

FACTS ABOUT

Caregivers

Information for Caregivers of the Physically or Mentally Ill



Caring for a person with a physical or mental illness can be extraordinarily challenging. It takes concern, compassion, and support to understand how friends, family, and caregivers of a mentally ill person may contribute to the health and well-being of a loved one. There are three steps you can take to provide the compassionate support an ill person needs.

Learn

It's important to learn more about mental illness. Depression, Alzheimer's/dementia, anxiety disorders, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder all have unique symptoms and treatments. Stay in contact with the person's medical professionals who may be prescribing medications or providing counseling support.

Support

Mental illness affects not only the mind, but the physical body as well. It's important to remain supportive and offer hope to those afflicted. Mental illness can be successfully treated and a network of supportive family members, physicians and caregivers provides reassurance, companionship, emotional strength and acceptance when it's most needed.

Listen

Just listening to a person with mental illness may help friends, family, and caregivers understand what issues, fears, and hopes that person may be experiencing. Take the time to listen to their thoughts and feelings.

Tips for Caregivers

- Take care of yourself. The ill person is counting on you. Do your best to remain physically and emotionally well.
- Be supportive - but set limits. Don't enable destructive behaviors.
- Focus on effective two-way communication with the patient's doctors and therapists.
- Accept help when people offer.

Signs and Symptoms to Watch For

When caring for an ill person, it's important to really listen to what they're saying. Be alert for:

- Changes in thinking or perception (hallucinations or delusions).
- Changes in mood (unrelated sadness, anger, euphoria, hopelessness, thoughts of suicide).
- Changes in behavior (hostility, indifference, doing nothing).
- Physical changes (hyperactivity, deterioration in personal healthcare, sleeping too much, weight loss or weight gain).



SUICIDE PREVENTION
FOUNDATION

Sources of Help

Western Colorado Suicide Prevention Foundation

<http://www.suicidepreventionfoundation.org>
(970) 683-6626

Caregiver Resource Websites

<http://www.healthyplace.com>
<http://www.thefamilycaregiver.org>
<http://www.strengthforcaring.com>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

1-800-273-8255
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org