

HOW CAN YOU HELP A PERSON WITH MENTAL ILLNESS?

Information for Patients Families & Friends

Covenant Health

Mental Health Programs

Grey Nuns Community Hospital & Misericordia Community Hospital

Ideas for day to day coping with a person with a mental illness:

(Person refers to the person with the mental illness.)

- talk to the person as an adult
- be calm, clear and direct in your communications
- be consistent
- set clear limits and rules and stick to them
- be clear in what you expect from the person
- be respectful
- praise all positive steps and behaviours
- understand the person may be unable to do things
- help the person to have short term goals that are realistic
- break down long term goals into short term goals that can be done
- understand it is important for the person not to make major decisions at this time
- learn more about the illness your family member has

Ideas about how to care for yourself:

- accept that the person is ill
- see the behaviour as part of the illness
- do not take the behaviour personally
- remain active in your own life, do things without the person
- do what you can to learn about the illness
- seek support for yourself
- try to stay positive, even during setbacks
- focus on the present
- ask yourself- “What is the best that I can expect at this time?”
- take time for yourself

Some people who are mentally ill have delusions, hallucinations, depression, and /or mania.

Delusions are false beliefs.

When a person is having delusions:

- do not talk at great length about the delusions with the person

- do not try to talk the person out of the thoughts
- respond to what the person is saying or doing that makes sense
- move the talk away from the delusions
- ask to change the topic of discussion if you need to
- if the person insists on a response to his or her delusions:
 - say you don't know
 - say that you see things in a different way
 - understand the person may feel strongly about their thoughts

Hallucinations are something a person sees or hears or otherwise senses when it is not present or occurring. When a person is having hallucinations:

- ask if something was seen or heard
- ask how the person feels about what he or she has seen or heard
- talk about realistic ways to deal with the feelings
- **sometimes, with caution**, talk of the behaviour as being a symptom of the illness
- understand that the person believes these are real

Do not:

- make fun of the person or what he or she is experiencing
- make light of or dismiss the experience
- enter into long talks about the hallucinations

Depression is a mental illness that causes people to feel hopeless, helpless, sad and negative.

Mania is a state of feeling “high” or “euphoric” that can persist for many weeks.

Ideas to help you cope:

- see the behaviours as a result of the illness
- learn the early warning signs
- support and help the person to get help early
- gently remind the person how important it is to get help early
- offer things that will help the person, such as:
 - talking to a health care worker or someone else you trust
 - exercise
 - planned activity
 - other things that you know have helped in the past
- be realistic in what you can expect of the person
- Encourage the person to follow their treatment plan

<p>Always notify the health care staff if the person is a threat to himself/herself or others.</p>

Where can you get more information?

- ask your doctor or nurse
- Call Health Link 780- 408-5465

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