteer for community service, facilitating two support groups.

I had an unhelpful experience years ago when a psychiatrist asked me: “When I was very ill, clinically depressed, what’s the matter? Money? You lost your man or your job?” I called a therapist friend who advocated for me in that situation. I will never forget that a comment can be unhelpful.
I want people to know that sometimes “support” means nothing more than “being there.” Just listen. Don’t give me your opinion or your experience. Don’t judge me. Maybe repeat back to me what you’ve heard. And give me a hug!
What really helps

- Honestly conveying one's real feelings and thoughts with another person. Social interaction is paramount to recovery, wellness, and especially for those suffering from suicidal ideations. Isolation is usually what happens to most people in a depressive state. As a result, we need to develop a method to help them reach out to caring people. I personally know that talking about our pain, it reduces the most intensity, even though the problems still exist.
Effective ally to those with lived experience:

Please realize that I have experienced trauma in my life. I might hesitate in going forward sometimes until I feel safe.

You can be an effective ally by being patient and not having preconceived stereotypes about people with mental disabilities.

You can be an effective ally by having an open mind and think respectfully about a complex subject.
Coping w/Suicide

My friend Gary committed suicide. He wasn't always my friend. I had to admit that when I first met him I did not like him at all. But after a few press we started to get to know each other. We came from very different backgrounds. I myself being African American was offended by the SS lightning bolt tattoo on his arms. But over the course of 18 months we shared different music and food talked about our families and our hopes and dreams as well as our fears. Thanks to a lot talking to doctors and friends I learned not to blame myself. I wish I could have prevented his choice to end his life.