



# How Parents/Guardians can Help

If your child struggles with depression, anxiety, ADHD, or any other psychiatric condition, what can you do to help?

**1. Learn more about their diagnosis,** the signs and symptoms of their disorder.

There are reliable sources of information online - good examples include CHADD The National Resource on ADHD, National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network, The American Psychological Association, National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH) and major medical centers (such as University of Michigan Health System and Mayo Clinic)

**2. Learn more about the treatment(s)** your child is undertaking, and what you can do to be helpful.

**3. Request parent/family sessions.** You will be able to work with your child's therapist to determine how you can help. Their therapist will be able to answer questions, discuss any concerns with treatment, and provide specific information regarding responses that might be beneficial or detrimental to the goals of treatment.

**4. Remember to focus on strengths.** Your child's mental health is one aspect of his/her life. It is important to find ways to have fun, and to recognize areas that are going well.

**5. Develop strategies to cope with challenging situations.** There may be times when your family member or friend shows strange or challenging behaviours that can make you feel confused, helpless, embarrassed, or scared. This can happen in public or in private. It's best to talk with your family member's care team for specific strategies to manage challenging situations. Here are some tips:

- Learn more about your options.
- Plan the best strategies for the situation.
- Understand that this is not personal.
- Realize that some behaviours may be beyond your loved one's control. They may be as distressing to them as they are to you.

**.6 Know what to do in a crisis situation.** If you believe that a loved one is at risk of harming him/herself or others and he/she won't seek help, you may need to seek emergency help - such as calling the police. In general, laws let a doctor, judge, or police officer order an evaluation if a person meets certain criteria. While this can be a helpful tool in a crisis situation, it can also be difficult and traumatic for everyone involved. Ideally, a loved one should have a plan in place that seeks action before these emergency measures are necessary.

**7. Examine your own feelings.** It's very common to experience a mixture of feelings - compassion, worry, and frustration among the most frequent ones.

**8. Take care of yourself.** It's very true that trying to help another person can take a toll - make sure to take time for yourself.

**9. Seek support if you need it.** This might be in the form of a support group (such as NAMI), or even seeing your own therapist if you need to.