

Living with and Supporting someone with a mental illness

Presented by the
Student Counselling Unit





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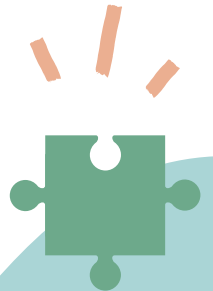
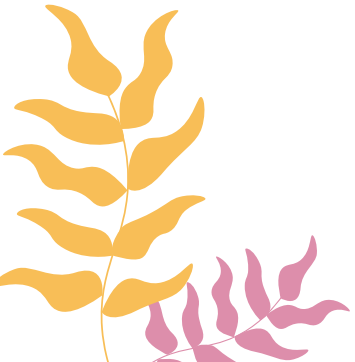
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Introduction

Living with a mental illness **can be difficult on the individual** but often **also affects those around the individual**. Living with someone with a mental illness can be straining emotionally, physically and psychologically. It becomes particularly challenging while studying and trying to support your loved one with a mental illness. It is important to not neglect yourself. **This workshop aims to provide coping strategies to deal with your own mental health while supporting someone else.**



What is a Mental Illness ?

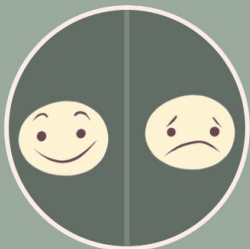


What does it look like ?

Signs of Mental Illness



Appetite or sleep changes



Extreme mood swings



Chronic low-grade depression



Hallucinations and/or delusions



Unhealthy coping mechanisms



Unusual emotional outbursts

- **Mental illnesses** are health conditions involving **changes in emotion, thinking or behaviour** (or a combination of these).
- **Severe mental illnesses** **limit or interfere with major life activities** (school, work, social).
- Having one of these signs does not guarantee a mental illness and it is best to **seek professional help** if one suspects a mental illness.

Mental Illness and Stigma



Use **STOP** to recognize mental health stigma.

Does the attitude or action:

Stereotype people with mental health conditions?

Trivialize people with mental health conditions and/or the condition itself?

Offend people with mental health conditions?

Patronize people with mental health conditions by treating them as if they were not as good as other people?

**Speak up
against stigma.**

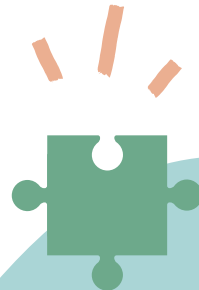


Canadian Mental Health Association
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
La santé mentale pour tous

Use the **STOP** criteria to recognize attitudes and actions that support the stigma of mental health conditions... Start with yourself.

Be thoughtful about your own choice of words. Use accurate and sensitive words when talking about people with mental health conditions.





Mental Illness and Relationship Dynamics

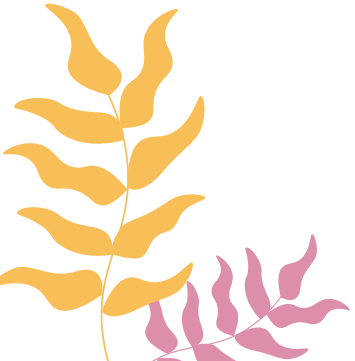
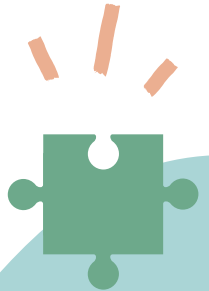


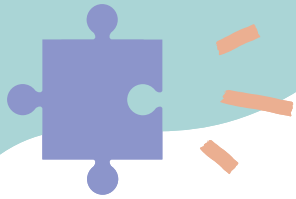
Communication
Is important

Role-reversal
between
parents and
children

Romantic
relationships
may
experience
challenges
with intimacy

If someone you're
living with is
diagnosed with a
mental illness, they
may be hesitant to
tell you. They may
wonder whether you
will end the
relationship or view
them negatively.





4.

15 Ways to Support a Loved One with a Mental Illness

It is important to note that you are not to blame for your loved-one's illness and that you alone cannot "cure" it, but your actions and behaviours can impact their well-being.





Patients of families who express hostility and criticism toward their loved one (e.g. believing they are lazy) or were emotionally overinvolved (e.g. “I’d give my left arm if they’d get well”) were more likely to **relapse**

— **Dr. Lefley**





Educate Yourself About the Condition

- will help you better understand their needs and their behaviour.
- Involving family in the treatment process reduces symptoms and hospitalisation days
- I family environment is generally improved,



Have Realistic Expectations

- Your expectations can impact your loved one's recovery.
- Figuring out what to encourage is often trial and error .



Seek out Resources

- Use reputable publications. Such as peer reviewed articles on google scholar, books from the library or reputable online site like the SCU page or SADAG





Reach out for Support

- Gain valuable knowledge and strength
- Support groups help normalize the situation and give you a chance to meet others in similar situations



Work closely with their treatment team

- Ask the social worker, psychiatrist how you can help at home.
- You can ask about what would be a reasonable expectation for recovery and how functional your loved one will be



Let them have control

- People with severe mental illnesses often feel like they've lost control of their lives
- Treat your loved one with respect no matter how symptomatic they are





Set appropriate limits

- While it's important to treat your loved one with respect and allow them to exercise control, it's just as necessary to set limits for the sake of everyone's well-being.



Encourage them to talk to their mental health professional

- Encourage them to write down what bothers them and **take it to their health professionals** e.g. medication has too many side effects



Establish Equality

- When setting limits don't single them out as the sick one. Establish an equality of what is expected from everyone in the household





Recognize feeling of shame and guilt are normal

- Know that guilt and shame are typical reactions for families and friends



Recognize your loved one's courage

- It takes courage to battle the debilitating symptoms every day and to seek and stay in recovery.



Help yourself

- Don't forget your own mental health. You can't pour from an empty cup





Be Calm

- Feel your feelings and acknowledge it but avoid responding angrily as your actions may also affect your loved one.



Convey Hope

- Tell your loved one that with continued treatment it is possible to live a satisfactory life



Get Involved with mental health awareness

- Get involved in raising awareness and the political processes of improving the mental health system since this affects other families like yours .



Do's and Don'ts When Supporting Someone With a Mental Illness



What to do

- Listen with an open mind
- Ask questions
- Help out with daily tasks
- Be patient



What not to do

- Don't make comments like "you're fine" "cheer up".
- Don't say you know how they feel if you don't
- Don't question their medical decisions
- Don't pressure them to stay busy
- Don't take it personally



Your Own Mental Health Needs



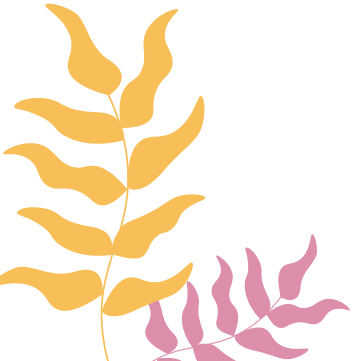
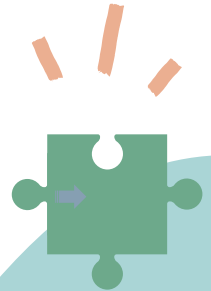
How to recognise them



Think about the answers
to the following questions.



- How would I describe my mood overall?
- Has my mood changed at all over the last six months to a year?
- Has my level of stress and/or anxiety changed recently?
- What strategies do I use to manage a low mood and/or anxiety when they come up?
- Are these strategies working?
- Are these strategies healthy (healthy = walking, yoga, reading, playing chess; not healthy = gambling, overeating, drinking alcohol, using tobacco or other drugs)?
- How am I functioning at university, in social relationships and within my family?
- Do I find pleasure in things I have usually found pleasurable?
- Has anything about my mental status changed? Am I having problems with memory, reality testing, confusion, or concentration?
- Have I had any thoughts of wanting to hurt or kill myself or someone else in the last few months?



Ways to Support Your Mental Health



Set Aside Time

Actively plan your time. Set aside time for your university work as well as your leisure time

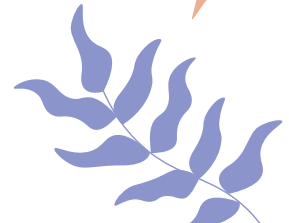
Join a support group for yourself

You will meet people in similar positions and can learn from how they handled their situations



Do what you love

It's easy to forget the coping mechanisms you've created over your lifetime (like listening to music , yoga , sports and spending time with friends). These coping mechanisms become important when your daily life becomes stressful



Resources



SADAG

- Website for info on mental illnesses
- Telecounselling /whatsapp chat
- Help with referrals and admissions
- Different support groups

SCU

- See a psychologist or intern psychologist
- SCU website for information and tips

Tough Love

- Support groups for families with loved ones that have an addiction.

Apps

- There are various apps for meditation, stress management as well as apps to manage symptoms that your loved one can use

YouTube Videos

- **7 things to say to someone with depression**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sn8UME5kik4>
- **10 tips to maintain your mental health**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-OAJfrhuwRk>
- **When mental illness enters the family**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRO0-JXuFMY>
- **"I'm not sick, I don't need your help"**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXxytf6kfPM>

Conclusions

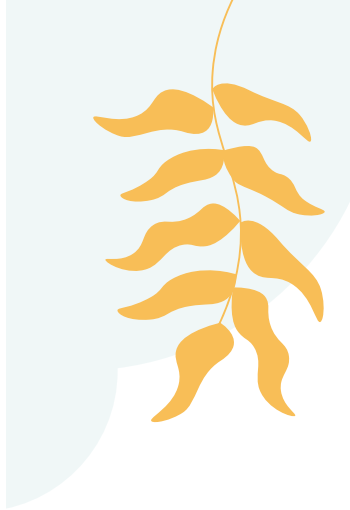


You and your loved one may become emotionally exhausted as you manage day to day living with a mental illness it's therefore important to practice self-care and to assess your own mental health needs.





YOUR
MENTAL HEALTH
MATTERS
TOO



Thanks!

Do you have any questions?

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