



Family Guidelines for Supporting a Young Person with Psychosis

Families can play an important role in supporting recovery, reducing stress, and helping to prevent the onset or worsening of symptoms.

CONSIDER:

- Psychotic illnesses are influenced by **both biological and environmental factors**
- **Reducing stress** within family relationships, schedules, and daily interactions can make it easier for someone to manage day-to-day life
- Family support can also **buffer** against outside stressors.
- *People experiencing psychosis may be particularly sensitive to the following:*
 - o **Warmth, structure, support, space:** help them recover at their own pace
 - o **Criticism:** negative comments and interactions can lead to increased symptoms
 - o **Over-involvement:** intrusiveness or doing too much can overwhelm people
 - o **Complex, unclear communication:** is hard to process and can worsen symptoms

GUIDELINES:

- **Take one step at a time.** Go slow. Progress may be gradual. Recovery takes time.
- **Lower expectations for the short term.** Compare this month to the last month rather than last year. Increase expectations only after a period of improvement or stability.
- **Use symptoms as a guide.** If they worsen, slow down, simplify, reach out, and ask for more professional help. If they improve, continue forward gradually.
- **Know and watch for early warning signs.** If you notice subtle changes in behavior or increases in symptoms, slow down or take a break. Ask for help early, when a little may go a long way.
- **Keep it cool.** Enthusiasm is normal. Disagreement is normal. Just tone it down.
- **Give each other space.** It's okay to offer. It's okay to refuse.
- **Observe your limits.** It's okay to say "no." A few good rules keep things clear and safe.
- **Ignore what you can't change.** Pick your battles. Let some things slide.
- **Don't tolerate violence or threatening.** Contact your clinician or emergency services immediately if you notice any behaviors suggesting risk for suicide or violence.
- **Keep it simple.** Keep sentences short and to the point. Stay calm and positive
- **Keep or re-establish family routines.** Stay connected to friends and family.
- **Solve problems step by step.** Work on one thing at a time. Consider alternatives.
- **Support the reduction of cannabis (and other drug use).** They make symptoms worse, can cause relapse, and prevent recovery.
- **Consider therapy for yourself.** if you experience changes in mood, sleep, capacity to cope
- **Stay Hopeful.** You are not alone. Recovery is possible. Treatment can help.

CONNECT: Educate *yourself* and connect with family support networks, such as:

- **NAMI Connecticut** – offers virtual family support groups (namict.org)
- **FAVOR Connecticut** – family and youth support and advocacy (www.favor-ct.org)