

GUIDANCE FOR FAMILY MEMBERS:

In crisis situations, family members are often the people who are forced to take actions (calling the police, initiating a 3-party petition) that harm their relationship with their loved one. Here are the few tips to foster healing within the family during this incredibly difficult time.



Tips FOR HEALING DURING CRISIS SITUATIONS

DO NOT AVOID VISITS TO THE HOSPITAL. Your loved one will most likely feel angry and betrayed, maybe even abandoned or “written off.” Respect those feelings. Even though a positive conversation may not happen right away, it is important not to avoid contact.

RESPECT YOUR LIMITS. Visiting your loved one in the hospital can be draining and overwhelming. If you can only visit for a few minutes to say “Hi, I love you,” that can be very meaningful.

RESPECT AND PROCESS YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE. Of course, your loved one is the one who is not well at this time. But you have also just gone through a difficult, possibly traumatic, life experience. Take time to process it. This might include seeking therapy. MANY family members do this.

AFTER VISITING, DO NOT “STEW” IN GUILT. Be with friends. Take your mind off of the situation. There is no shame in giving your mind a rest.

GO TO NAMI FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP MEETINGS, participate in a NAMI Basics or NAMI Family-to-Family course, get connected in any way you can to others who understand your experience.

STAY ACTIVE AND IN TOUCH WITH CARE PROVIDERS during and after the crisis.

“I’d like to understand the next steps so that my loved one’s road to recovery will be as smooth as possible. How can we work together?”

KEEP A RECORD OF YOUR COMMUNICATION WITH CARE PROVIDERS including the time and day of your communication, who you talked to and what you learned.



HEALING RELATIONSHIPS DURING CRISES



Tips FOR HEALING AFTER CRISIS SITUATIONS

ACKNOWLEDGE your loved one's feelings of betrayal and anger.

APOLOGIZE and ask for forgiveness.

EXPLAIN why you had to do what you did, in a non-accusatory way.

EMPATHIZE, normalize feelings and use "I" statements.
For example:

Loved one: *"If you loved me, you never would have allowed me to be put in the hospital."*

Family member: *"I understand and I would feel the same way. But I was scared and wanted to keep you safe because I love you."*

PUT YOURSELF IN YOUR LOVED ONE'S SHOES. If you did not feel you were sick and someone forced you to go the hospital, you would be scared and furious. When you say something during this highly stressful time, imagine being on the receiving end of your own words.

DO!

DON'T

EXPECT INSTANT FORGIVENESS; it will take time.

BLAME your loved one for what happened.

BE MISLEADING about what you would do in the future (i.e. *"I will never call the police again."*)

SPEAK IN ABSOLUTE TRUTHS: *"I had to do this. I had no choice."* Instead, try: *"I felt I had no choice. I felt it was necessary."* There is a subtle, but important difference.

ASK FOR AGREEMENT. Just ask for understanding of your perspective.

EXPECT INSTANT SUCCESS in one conversation. It will take time and many discussions.

NOTE: These pages include ideas adapted from Xavier Amador's *I'm Not Sick; I Don't Need Help!*