

FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Family relationships are an important part of our daily lives. Relationships can be difficult to navigate and dealing with a family member with mental illness can make these relationships even more difficult. Research has shown there are numerous benefits to having healthy, social connections. Some of the benefits include higher self-esteem, a greater sense of empathy, and lower rates of depression and anxiety.

Here are helpful hints to use in times of stressful family situations:

- Avoid placing blame and guilt.
- Seek the support, understanding and relief you need. Remember, you must keep yourself healthy and able to cope because you, the family member, are the first line of defense for your loved one.
- As much as possible, continue your own outside interests and schedule time for yourself and your needs. Get away for a few days and/or keep your vacation plans.
- Remember, other family members may also be affected and are likely experiencing denial, guilt, and depression. Try to keep communication open.
- Find out about the benefits and support systems for when things are going well; don't wait for a crisis. Seek professional help and support.

It is important to learn as much as possible about mental illness and the treatment options that are available in order to be better prepared to help your loved one. Offer support and encouragement whenever possible. Be patient and remember to take care of yourself during difficult times.

