

5 TOP TIPS TO HELP YOU

Talk to someone you can trust about what is going on. It can be a huge relief and a release of stress to be able to get things off your chest. This could be from your teacher, another relative, a good friend, a doctor, social worker or someone from the young carer's project. It could be from a telephone helpline where you can remain anonymous (not give them your name) if you prefer. Some contact telephone numbers are in this leaflet.

Look after yourself

Make sure you take breaks and have fun. This is often easier said than done – you can spend so much time worrying about your relative that you may forget about yourself. But this means eating properly, sleeping and making sure you find the time to spend on things you enjoy like swimming, shopping or being with your friends. Try to stay in touch with your friends and don't become isolated.

Learn as much as you can about your relative's condition and the treatment they receive.

Knowledge about their illness will help you to deal with the situation and know what to expect.

Remember:

YOUR RELATIVE'S ILLNESS IS NOT YOUR FAULT – YOU CANNOT CAUSE SOMEONE TO BE ILL.

Try not to argue with your relative

Wait until things calm down and then you will find it easier to get your point across. More often than not you are arguing with the symptoms of the illness and not the person themselves. Arguing will only raise the tension.

If the person you care for says something strange or hurtful try to remember that this maybe because they are ill. If their words or behaviour worry you, tell a trusted adult.



KEY CONTACTS

SCHOOL:

In school you may want to talk to your teacher or school nurse for advice. Or you can call any of the following contacts:

ADULT MENTAL HEALTH:

You can speak to Cath Colins or Sandra Hopley

Tel: 020 3228 0626

Email: catherine.collins@slam.nhs.uk or

sandra.hopley@slam.nhs.uk

For general information about Adult Mental Health Services 24/7

call the Free helpline PALS (Patient Advice Line) 0800 731 2864

For more information on the web: www.youngminds.org.uk

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE:

Young Carers Social Worker:

Pearl Morene: Tel: 0208 314 3853

Email: pearl.morene@lewisham.gov.uk or phone:

Children's Social Care Duty Team call 020 8314 6660

YOUNG CARERS LEWISHAM:

Contact: 020 8699 8686 or freephone: 08000 198 841

Text: 07908 368 143

Email: youngcarers@carerslewisham.org.uk



YOUNG CARERS

Mental Health Resource Leaflet



This leaflet is designed for young people up to 18 years who are helping to look after a relative or friend who has a mental health problem

Making Young Carers Count in Lewisham



WHY DO PEOPLE BECOME ILL?

If someone has a mental illness, it means that their mind is ill. Mental health problems can be diagnosed when a person's problems carry on over a longer period of time and start to affect the way that the person thinks, feels and behaves.

When someone has a mental health problem, they may be experiencing some very unpleasant thoughts and sensations which make them behave in a strange way. All of a sudden, the person you thought you knew seems to have changed and is behaving in a bizarre way. Their behaviour may cause pain, embarrassment or could be dangerous but they look exactly the same.



WHAT CAUSES MENTAL ILLNESS?

ENVIRONMENT

Sometimes things can happen in life which people find hard to cope with like the death of someone close to them, the break up of a relationship or the loss of a job. These events can be very stressful and can make a person more vulnerable to illness which includes mental health problems.

BIOLOGY

Sometimes the chemicals in the brain aren't working properly and cause the brain to send out wrong messages. These messages can make someone have odd thoughts or feelings or behave in a strange way. For example, someone may hear voices talking to them and may talk back to them. The voices are very real to the person hearing them even though no-one else can hear them. The voices are produced by the person's own mind which has been disturbed by the chemicals in the brain not working properly. These chemicals affect our thoughts, behaviours and feelings. Medication aims to restore a healthy chemical balance.

GENETICS

There may be a history of mental illness in a family which can sometimes pass from one generation to the next which means that people in this particular family may be more likely to suffer from mental illness in the future than other people. You may think 'I wonder if I will get it?' but having a family history of an illness does not automatically mean that you will get the illness too as many different factors combined lead to mental ill health.

Remember:
you cannot cause someone else's mental illness.



WHAT ABOUT ME?

Things may have changed at home, either suddenly or over time. You may not be getting enough sleep or enough food.

You may feel that no one is taking any notice of you. You may feel that what you are going through is a horrible nightmare and you wish that things could return to the way they were.

You may feel very angry that other people don't experience the same problems.



You may feel enormous pressure on your shoulders. All of these feelings are normal and understandable.

Remember:
a person who is ill may be feeling frightened or embarrassed too.