

## Support & Education

- Educate yourself about the diagnosis and treatment of the problem under treatment. Ask the clinician for reading materials, attend community support groups or visit some of the websites linked throughout this guide.
- Encourage and support healthy behaviors such as proper diet, regular exercise and Avoidance of alcohol and other chemicals.
- Pay attention to your loved one's appointment and medication schedule; use gentle reminders as appropriate. If necessary, help with scheduling appointments or offer to accompany your loved one to the appointment.
- Listen and be patient with the recovery process. Treatment helps, but improvement s gradual, not immediate.
- Acknowledge the biological and stressful contributions to the illness; avoid accusations of blame.
- Discourage your loved one from making significant life decisions until after recovery.
- Pay attention to your own stress level. Taking care of a patient with longstanding mental health problems can be draining. In addition to following some of the earlier-offered advice, consider the need for professional help for yourself.
- Offer support and assistance. Remember, just because your loved one may not ask or it does not mean that s/he does not need it. Emotional support involves understanding, affection and encouragement. Do not disparage sad or negative feelings, )ut point out realities and offer hope.
- Lastly, do not ignore discussions about suicide. Such talk should always be taken seriously and merits immediate professional help. Do not leave the suicidal person alone and prevent access to medication, weapons or other items that could be used to inflict harm. If in doubt, call 911 or go to the emergency room immediately.