

# A qualitative evaluation of 'Depression Connect', an online peer support community for people with depression.

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## Background

To facilitate the **exchange of experiences** for individuals **cop**ing with depression, a moderated community for online peer support was developed, called 'Depression Connect' [DC].



There are **two** distinctive online communities: one for **individuals with depression** and one for **relatives**.

## What is Depression Connect?



DEPRESSIE  
CONNECT



- A **closed platform**, to exchange experiences in coping with depression;
- **Moderated** by experiential experts on a daily basis;
- Developed for **anyone with depression**, regardless of clinical and demographic characteristics;
- Online peer support; professionals are not engaged;
- A dynamic community, usage on a **voluntary basis**;
- Members have the possibility to stay **anonymous**;
- Hosted by the **Dutch Depression Association (Depressie Vereniging)**.

[www.depressieconnect.nl](http://www.depressieconnect.nl)

## Evaluating DC: do users benefit?

We are conducting

- A **quantitative** research with **Empowerment** as main outcome;
- A **qualitative** evaluation, consisting of 15 interviews about user experiences (results shown below) with DC-users.

## User statistics

> 1300 members

Active users: 9% ≥ 50 visits

40 – 45 new users per month

10 to 15 new messages per day

Mean duration of visit: 8 minutes 46 seconds

## User experiences

### Sense of belonging

- "Other users **recognized** the feelings I coped with. That strengthens a natural feeling of **connectedness**. It feels like I am in the right place."

### Emotional growth

- "Well, if you're sharing experiences, you gain **insight**, and you will start to **reflect** seriously, like: 'Ah, that could be the same for me, and maybe that's a pitfall for me as well.'"

### Self-efficacy

- "I have to admit, it works as **incentive**. Certain books that people mention sometimes makes me curious and I want to search for more information. When others share information about coping strategies, I try to **'cherry-pick'** what suits me."

### Empowerment

- "You don't get stuck in fears for example. When you read messages of peers, who say 'It will pass', it's like, 'Yes, indeed'. So you encourage yourself to adopt a **different attitude towards depression**. Consequently, when you feel more balanced, you are able to **support others** too."

## Practicing coping with depression

Users value forum use as **complementary** to **mental health care treatment**:

- Supports **recovery-oriented** processes;
- Serves as a digital realm to **practice and reflect** on coping skills.

Online peer support for depressive patients may serve as:

- An **inspiration for coping** with depression;
- A sphere for **practicing (social) skills**;
- Coping technique in itself.

## Implementation

A **low-cost** and **accessible** intervention. **Invite** your patients to **explore DC**, and **inform your colleagues** about this platform.

We can provide **support in implementation**.

More information?

We can provide support in implementation.

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