



# How to Support a Loved One with a Mental Health Diagnosis

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*Supporting a loved one through mental health challenges can feel overwhelming, but it's important to care for both their well-being and your own. This guide offers practical steps to help you navigate the process.*



## 1 UNDERSTAND YOUR LOVED ONE'S DIAGNOSIS & WELLNESS PLAN

### Open Communication

- Engage in open and supportive conversations with your loved one. If possible, join them in a therapy session to better understand their diagnosis.
- With their consent, the therapist can provide insights into your loved one's mental health needs and challenges, and guide you on how to support them effectively.

### Create an Action Plan

- Work with your loved one and their therapist to develop a clear action plan for distress situations.
- The plan can include:
  - Recognizing symptoms and triggers
  - Identifying when to step in with support
  - Establishing practical strategies that benefit both you and your loved one in times of distress.

## 2 HOW TO SUPPORT YOUR LOVED ONE

### Offer Observations, Not Diagnoses

- You don't need to diagnose your loved one, but it can be helpful to share your observations with them, like noticing changes in behavior (e.g., trouble sleeping, increased stress).
- Encourage them to seek help, but don't force it—just express your concern and willingness to assist.

### Be Supportive with Concrete Actions

- Offer practical support like:
  - Watching their favorite movie together
  - Going for a walk
  - Making them a favorite meal
  - Simply being there to listen
- Encourage them to reach out for professional help if they haven't already. You can offer to help them contact their treatment team or start the conversation if they're unsure how.

# 3

## PREPARING FOR A CRISIS

### Develop a Crisis Plan Ahead of Time

- Planning ahead is crucial, as it's difficult to think clearly during a crisis. Work with your loved one to create a clear crisis plan if possible. This can reduce anxiety and help you feel more prepared.
- If a joint plan isn't feasible, make your own plan to manage potential crises, focusing on:
  - Protecting the person, yourself, and others
  - Knowing when to intervene or when to call for professional help

### Understand the Range of Symptoms

- Not all mental health symptoms require immediate intervention. Symptoms can vary in intensity, and it's important to assess the situation carefully.
- Having open discussions when your loved one is not in distress helps clarify their needs and reduces uncertainty in emergencies.

# 4

## WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

### When to Call 911

- If your loved one threatens self-harm or harm to others, it is critical to call 911 or seek immediate medical attention.
- Ensure they are safely taken to a hospital or emergency facility for proper evaluation.

# 5

## SUMMARY OF STEPS FOR SUPPORT

### In Crisis:

- Call 911 if there is an immediate risk of harm.
- Ensure your loved one's safety and seek professional help.

### In Non-Crisis Situations:

- Open discussions about symptoms and feelings can help both of you understand what support is needed.
- Create an action plan for future situations to prevent confusion during distress.
- Ask how you can assist in their treatment and recovery process.

### Care for Yourself:

- Seek support through counseling or your Assistance Program to maintain your well-being.
- A therapist can provide insight and help you manage your emotions while supporting your loved one.



## REMEMBER

Supporting a loved one with a mental health diagnosis is a long-term commitment, but you don't have to do it alone. Use available resources, keep open lines of communication, and prioritize your own mental health as well.