



## **35 Tips for People with a Mental Health Condition... And their Friends and Families**

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1. You cannot cure a mental health condition for a family member.
2. Show your support. Express your concern and sympathy, talk openly and make sure that your friend knows that he/she is not alone. The most important thing you can do is just offer to be available.
3. Listen. If your friend talks about their mental health diagnosis, don't change the subject.
  - Resist the temptation to give advice or dismiss their concerns.
  - If your friend discloses personal information, keep his/her trust by not sharing the information with others. The exception is talk about suicide. When suicide is mentioned, it's time to tell a professional and get help!
4. Ask what you can do to help. You can leave this open-ended (*I want to know how I can best support you.*) or suggest specific tasks that might be helpful (*Can I walk with you to your therapist appointment?*)
5. Know that despite your best efforts, a person's symptoms with their mental health condition could get worse, or could improve.
6. You may learn something about yourself as you learn about a loved one's mental health condition.
7. Over the course of being a longterm support or caregiver, it is not okay for you to be neglected. You have needs and wants too.
8. Separate the person from the condition. Love the person, even if you hate the condition.
9. Separate medication side effects from the condition or person.

10. It may be as difficult for the individual to accept the condition as it is for other family members or friends.
11. The condition of a family member is nothing to be ashamed of.
12. Your chances of getting a mental health condition as a sibling or adult child of someone with a mental health condition are 10-14%.
13. There is no one to blame for the condition
14. Remember to feed your sense of humor. :)
15. It may be necessary to renegotiate your emotional relationship with yourself and your loved one with a mental health condition.
16. Ride the wave and perhaps even revise your expectations.
17. Remind yourself of the tremendous remarkable courage your family member or friend may show when dealing with a mental health condition.
18. "Success" for each individual and caregiver may be different.
19. Your family member or friend is entitled to his or her own journey, as are you.
20. If you don't talk about your feelings you may feel stuck or frozen.
21. Mental health conditions, like other diseases, are a part of the varied fabric of life.
22. Mental health conditions, are in fact biological and oriented in the brain.
23. Symptoms may change over time while the underlying condition remains.
24. A person's mental health condition may be periodic, with times of improvement and deterioration, regardless of your hopes or actions.
25. You should request the diagnosis and its explanation from professionals—a psychiatrist, general practitioner, or clinical therapist.
26. Strange behavior can be symptom of the condition. Please don't take it personally.
27. Don't try to shoulder the whole responsibility in caring for your friend or family member with a mental health condition.
28. If you're not caring for yourself, you can't care for another.
29. Maintain your role as the sibling, child, parent, or friend of the individual. Don't change your role.
30. Mental health professionals, family members, and those experiencing a mental health condition all have ups and downs when dealing with the condition.
31. Mental health professionals have varied degrees of competence (just like in every other profession in the world).
32. It can be quite therapeutic for you to help others if you cannot help your family member or friend.
33. Recognizing that a person has limited capabilities in certain areas of life should not mean that you expect nothing of them.

34. Do not be afraid to ask your family member or friend if he or she is thinking about hurting themselves (with empathy and love)—it is always better to be safe than sorry.
35. You are not alone. Sharing your thoughts and feelings with others in a support group is helpful and enlightening for many.