

SELF-CARE TIPS FOR FAMILIES

GUIDANCE FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

IT IS OKAY TO GET ANGRY. It is not selfish.

It is a normal response. Give yourself permission to feel anger. What matters is how you handle the anger. Give yourself time to cool down before responding.

Avoid blame. Your loved one is not to blame and neither are you. Acknowledge any guilt you may feel but do not let it control you.

Celebrate small victories. Even though you were exhausted, you still ate 3 meals today. Even though you and your loved one fought last week, today you went for a walk or had a nice talk.



Develop a support system

that “gets it,” that has, in some way, been through what you’re going through. This can be friends, family or fellow NAMI members. Let your support system know what is and is not helpful to you.

ASK FOR HELP. You truly can’t do this alone. MANY family members find a therapist. Navigating challenging relationships or family dynamics is a VERY common and legitimate reason to seek therapy.

IT IS NOT ONLY OKAY TO TAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF, IT IS NECESSARY. You can’t effectively support your loved one if you don’t take care of yourself.

FORGIVE YOURSELF

for mistakes. Learn from them and move on.

USE HUMOR



to relieve stress whenever possible.

You are a supporter, not a magician. Accept that there are things you cannot change.

EDUCATION IS KEY TO SELF-CARE

Educating yourself about your loved one’s mental illness is an important part of self-care. Education programs such as NAMI Family-to-Family help you better understand why your loved one acts and feels the way they do, how to navigate the complex mental health system and how to have healthier relationships. Having this knowledge will reduce stress. Also, research has shown that education for family members improves health outcomes for people living with mental illness. By educating yourself, you are making an important contribution to your loved one’s recovery!