



Strategies for Coping & Self-Care

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Purpose

- To identify & discuss the challenges related to caring for a family member with a mental health disorder
- Provide general tips for managing those challenges
- Discuss & identify effective coping strategies
- Discuss self-care & how to implement
- Introduce the coping tool kit & discuss possible action plans to maximize self-care
- Share resources

What are the challenges related to caring for a family member with a mental health disorder?

Un-Mute and share your thoughts
OR Share in the chat

Challenges

- Instability or unpredictability
 - Symptoms or functioning
- Change in developmental track
- Disruption of individual and family plans
- Responding to symptoms or crisis
- Relationship difficulties
- Emotional difficulties
- Behavioral difficulties
- Confusion in family roles
 - Parents, siblings, and other support persons



General Tips

- Understand that you are not to blame, and neither is your family member
- This will be an adjustment for everyone
- You will not always know what is helpful and what to avoid
- Encourage and support treatment
- Be collaborative with your family member and treatment teams
- Engage in learning skills to practice together
- Allow time and space for recovery
- Acknowledge and appreciate small steps and milestones



What does
coping mean?

n. the use of cognitive and behavioral strategies to manage the demands of a situation when these are appraised as taxing or exceeding one's resources or to reduce the negative emotions and conflict caused by stress.

(APA Dictionary, 2020)

Strategies for coping with family members of patients with mental disorders

[Daniele Alcalá Pompeo](#), [Arélica de Carvalho](#), [Aline Morgado Olive](#), [Maria da Graça Girade Souza](#), and [Sueli Aparecida Frari Galera](#)

- Descriptive study conducted at a psychiatric hospital (*Brazil*)
 - 40 family members of hospitalized patients over the age of 18
 - Followed the patient before and during hospitalization
- Results:
 - The coping strategies most often used by family members were social support and problem solving
 - Parents used more functional strategies (e.g. social support, positive reappraisal, self-control)
- Conclusion:
 - Despite challenges related to caring for a family member experiencing a mental health disorder, families were able to use functional strategies allowing them to cope with adversities in a well-adjusted way

Coping with Mental Health in the Family

- Acceptance
- Emotional Awareness
 - Recognize and process how you and your family feels.
- Deep Breathing
 - “5, 3, 7” Method
 - Breathe in for 5 seconds, Hold for 3 seconds, Breathe out for 7 seconds
 - This repetition sends a message to the brain that everything is okay or it will be soon
- Mental Reframing
 - Taking an emotion or stressor and thinking of it in a different way.
 - *What is upsetting me? How can I think about this differently? What can I do differently?*
- Notice the positives
 - When you take the time to notice positive moments in your day, your experience of that day becomes better. Try writing down one thing each day or week that was good.



(Pombo, 2019), (NAMI, 2020)

Coping (*Continued*)

- The “5 Senses”
 - Use your physical space to ground you through a crisis. Instead of focusing on one specific object, rather engage “The 5 Senses” by running through what each of your senses is experiencing in that moment.
- Mindfulness
 - Draw your attention to the present moment.
- Activity
 - Get physical, change up your environment, meditate, engage in hobbies, socialize with friends or other family members.
- Expand Support Systems
 - Social and professional supports.

What coping methods have you used
or do you plan to try and use?

Un-mute and share your thoughts
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What is self-care?

- **n.** *the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's own health.*
- *the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, in particular, during periods of stress.*

Why is self-care important?

- We are more resilient and more able to handle life's stress when we are feeling our best both physically and emotionally
- Important factor in physical health outcomes
- Affects your emotional health
- Helps you to be a better caregiver
- Avoid deeper levels of unhappiness, low self-esteem, and feelings of resentment
- Gives you a break from stress
- Gives you time alone

Self-Care Strategies that Work

- Healthy diet & exercise
- Engage in hobbies
- Play sports
- Watch a movie
- Take a bath
- Pamper yourself
- Read a new book
- Start a puzzle
- Keep a journal
- Garden
- Take your pet for a walk
- Cook or bake
- Meditate
- Yoga
- Breathing/ visualization exercises
- DIY projects
- Listen to music
- Read a blog
- Create art
- Meet up with a friend
- Go away for the weekend
- Make coffee or tea
- Play an instrument
- Dance
- Ride a bike
- Read articles/newspaper
- Crosswords
- Plan time for you
- Get enough sleep



What You Can DO for Yourself

- (1) **Acknowledge** that you have a family member experiencing a challenge with their mental health and how it impacts you.
 - Remember that you're not responsible for causing your family member's problems or for fixing their condition. You can be their support through the recovery process.
- (2) Develop new ways of **Taking Care** of yourself.
 - Recognize that you have legitimate needs and stressors, and that it's completely acceptable to take care of yourself.
- (3) Develop new ways of **Relating** to others.
 - Be mindful of old, unhealthy patterns of communicating and practice new ways of relating to your family members.

What You Can DO for Yourself

- (4) **Educate** yourself about your family member's experience.
 - Your job isn't to treat or cure your family member but educating yourself about the disorder/diagnosis via reliable online, text, and professional resources can help you understand what your family member is facing.
- (5) Consider seeing a **Mental Health Professional** yourself to process.
 - You may benefit from seeking assistance because a mental health professional can help you understand how a family member's mental state affects your life and helps you explore your own needs and emotions.
- (6) Join a **Support Group**.
 - A support group that addresses your specific situation can help reduce feelings of isolation and validate your experience.

What thoughts or ideas do you have about what you could do for yourself at this time?

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What is a Coping Tool Kit?

*a place for you (or your family member) to keep the things that calm you down in periods of distress. If you have everything gathered in one place, it's easier to remember to use your **coping skills** rather than using negative behaviors.*

Coping Skills Toolbox



What Is It?

A Coping Skills Toolbox is a place for you to keep things that calm you down in periods of distress.

If you have everything gathered in one place, it's easier to remember to use your coping skills rather than using negative behaviors.

Self-Soothing

(Comforting yourself through your five senses)

1. Something to touch.
(EX: stress ball)
2. Something to hear.
(Ex: music, meditation guides)
3. 3. Something to see.
(Ex: snow globe, happy pictures)
4. Something to taste.
(Ex: mints, tea, sour candy)
5. Something to smell.
(EX: lotion, candles, perfume)

Distraction

(Taking your mind off the problem for a while)

Examples: Puzzles, books, artwork, crafts, knitting, crocheting, sewing, crossword puzzles, Sudoku, positive websites, music, movies, etc.

Opposite Action

(Doing something the opposite of your impulse that's consistent with a more positive emotion)

1. Affirmations and Inspirations (Ex: looking at or drawing motivational statements or images)
2. Something funny or cheering
(Ex: funny movies/TV/books)

Emotional Awareness

(Tools for identifying and expressing your feelings)

Ex: A list or chart of emotions, a journal, writing supplies, drawing & art supplies

Mindfulness

(Tools for centering and grounding yourself in the present moment)

Ex: Meditation or relaxation recordings, grounding objects (like a rock or paperweight), yoga mat, breathing exercises

Crisis Plan

(Contact info of supports and resources for when coping skills aren't enough)

Family/Friends, Therapist, Psychiatrist, Hotline, Crisis Team, ER , or 911

Put it all together!

Once you've gathered all of your items, put them together in a box or other container, decorate it to your heart's content, and put it in a place where you'll remember it. Then USE IT!!



Take Action!

We encourage you to create your own action plan/coping toolkit for maximizing self-care.

Resources for Families

- “Psychosis Symptoms: Coping & Communication Strategies” (Calkins, 2018)
 - https://www.med.upenn.edu/bbl/assets/user-content/PERC%20Family_group_MEC_5_22_18.pdf
- SAMHSA
 - <https://www.samhsa.gov/families>
- NAMI
 - <https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Family-Members-and-Caregivers>
- APA
 - <https://www.apa.org/helpcenter/serious-mental-illness>
- Minding Your Mind
 - <https://mindingyourmind.org>

Thank you for attending this virtual support & education group.

For any questions or comments
please contact me at:

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