



Restore Balance

Restore Mental Health Families Guidebook



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Icons used in this guidebook:

**Food for
Thought**



**Tips &
Tricks**



**Tough
Love**



**Good
& Wise**



**Words of
Wisdom**



Lesson 1: Mental Illness - A New Understanding

There have been ongoing developments in our understanding of mental illness. It's important to note that the field of mental health is dynamic, and new research and insights continue to emerge. Here are some trends and areas of progress in the understanding of mental illness up to 2022:



- **Biopsychosocial Model:** This is a holistic approach to understanding mental health that takes into account biological, psychological, and social factors. It recognizes that mental health issues can arise from a combination of genetic, neurological, psychological, and environmental factors.
- **Neuroscience and Neuroimaging:** Advances in neuroscience and brain imaging technologies have provided deeper insights into the neurobiological underpinnings of various mental disorders. This includes studies on brain structure, function, and neurotransmitter activity.
- **Genetics and Epigenetics:** Research has highlighted the role of genetics in mental health, showing that certain genetic factors can contribute to susceptibility to mental disorders. Additionally, epigenetic research explores how environmental factors can influence gene expression and potentially contribute to mental health conditions.
- **Microbiome-Gut-Brain Axis:** Emerging research suggests a connection between the gut microbiome and mental health. Studies have explored how the composition of gut bacteria may influence mood, cognition, and behavior, leading to a new field of study known as psychobiotics.
- **Trauma-Informed Care:** There's a growing recognition of the impact of trauma on mental health. This perspective emphasizes creating safe and supportive environments for individuals who have experienced trauma, with the goal of promoting healing and resilience.
- **Cultural Competence and Diversity:** Mental health professionals increasingly recognize the importance of cultural competence in assessment and treatment. This involves understanding how cultural, ethnic, and societal factors can influence the experience and expression of mental health conditions.
- **Lifespan Approach:** Understanding mental health across the lifespan, from childhood through adolescence to adulthood and old age, is crucial. This includes recognizing the unique challenges and developmental considerations at different stages of life.
- **Holistic and Integrative Approaches:** There's a growing interest in combining traditional mental health treatments (such as therapy and medication) with complementary approaches like mindfulness, yoga, exercise, and nutrition. Sound/music therapy and Polyvagal Theory for Nervous System Regulation are other examples of evidenced based integrative modalities
- **Digital Health and Telehealth:** The use of technology in mental health care, including teletherapy, mental health apps, and virtual reality interventions, has expanded accessibility to mental health services.
- **Stigma Reduction and Advocacy:** Efforts to reduce stigma around mental health conditions continue to gain momentum. Advocacy groups and public figures are working to raise awareness, promote understanding, and improve access to mental health resources.

COMMON MENTAL ILLNESSES INCLUDE:

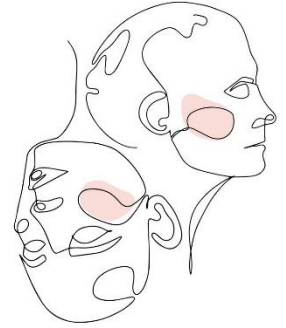
- **Depression:** Characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and a lack of interest or pleasure in most activities. It can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems and can decrease a person's ability to function at work and at home.
- **Anxiety Disorders:** These include conditions like Generalized Anxiety Disorder (excessive worrying about various aspects of life), Panic Disorder (sudden, intense bouts of fear accompanied by physical symptoms), Social Anxiety Disorder (intense fear of social situations), and specific phobias (intense fear of specific objects or situations).
- **Bipolar Disorder:** This involves episodes of mania (elevated or irritable mood, increased energy, and activity) and depression. It used to be known as manic depression.
- **Schizophrenia:** A severe mental disorder characterized by disorganized thinking, delusions, hallucinations, and emotional disturbances.
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD):** This involves unwanted, intrusive thoughts and repetitive behaviors or mental acts that a person feels compelled to perform.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** This can develop after exposure to a traumatic event and is characterized by symptoms like flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts about the event.
- **Eating Disorders:** Including Anorexia Nervosa (intense fear of gaining weight and a distorted body image leading to restricted eating), Bulimia Nervosa (binge-eating followed by purging behaviors), and Binge Eating Disorder (regularly eating large amounts of food without compensatory behaviors).
- **Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):** A chronic condition including attention difficulty, hyperactivity, and impulsiveness.
- **Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD):** This involves unstable moods, behavior, and relationships. People with BPD often have a distorted self-image, may feel impulsive, and have intense, unstable relationships.
- **Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD):** These are characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech, and nonverbal communication.
- **Substance Use Disorders:** Involves the recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs leading to clinically significant impairment.
- **Dementia:** A group of conditions characterized by a decline in cognitive function, including memory loss and a decrease in the ability to think, reason, and communicate.



It's important to note that mental illnesses can vary widely in severity and duration. Many individuals experience symptoms that are manageable with proper treatment, while others may have more severe and persistent conditions.

CO-OCCURRING MENTAL DISORDERS:

Mental illness and substance abuse disorders often co-occur, a condition known as comorbidity. This means that individuals who struggle with mental health issues are more likely to also experience problems related to substance use. Here are some common combinations of mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders:



of

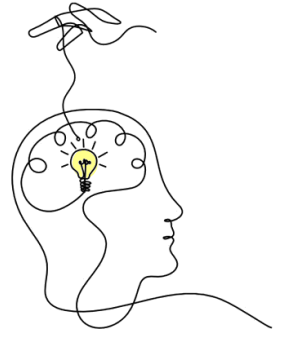
- **Depression and Alcohol/Substance Abuse:**
Many people with depression turn to alcohol or drugs as a way to self-medicate and cope with their feelings. Unfortunately, this often exacerbates the symptoms of depression.
- **Anxiety Disorders and Alcohol/Substance Abuse:**
People with anxiety disorders may use substances to try to calm their nerves or to escape their anxious thoughts. However, this can lead to a cycle of dependence and increased anxiety.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Substance Abuse:**
Individuals who have experienced trauma, such as veterans or survivors of abuse, may use substances to numb emotional pain. This can lead to a dangerous cycle of substance dependence.
- **Bipolar Disorder and Substance Abuse:**
Some individuals with bipolar disorder may use substances during manic episodes to intensify their high, or during depressive episodes to alleviate their low mood.
- **Schizophrenia and Substance Abuse:**
Substance abuse is more common among people with schizophrenia compared to the general population. This can be due to various factors, including attempts to self-medicate or a lack of awareness about the risks.
- **Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and Substance Abuse:**
People with BPD may use substances to cope with intense and unstable emotions. However, this can lead to increased impulsivity and worsened emotional instability.
- **Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Substance Abuse:**
Individuals with ADHD may be at higher risk for substance abuse, possibly as a way to self-medicate and improve focus or to cope with associated challenges.
- **Eating Disorders and Substance Abuse:**
People with eating disorders may use substances for various reasons, including appetite suppression or as a form of self-punishment. This combination can be particularly dangerous for physical health.
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and Substance Abuse:**
Although less common, some individuals with OCD may use substances in an attempt to alleviate their obsessive thoughts or compulsive behaviors.

It's important to note that the relationship between mental illness and substance abuse is complex and bidirectional. Substance abuse can worsen the symptoms of mental illness, and mental illness can increase the risk of substance abuse.



TIPS FOR SUPPORTING A PERSON WITH MENTAL ILLNESS:

Supporting a loved one with mental illness can be challenging, but it's incredibly important. Here are some strategies to help you navigate this situation:



- **Educate Yourself:** Learn about the specific mental illness your loved one is dealing with. Understanding their condition will help you empathize and provide better support. Educate yourself how to interact with a person who has a certain mental illness. There is an intervention for every situation.
- **Encourage Professional Help:** Encourage them to seek professional help from a therapist, counselor, or psychiatrist. Getting help for yourself can also be a good example of encouragement.
- **Be Patient and Non-Judgmental:** Understand that recovery takes time and setbacks are common. Avoid blaming or shaming them for their condition. Be a source of understanding and empathy.
- **Listen Actively:** Create a safe space for them to express their thoughts and feelings. Avoid giving unsolicited advice or trying to "fix" their problems. Sometimes, just listening can be incredibly valuable.
- **State your boundaries:** Understand that they might contact you when they want to leave treatment against medical advice. Enabling them to return home would be an example of inappropriate support.
- **Respect and Encourage Their Autonomy:** Understand that they are ultimately in control of their own treatment and recovery. Offer suggestions and support, but don't try to force them into any specific approach.
- **Be Mindful of Triggers:** Pay attention to situations or topics that might trigger distress or anxiety for them. Try to avoid these triggers especially when they are in inpatient level of treatment. Join the support group to vent your concerns.
- **Seek Support for Yourself:** Supporting someone with a mental illness can be emotionally draining. Make sure you have your own support system in place, whether it's friends, family, support group or a therapist.
- **Emergency Plans:** Know what to do in case of a crisis. Have contact information for their healthcare providers, local crisis lines, and a plan for immediate help if necessary.
- **Accept help/recommendations:** Acknowledge your need for help and support. Consider learning to trust the healthcare professionals. Learn to discern between empowering advocacy and disempowering enabling.



Joining the support group like FHE HEALTH provides for families, can help you to develop your own resilience and coping skills. This includes knowing how to manage stress, seek help when needed, and maintain good mental health habits.



**“Just because no one else can heal or do your inner work for you,
It does not mean you can, should, or need to do it alone.”**

Lisa Oliver

Lesson 2: The Impact of Mental Illness on The Family



Mental illness can have a significant impact on family dynamics, affecting various aspects of daily life, relationships, and overall well-being. Here are some common ways in which mental illness can influence family dynamics:

- **Emotional Strain:** Family members often experience a range of emotions when a loved one is struggling with mental illness. These can include sadness, worry/fear, anger, guilt, and even resentments.
- **Communication Challenges:** Effective communication can become difficult. The person with mental illness may have trouble expressing themselves or may withdraw, while family members may struggle to understand or may inadvertently say things that exacerbate the situation.
- **Role Changes:** The responsibilities and roles within the family may shift. For instance, a spouse or child might take on additional caregiving tasks, which can be emotionally and physically demanding.
- **Increased Stress:** Caring for someone with a mental illness can be demanding and may lead to increased stress levels for all family members. This can affect their own mental health and well-being.
- **Financial Strain:** Depending on the nature of the mental illness, there may be additional financial burdens due to medical bills, therapy, medications, or even lost income if the affected person is unable to work.
- **Social Isolation:** The family may become more socially isolated, either because they have less time or energy to engage in social activities, or because they may feel stigmatized or misunderstood by others.
- **Impact on Siblings:** If a parent or sibling has a mental illness, it can affect the dynamics between siblings. One sibling may feel neglected or burdened with extra responsibilities.
- **Educational and Developmental Impact:** If a child is affected by mental illness, it can influence their education and overall development. They may struggle in school or have difficulties forming healthy relationships.
- **Stigma and Shame:** Families may experience feelings of shame, embarrassment, or stigma associated with mental illness. This can lead to secrecy or reluctance to seek help, which can further strain relationships.
- **Self-Care Neglect:** Family members may neglect their own self-care while focusing on the needs of the person with mental illness. This can lead to burnout and negatively impact their own mental health.
- **Resilience and Growth:** On the positive side, dealing with mental illness can also bring families closer together and foster resilience. It can lead to increased empathy, understanding, and support for one another.



It's important to note that the impact of mental illness on family dynamics can vary widely depending on the specific diagnosis, severity, and the resources available to the family.



TIPS FOR BOUNCING BACK TO MORE BALANCED AND PEACEFUL LIFE:

- **Seek Support:** Don't try to go through this alone. Talk to friends, other family members, or a therapist about what you're experiencing. Sharing your feelings and getting support can make a big difference.
- **Set Boundaries:** It's important to set clear boundaries to protect your own mental health. This may involve limiting your exposure to certain situations or conversations that are particularly stressful.
- **Practice Self-Care:** Take care of yourself physically and emotionally. This can include getting regular exercise, eating well, getting enough sleep, and engaging in activities you enjoy.
- **Learn Coping Strategies:** Explore and practice stress-reducing techniques like mindfulness meditation, deep breathing exercises, or progressive muscle relaxation. These can help you manage your own emotions in difficult situations.
- **Educate Yourself:** Understanding the mental health condition your family member is dealing with can help you cope better and provide better support. Knowing what to expect and how to respond can be empowering.
- **Set Realistic Expectations:** Understand that you can't control or "fix" your family member's mental health. It's important to accept that there may be limitations to what you can do.
- **Take Breaks:** If possible, take breaks from the situation to recharge. This might involve spending time away from your family member, even if it's just for a short period.
- **Join a Support Group:** Consider joining a support group for family members of individuals with mental health challenges. This can provide a space to share experiences and gain insights from others in similar situations.
- **Focus on What You Can Control:** Recognize that you can only control your own actions and reactions. Let go of trying to control the behavior or emotions of your family member.
- **Practice Trust:** Model trust in treatment and helping the loved one to follow the aftercare plan leads to stabilization and medication compliance.

LET GO!

- To "let go" does not mean to stop caring, it means that I can't do it for someone else.
- To "let go" is not to cut myself off, it is the realization that I can't control another.
- To "let go" is not to enable, but to allow learning from natural consequences.
- To "let go" is to admit powerlessness, which means the outcome is not in my hands.
- To "let go" is not to try to change or blame another, it is to make the most of myself.
- To "let go" is not to care for, but to care about.
- To "let go" is not to judge, but to allow another to be a human being.
- To "let go" is not to be in the middle arranging all the out-comes but to allow others to effect their own destinies.
- To "let go" is not to be protective, it is to permit another to face reality.
- To "let go" is not to deny, but to accept.
- To "let go" is not to nag, scold, or argue, but instead to search out my own shortcomings and to correct them.
- To "let go" is not to adjust everything to my desires but to take each day as it comes, and to cherish myself in it.
- To "let go" is not to criticize and regulate anybody but to try to become what I dream I can be.
- To "let go" is not to regret the past, but to grow and to live for the future.
- **TO "LET GO" IS TO FEAR LESS AND TO LOVE MORE.**



Remember, it's okay to seek professional help for yourself as well. A therapist or counselor can provide you with additional tools and strategies to navigate this challenging situation. Take care of yourself.

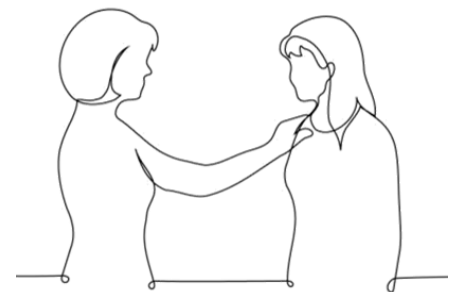
Lesson 3: Learn To Encourage Your Loved One's Self-Agency



The concept of self-agency for people with mental illness revolves around the idea that individuals experiencing mental health challenges can actively participate in their own treatment, recovery, and decision-making processes. It emphasizes their ability to make choices, set goals, and take actions that contribute to their well-being and quality of life. Here are some key aspects of the concept of self-agency in the context of mental illness:

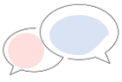
- **Empowerment:** Self-agency promotes a sense of empowerment, encouraging individuals to take an active role in managing their mental health. This empowerment can lead to increased self-esteem and confidence.
- **Collaborative Decision-Making:** It involves collaboration between individuals and mental health professionals. This collaborative approach recognizes the expertise of individuals in understanding their own experiences and preferences. Together, they work towards developing treatment plans and setting achievable goals.
- **Personalized Care:** Recognizing that mental health experiences vary widely, self-agency supports the idea that individuals should have access to personalized care that takes into account their unique needs, preferences, and strengths.
- **Goal Setting:** Encouraging individuals to set realistic and meaningful goals for themselves is a crucial aspect of self-agency. These goals may relate to various aspects of life, such as work, relationships, or personal development.
- **Education and Awareness:** Self-agency involves educating individuals about mental health, their specific conditions, and available treatment options. This knowledge empowers them to make informed decisions about their care.
- **Resilience Building:** Fostering resilience is an essential component of self-agency. This involves helping individuals develop coping mechanisms, problem-solving skills, and the ability to bounce back from setbacks.
- **Reducing Stigma:** Self-agency contributes to reducing the stigma associated with mental illness by promoting a view of individuals as active agents in their own lives rather than passive recipients of care.
- **Cultural Competence:** Recognizing and respecting diverse cultural backgrounds is important in the context of self-agency. Mental health services should be culturally sensitive and inclusive, allowing individuals to express their unique perspectives and values.

It's important to note that the concept of self-agency doesn't imply that individuals are solely responsible for their mental health challenges. It acknowledges the role of a supportive and collaborative healthcare system, including mental health professionals, family, and community, in providing the necessary resources and assistance. Overall, fostering self-agency in people with mental illness contributes to a more holistic and person-centered approach to mental healthcare.



Support from family members is crucial for someone living with mental illness, and it plays a significant role in promoting their self-agency. Encouraging self-agency in individuals with mental illness involves empowering them to take an active role in their own well-being and recovery. Here are some strategies that may help:

- **Encourage Open Communication:**



- Create a safe and non-judgmental space for open communication. Encourage the person to express their thoughts and feelings without fear of criticism.
- Actively listen to their concerns and validate their experiences. This can help the individual feel heard and understood.

- **Educate Yourself:**



- Learn about the specific mental health condition your family member is dealing with. Understanding the challenges they face can enhance empathy and inform how you provide support.

- **Respect Autonomy:**



- Respect the person's autonomy and independence. Avoid making decisions on their behalf without their input unless it's necessary for their safety.

- **Collaborate on Treatment Plans:**



- Work together to establish and maintain treatment plans. Attend therapy sessions or medical appointments together, if the individual is comfortable with it, and provide encouragement for medication adherence.

- **Set Realistic Expectations:**



- Recognize and accept the limitations that mental illness might impose on the person. Set realistic expectations for their goals and achievements, celebrating small victories along the way.

- **Encourage Self-Care:**



- Support and encourage healthy lifestyle choices, including regular exercise, a balanced diet, and adequate sleep. These factors can significantly impact mental well-being.

- **Promote Independence:**



- Encourage individuals to take initiative in managing their daily lives and making decisions about their treatment.
- Provide guidance without taking over, fostering a sense of independence.

- **Celebrate Progress:**



- Acknowledge and celebrate even small achievements and progress toward goals.
- Reinforce the idea that setbacks are a natural part of the recovery process.

- **Encourage Self-Advocacy:**



- Help individuals develop the skills to communicate their needs and preferences to healthcare providers.
- Support them in navigating the mental health system and accessing appropriate services.

- **Participate in Supportive Activities:**



Engage in activities that promote mental well-being together, such as participating in hobbies, exercising, or health promoting activities .

- **Avoid Enabling:**



- Enabling as “doing for them what they are capable of doing for themselves” is a direct opposite of encouraging self-agency.

- **Model Self-Agency:**



- Lead by example and demonstrate self-agency in your own actions and decisions.
- Examine your own needs for a better mental and physical health and exercise your own self-agency in creating positive change in your life

- **Cultivate a Sense of Purpose:**



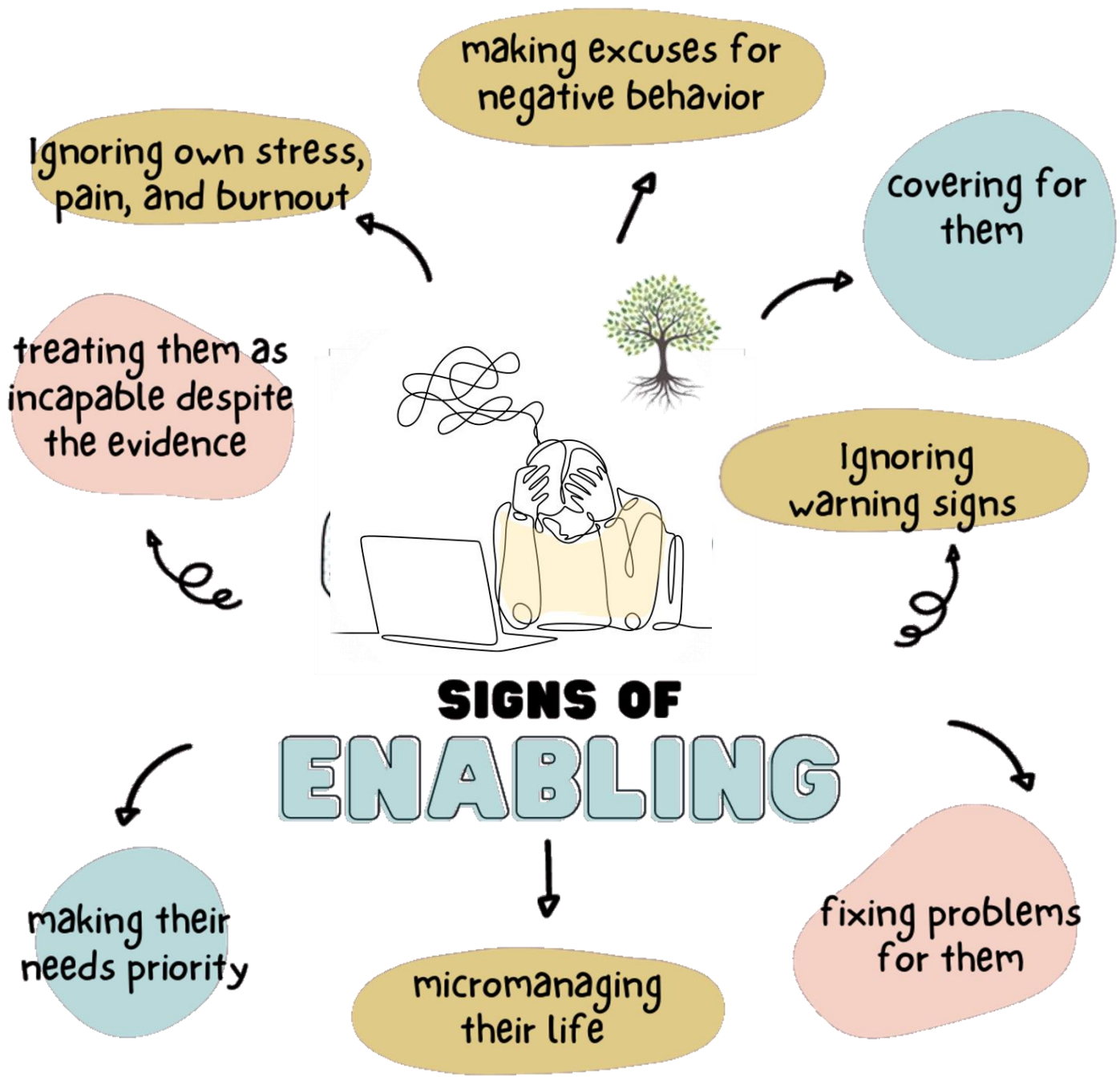
- Help individuals identify and pursue activities that bring them a sense of purpose and fulfillment.
- Assist them in building connections with supportive communities.

- **Normalize Seeking Help:**



- Reduce stigma around mental health treatment and seeking support.
- Emphasize that asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Additionally, involving mental health professionals in the support process and encouraging individuals to follow recommendations made by mental health professionals is essential and beneficial for both the individual and the family.



FOLLOWING THE AFTERCARE PLAN

Following an aftercare plan after leaving a mental health hospital is crucial for reasons like:

- continuity care,
- stabilization and maintenance of mental health condition,
- medication management,
- and preventing relapse.

If you are wondering how you can support a family member after inpatient hospitalization, here are some ways you can help with their follow-up care:

- Ask if you can look over their discharge plan. This plan outlines their follow-up care. It lists important information such as doctor and counselor appointments, medicines, and emergency phone numbers.
- Offer to help them get to their doctor and counselor appointments. The first appointments are usually within 7 days of discharge.
- Offer to help them with medicines. You can remind them to take the medicines exactly as their doctor says. And you can help watch for side effects.
- Support their self-care. You could go for walks together or watch movies together. You could make healthy meals and encourage rest. You also could support their healthy coping skills, such as listening to soothing music, doing deep breathing, or keeping a journal.
- Encourage them to connect with others. Being around close, supportive friends and family can help them feel better.
- Avoid focusing on the illness. Instead, focus on what you enjoy about the person you're caring for, such as their strengths and talents.
- Watch them for signs of self-harm or suicidal behavior. Warning signs include talking about things like suicide, feeling hopeless, or being a burden to others.



- If your partner, parent, child, or friend just left inpatient treatment, you may be wondering what's next for them. This is an important time for them to get follow-up care. It can help them avoid relapse. In a relapse, their symptoms return, and they may need to go back to the hospital.

In addition, you as caregiver need to have your own plan in place to avoid burnout.

1. Take care of yourself
2. Build a strong support system for yourself
3. Find ways to relax
4. Practice self-compassion
5. Restore balance in your life



Lesson 4: Conquer Codependency - Encourage Interdependence



Conquering codependency is a valuable journey towards establishing healthier relationships and a more balanced sense of self. Codependency is a complex and often subtle pattern of behavior, so it can be challenging to recognize it in oneself. However, there are some common signs and characteristics that may indicate codependency. Keep in mind that everyone may exhibit some of these traits from time to time, but when they become persistent and detrimental to your well-being or relationships, it may be a sign of codependency. Here are some common signs of codependency:

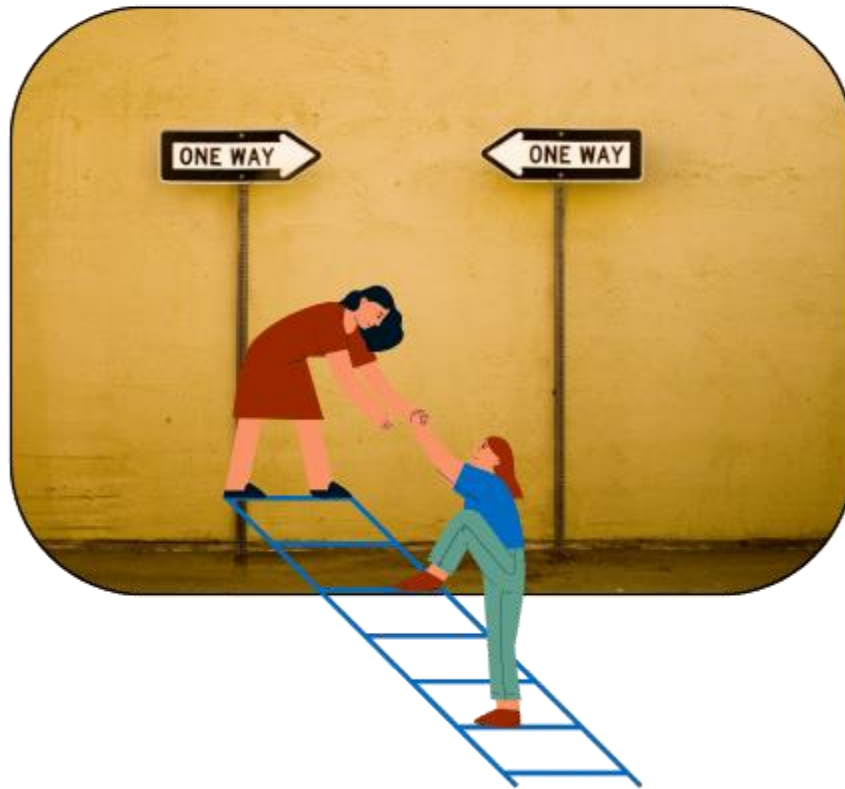
- **Difficulty setting boundaries:** You have a hard time saying "no" or asserting yourself in relationships, even when it's not in your best interest.
- **Low self-esteem:** You may feel a constant need for validation and approval from others to feel worthy or valuable.
- **Excessive caretaking:** You tend to prioritize others' needs and well-being over your own, often to the point of neglecting your own needs.
- **Difficulty expressing emotions:** You may have trouble identifying and communicating your own feelings, and you might suppress or ignore them to avoid conflict or upsetting others.
- **Fear of rejection or abandonment:** You may go to great lengths to avoid being alone or to keep others from leaving you, even if it means sacrificing your own needs.
- **Need for control:** You might feel the need to control situations, people, or outcomes in order to feel secure and safe.
- **Lack of boundaries in relationships:** You may become overly enmeshed with others, losing a sense of your own identity in the process.
- **Difficulty making decisions:** You may rely heavily on others to make decisions for you, or you may have trouble trusting your own judgment.
- **Feelings of guilt or shame:** You may feel guilty for prioritizing your own needs, or you might feel responsible for others' emotions and actions.
- **Dependency on others for self-worth:** Your sense of self-worth is largely dependent on the approval and validation you receive from others.
- **Tendency to attract or be attracted to dysfunctional relationships:** You might find yourself in relationships with people who have addiction issues, emotional instability, or other problems.

If you recognize several of these signs in yourself, it's important to remember that codependency is a learned behavior and can be addressed with self-awareness, therapy, and support. Seeking professional help from a therapist or counselor who is experienced in codependency can be a valuable step toward understanding and overcoming these patterns. Remember, self-improvement and personal growth are ongoing journeys, and it's never too late to work on developing healthier, more balanced relationships with yourself and others.

Advocacy involves supporting someone in a way that empowers them and promotes their well-being, often through positive actions and advocacy for their rights.

Enabling, on the other hand, involves inadvertently or intentionally allowing someone to continue harmful behaviors, often by shielding them from the consequences of their actions.

ADVOCACY VS. ENABLING



Advocacy and enabling are two distinct concepts that involve supporting or assisting someone, but they have very different implications and consequences:

Lesson 5: Maintain Your Well-Being: You Can Pour More From a Full Cup.

Basic essential self-care strategies are fundamental practices that help promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being. These strategies are important for maintaining overall health and preventing burnout or stress-related issues. Here are some basic self-care strategies:

- **Prioritize Sleep:** Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep per night. Establish a regular sleep schedule and create a relaxing bedtime routine.
- **Nutrition:** Eat a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats. Stay hydrated by drinking enough water.
- **Exercise:** Engage in regular physical activity. Find activities you enjoy, whether it's walking, jogging, yoga, or dancing.
- **Mindful Breathing and Relaxation Techniques:** Practice deep breathing exercises, meditation, or progressive muscle relaxation to calm the mind and reduce stress.
- **Maintain Personal Hygiene:** Regularly shower, brush your teeth, and groom yourself. Taking care of your physical appearance can positively impact your mood and self-esteem.
- **Limit Screen Time:** Take breaks from screens, especially before bedtime. Overexposure to screens can disrupt sleep patterns and lead to eye strain.
- **Set Boundaries:** Learn to say no when necessary. Establishing and maintaining boundaries helps protect your time and energy.
- **Social Connections:** Nurture relationships with family and friends. Spending time with loved ones provides emotional support and a sense of belonging.
- **Time Management:** Organize your time effectively to balance work, personal life, and leisure activities. Prioritize tasks and avoid overloading your schedule.
- **Hobbies and Creative Outlets:** Engage in activities that bring you joy and fulfillment. This can include anything from painting, writing, gardening, or playing a musical instrument.
- **Positive Self-Talk:** Cultivate a positive inner dialogue. Replace negative thoughts with affirming and encouraging statements.
- **Practice Gratitude:** Reflect on the things you are grateful for. This can help shift your focus towards positive aspects of your life.
- **Seek Help When Needed:** Don't hesitate to reach out for support from friends, family, or professionals if you're struggling emotionally or mentally.
- **Cultivate Mindfulness:** Be present in the moment and pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and surroundings. Mindfulness helps reduce stress and increase self-awareness.
- **Engage in Leisure Activities:** Take time for activities that bring you joy and relaxation, whether it's reading, watching movies, or going for a nature walk.

Remember that self-care is individualized, so it's important to tailor these strategies to fit your unique needs and preferences. Additionally, consistency is key—incorporate these practices into your routine to experience the full benefits of self-care.



TIPS FOR STICKING TO NEW SELF-CARE HABITS:

- **Make it Obvious:** This step involves making your desired habit more visible and noticeable. It's about creating obvious cues in your environment that trigger the behavior you want. For example, if you want to read more, you might place a book on your bedside table, so you see it before going to bed.
- **Make it Easy:** This step is about reducing the friction associated with the habit you want to develop. The idea is to make it as simple and convenient as possible to perform the desired behavior. For example, if you want to exercise in the morning, you might lay out your workout clothes the night before.
- **Make it Rewarding:** This step involves providing immediate and satisfying rewards for completing the habit. Rewards help reinforce the behavior and make it more likely to stick. For example, if you want to eat healthier, you might reward yourself with a small treat or a compliment for making a nutritious meal.
- **Make it Satisfying:** This step is about finding the inherent satisfaction in the habit itself. It's about focusing on the positive feelings or outcomes that come from doing the habit, even if they might not be immediately obvious. For example, the feeling of accomplishment and well-being that comes from completing a workout.

By applying these four steps, you can increase the likelihood of successfully establishing and maintaining a new habit. Remember that habits take time to form, so be patient with yourself and celebrate your progress along the way.

The reason we often don't do what is right for us - is because under stress our brain reverts to survival mode, and defaults to those ways of doing that are easiest for the brain to handle.

self care
isn't
selfish[♥]

SELFCARE

Checklist

	M	T	W	TH	F	SA	SU
Drink a glass of water to start the day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enjoy 45 minutes of exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Get some fresh air	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have a healthy breakfast	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enjoy a warm morning drink	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Plan out your day in your planner	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stretch your body	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Take regular breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enjoy some sunshine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Take hot/Cold bath or shower	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Read something meaningful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Play some invigorating music	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disconnect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eat a healthy snack	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wind down by avoiding bright light at night	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Get in bed before 10pm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Lesson 6: Boundaries & Limits - Stand Your Ground, Hold the Line



Setting boundaries and limits with addicted and mentally ill family members can be challenging, but it's crucial for your own well-being and theirs. Here are some tips to help you navigate this difficult situation:

- **Educate Yourself:** Learn about addiction and mental illness. Understanding the conditions can help you approach the situation with empathy and knowledge.
- **Prioritize Your Well-being:** Your own mental and emotional health should be a top priority. It's not selfish to take care of yourself.
- **Seek Professional Guidance:** Consult with therapists, counselors, or support groups. They can provide you with specific advice and coping strategies based on your unique situation.
- **Communicate Openly and Honestly:** Clearly express your concerns, feelings, and intentions. Use "I" statements to avoid sounding accusatory. For example, say "I feel overwhelmed when..." instead of "You always...".
- **Set Clear Boundaries:** Determine what behaviors are acceptable and what are not. For example, you might establish limits on borrowing money, disruptive behavior, or substance use in your presence.
- **Be Consistent:** Once you've set boundaries, stick to them. Consistency is key in establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries.
- **Avoid Enabling:** While it's natural to want to help, be mindful of enabling behaviors. Enabling can perpetuate destructive patterns.
- **Offer Support in a Healthy Way:** Encourage treatment or therapy and offer assistance in finding resources. However, remember that you can't force someone to seek help.
- **Safety Comes First:** If the situation becomes physically or emotionally dangerous, prioritize your safety and that of others involved. Seek help from authorities or professionals if necessary.
- **Practice Self-Care:** Engage in activities that promote your own well-being, whether it's exercise, hobbies, meditation, or spending time with supportive friends and family.
- **Seek Legal Advice if Necessary:** Depending on the situation, you may need legal advice to protect your interests or those of other family members.
- **Detachment with Love:** This concept from Al-Anon, a support group for families and friends of alcoholics, suggests detaching emotionally while still showing love and support. It means recognizing that you can't control someone else's actions or choices.
- **Consider an Intervention:** In some cases, a professionally guided intervention may be necessary to encourage your family member to seek help.
- **Practice Patience:** Recovery from addiction and mental illness is a journey with its ups and downs. Be patient and understanding, but also firm in maintaining your boundaries.

Remember that every situation is unique, and what works for one person may not work for another. Trust your instincts and don't hesitate to seek professional help or advice when needed.

Boundaries are more powerful when they are embodied and practiced.



Tips for Embodying "NO" can be a powerful expression of personal boundaries, self-respect, and assertiveness.

WAYS TO EMBODY THE CONCEPT OF "NO":

- **Confidence:** Stand tall, maintain eye contact, and speak clearly. Confidence in your stance helps convey your message effectively.
- **Firmness:** Use a clear, firm voice when expressing your boundaries. Avoid sounding apologetic or uncertain.
- **Body Language:** Your body language should mirror your verbal communication. Avoid slouching or fidgeting. Maintain an open but assertive posture.
- **Directness:** Be straightforward and specific in your communication. Avoid beating around the bush or giving mixed signals.
- **Respectful Tone:** While being firm, it's important to maintain respect for the other person. You can say "no" without being rude or dismissive.
- **Practice Active Listening:** Show that you're listening to the other person's perspective, even if you ultimately disagree. This demonstrates that you've considered their viewpoint.
- **Avoid Over-explaining:** You don't owe anyone a lengthy explanation for your boundaries. A simple, concise statement can be effective.
- **Set Clear Boundaries:** Know your limits and communicate them clearly. This helps prevent confusion or misunderstanding.
- **Trust Your Instincts:** If something doesn't feel right, trust your gut. You don't need to justify your feelings or decisions to anyone.
- **Self-Awareness:** Understand your own needs, values, and priorities. This self-awareness will help you confidently say "no" when necessary.
- **Practice Self-Care:** Taking care of your physical, mental, and emotional well-being strengthens your ability to assert yourself.
- **Learn to Say No Gracefully:** You can say "no" in a way that respects the other person's feelings. Acknowledge their request, express gratitude for the consideration, and then firmly decline.
- **Practice Role-Playing:** Enlist a friend or coach to help you practice asserting yourself in different scenarios. This can boost your confidence in real-life situations.

Remember, embodying "no" is about asserting your own boundaries and needs, not about being confrontational or aggressive. It's a vital aspect of self-respect and healthy communication.

“Daring to set boundaries is about having the courage to love ourselves, even when we risk disappointing others.” - Brene Brown

Stop saying sorry for



Being busy
and owning
your time



Setting
boundaries
for yourself



Not being
perfect
always



Crying or
showing
emotions

Lesson 7: Connection & Support - Breaking the Stigma

Yes, connection and support can play a crucial role in breaking the stigma of mental illness for families. Here's how:

- **Normalization:** When families openly discuss mental health challenges, it helps to normalize the experience. It sends a message that mental health struggles are a part of the human experience and not something to be ashamed of.
- **Empathy and Understanding:** Connecting with others who have experienced similar challenges fosters empathy and understanding. This can lead to greater compassion and support within families.
- **Reducing Isolation:** Mental health issues can often make individuals and families feel isolated. Knowing that there are others who have been through similar experiences can provide a sense of belonging and reduce feelings of isolation.
- **Education and Awareness:** Through connection and support, families can learn about mental health conditions, treatments, and coping strategies. This education can demystify mental illness and lead to more informed and compassionate responses.
- **Advocacy:** When families come together to support one another, they can also become advocates for mental health awareness and policy changes. This can contribute to a broader societal shift in attitudes towards mental health.
- **Encouraging Help-Seeking Behavior:** By openly discussing mental health, families can create an environment where seeking help is seen as a sign of strength rather than weakness. This can lead to earlier intervention and better outcomes.
- **Creating a Safe Space:** Having a supportive family environment can be a critical factor in an individual's recovery journey. Knowing that they can turn to their family for support without judgment can make a significant difference.
- **Modeling Healthy Coping Mechanisms:** When families openly discuss and support mental health, they can model healthy coping mechanisms for stress, anxiety, and other challenges. This can benefit not only those directly dealing with mental health issues but everyone in the family.
- **Breaking Generational Patterns:** Families that openly address mental health issues can break generational patterns of stigma. Children growing up in such environments are more likely to develop healthy attitudes towards mental health.
- **Fostering Resilience:** Knowing that they have a support system can make individuals more resilient in the face of mental health challenges. This can lead to better overall mental health outcomes.

However, it's important to note that breaking the stigma of mental illness is a complex and ongoing process. It requires a collective effort from society, including families, communities, and institutions. Every small step towards openness and support contributes to this larger cultural shift.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Support groups for families affected by mental health issues and addictions can be incredibly valuable. They provide a safe space for individuals to share their experiences, gain insights, and receive support from others who are going through similar challenges. Here are some common types of support groups for families affected by mental health and addictions:

- **NAMI Family Support Groups:** NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) offers support groups for family members and caregivers of individuals living with mental health conditions. These groups provide education, support, and empowerment.
- **Al-Anon and Nar-Anon:** These are support groups for families and friends of individuals struggling with alcoholism (Al-Anon) or drug addiction (Nar-Anon). They focus on providing support and coping strategies for those affected by a loved one's addiction.
- **SMART Recovery Family & Friends:** SMART Recovery offers a program for family and friends of individuals struggling with addiction. It focuses on evidence-based strategies to promote healthy and balanced relationships.
- **Dual Recovery Anonymous (DRA):** DRA is a 12-step program designed to help people with a dual diagnosis (both substance use disorder and a mental health condition). Family members and friends may find support in these groups as well.
- **GRASP (Grief Recovery After a Substance Passing):** This is a support group for individuals who have lost a loved one due to substance use or addiction-related causes. It provides a space for people to process their grief and find support from others who have experienced similar losses.
- **Families Anonymous (FA):** FA is a 12-step program for the families and friends of individuals with drug, alcohol, or behavioral issues. It focuses on mutual support and understanding.
- **Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA):** While primarily focused on individuals living with depression and bipolar disorder, DBSA also provides resources and support for family members and friends.
- **Gam-Anon:** This is a support group for family and friends of individuals affected by problem gambling. It provides a safe and supportive environment to share experiences and coping strategies.
- **Eating Disorders Hope Support Groups:** These online support groups are specifically for individuals and families affected by eating disorders. They offer a platform to share experiences, offer and receive support, and find resources for recovery.

“One of the most beautiful qualities of healthy relationships
is to understand and to be understood.”

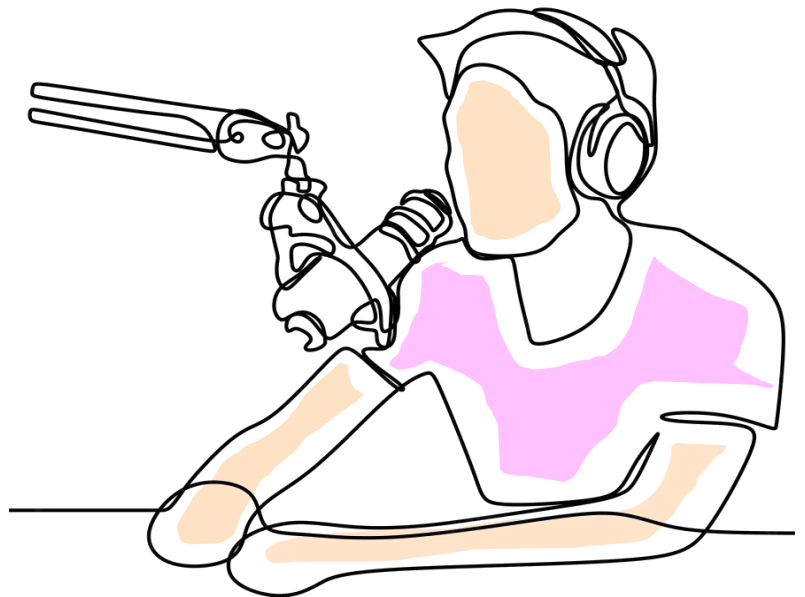
Drew Fig

PODCASTS

Here are some **podcasts** that you might find helpful:

- **Hope Start with Us:** An official podcast of National Alliance on Mental Illness offering encouragement, practical advice, and bringing people together in breaking stigma of mental illness.
- **The Hilarious World of Depression:** This podcast combines humor with serious discussions about mental health. It features interviews with comedians who have dealt with depression.
- **Depresh Mode with John Moe:** Hear from comedians, musicians, authors, actors, and other top names in entertainment and the arts about living with depression, anxiety, and many other common disorders. Find out what they've done to address it, what worked, and what didn't. Depresh Mode also features useful insights on mental health issues with experts in the field.
- **The One You Feed:** While not specifically focused on mental illness, this podcast addresses topics related to mental health, well-being, and personal development.
- **Therapy For Black Girls:** Although not exclusively about mental illness, this podcast provides valuable information about mental health, therapy, and self-care, with a focus on the experiences of Black women and girls.
- **Mom and Mind Podcast:** Hosted by Dr. Kat Kaeni, this podcast is focused on providing support and resources for mothers who are dealing with mental health challenges during pregnancy and postpartum.

Supporting a family member with mental illness can be a challenging and important role. There are several resources that offer valuable insights, resources, and support for families of individuals dealing with mental health issues. Give yourself the support you deserve!



Lesson 8: Relationship Resilience - From Conflict to Peace

Being in a relationship with someone who has a mental illness can be both rewarding and challenging. It's important to approach the situation with empathy, understanding, and patience. Here are some tips to consider:

- **Educate Yourself:** Learn about your loved one's specific mental health condition. Understanding their challenges can help you be more supportive.
- **Open Communication:** Encourage your family member to talk about their feelings and concerns. Be a good listener and avoid judgment or trying to "fix" their problems.
- **Empathize and Validate:** Let them know that you acknowledge their feelings and struggles. Validate their experiences, even if you may not fully understand them.
- **Boundaries:** Understand that there may be times when your family member needs space or alone time. Respect their boundaries and give them the support they need. Be assertive about your boundaries.
- **Encourage Professional Help:** Encourage your loved one to seek help from mental health professionals if they haven't already. Offer to drive them to their appointments to encourage compliance.
- **Take Care of Yourself:** It's important to maintain your own mental and emotional well-being. Make sure you have a support system and engage in self-care activities.
- **Avoid Stigmatizing Language:** Be mindful of the language you use and avoid stigmatizing terms. Treat mental illness like any other health condition.
- **Be Patient:** Mental health struggles can be long-term, and recovery is often a gradual process. Be patient and understanding and celebrate small victories.
- **Offer Practical Support:** Offer help with daily tasks or activities if your family member is struggling. Sometimes, small gestures can make a big difference.
- **Avoid Trying to "Fix" Them:** You can't "fix" your family member's mental health issues. Instead, focus on being supportive and understanding.
- **Practice Self-Compassion:** Remember that you're not responsible for your loved one's mental health, and it's okay to have your own needs and limits.
- **Monitor for Crisis Situations:** If you're concerned about your partner's immediate safety, do not hesitate to seek professional help or contact emergency services.

It's important to have open, honest conversations with your family member about what they need and how you can best support them without enabling and disempowering them.

RUPTURE & REPAIR

IT'S MORE THAN "I AM SORRY"
IT'S ALSO:

- NAMING IT HAPPENED
- OWNING YOUR ROLE
- NAMING THE IMPACT
- LISTENING TO YOUR PARTNER'S PERSPECTIVE EVEN IF IT IS DIFFERENT FROM YOURS
- WONDERING HOW IT WAS CO-CREATED
- PLANNING A WAY FORWARD



Lesson 9: Effective Communication

Nonviolent Communication (NVC), developed by Marshall Rosenberg, is a powerful tool for effective communication and conflict resolution. It emphasizes empathy, understanding, and collaboration. Here are some tips to help you practice NVC:

Observe Without Judging:

- Focus on specific, observable behaviors or situations. Avoid evaluations, criticisms, or labels. For example, say, "I noticed you didn't return my call," instead of, "You're always avoiding calling back."

Express Feelings:

- Identify and express your feelings. Be honest and vulnerable about your emotions. Use "I" statements to take responsibility for your feelings. For instance, say, "I feel disappointed," rather than, "You make me disappointed."

State Your Needs:

- Clearly articulate your needs or values related to the situation. This helps the other person understand what is important to you. For instance, say, "I need support with this project," rather than, "You should help me with this."

Make Requests, Not Demands:

- Instead of making demands, make requests. Be open to negotiation and compromise. For example, say, "Could you please share your thoughts on this?" rather than, "You have to tell me what you think."

Listen Empathetically:

- Focus on understanding the other person's feelings and needs. Reflect back what you've heard to ensure you've understood correctly.
- Avoid trying to fix the problem or give advice unless asked.

Avoid Blame and Criticism:

- Refrain from blaming or criticizing the other person. Instead, focus on your own feelings and needs. For example, say, "I felt hurt when you said that," instead of, "You shouldn't have said that."

Stay Open and Curious:

- Be open to understanding the other person's perspective, even if it differs from yours. Seek to learn about their feelings and needs.
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage them to share.

Use Nonviolent Language:

- Be mindful of the words you use. Avoid aggressive or judgmental language. Use words that reflect your feelings and needs.

Avoid Assumptions:

- Don't assume you know what the other person is thinking or feeling. Ask for clarification if needed.
- Say, "Can you help me understand how you're feeling about this?" instead of assuming.



Practice Patience and Flexibility:

- Be patient with yourself and others as you learn and apply NVC. It's a skill that takes time to develop.
- Be willing to adapt your approach based on the specific situation and the needs of the individuals involved.

Practicing NVC is a skill that takes time and effort. It's important to approach it with sincerity and a genuine desire to connect with others. Keep in mind that it's not about always getting what you want, but about fostering understanding, empathy, and mutual respect in your interactions. Dealing with aggressive family members can be challenging, but it's important to approach the situation calmly and with empathy. Here are some steps you can take to help calm and de-escalate the situation:

Stay Calm Yourself:

- Maintain your own composure. Responding with anger or frustration can escalate the situation further.

Create a Safe Space:

- If possible, move to a neutral, private area where you can talk without distractions or interruptions.

Listen Actively:

- Let the aggressive family member express themselves without interrupting. Show that you are genuinely interested in understanding their point of view.

Use Non-Threatening Body Language:

- Maintain open body language (uncrossed arms, relaxed posture) to help convey that you're not a threat.

Validate Their Feelings:

- Acknowledge their emotions, even if you don't agree with their perspective. For example, you could say, "I can see that you're really upset right now."

Avoid Blame or Criticism:

- Instead of saying, "You always do this," try focusing on specific behaviors and how they make you feel. For example, "When you raise your voice, it makes me feel uncomfortable."

Set Boundaries Firmly but Respectfully:

- Make it clear what behavior is not acceptable. Use "I" statements to express your feelings and needs. For example, "I need you to speak to me calmly."

Offer Solutions or Choices:

- Propose alternatives or compromises that might help resolve the issue. Ask for their input on finding a solution.

Take a Break if Necessary:

- If the situation becomes too heated, it's okay to suggest taking a break to cool off. This can prevent things from escalating further.

Safety First:

- If you ever feel unsafe or threatened, prioritize your own safety. If necessary, remove yourself from the situation and seek help from a trusted friend, family member, or authority figure.

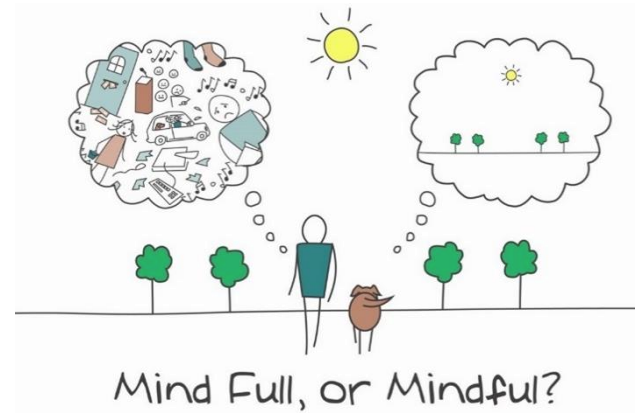
Remember, it's not your responsibility to change someone else's behavior, but you can influence the situation by maintaining your own composure and communicating effectively.

Lesson 10: Mindfulness - A Superpower

Mindfulness can indeed be considered a modern superpower. Practicing mindfulness can be a valuable tool for caregivers to manage their own well-being and provide better support to their loved ones. The capacity to be present is one of the top cornerstones of good mental health.

Living more in the moment can greatly enhance your well-being and overall quality of life. Here are some tips to help you cultivate mindfulness and be more present in your day-to-day life:

- **Practice Mindfulness Meditation:** This involves paying attention to your breath and bodily sensations. It helps train your mind to focus on the present moment.
- **Engage Your Senses:** Take time to notice what you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch. This can be as simple as really savoring the flavor of your food or appreciating the beauty of a sunset.
- **Limit Multitasking:** Try to do one thing at a time and give it your full attention. This helps you to be fully present in the activity.
- **Deep Breathing Exercises:** Take deep, slow breaths. Focusing on your breath can bring you back to the present moment.
- **Observe Your Thoughts:** Instead of getting caught up in your thoughts, observe them like clouds passing by. This helps create a little distance and allows you to be more present.
- **Practice Gratitude:** Take a moment each day to reflect on things you're grateful for. This can help you appreciate the present moment.
- **Engage in Flow Activities:** Do things that fully absorb your attention and make you lose track of time. This could be a hobby, a sport, or any activity you enjoy.
- **Disconnect from Technology:** Take breaks from screens and devices. Being constantly connected can pull you out of the present moment.
- **Savor the Small Moments:** Take time to appreciate small pleasures, like a warm cup of tea, a good book, or a smile from a stranger.
- **Let Go of Past Regrets and Future Worries:** While it's important to learn from the past and plan for the future, dwelling on them excessively can rob you of the present.
- **Accept Imperfection:** Embrace the imperfect nature of life. Understand that things don't always go as planned, and that's okay.
- **Practice Mindful Eating:** Pay attention to the taste, texture, and smell of your food. Chew slowly and savor each bite.
- **Engage in Mindful Movement:** Whether it's yoga, tai chi, or a simple walk, pay attention to the sensations in your body as you move.
- **Be Present in Conversations:** Listen actively when someone is talking to you. Put away distractions and give them your full attention.
- **Cultivate Patience:** Allow things to unfold in their own time. Rushing through life can cause you to miss out on the richness of each moment.



Try to be present in the moment. Do one thing at a time and avoid multitasking and distractions.

1

Do a body scan. Pay attention to your physical sensations and what you can perceive in your environment

2

Mindful Habits

RESTORE BALANCE

Practice mindful journaling every morning as a way to keep track of your thoughts and emotions

3

Practice mindful breathing exercises daily to help you ground yourself and lower stress levels.

4

It's important to remember that living in the moment is a skill that takes practice. Be patient with yourself and make a conscious effort to incorporate these practices into your daily life. Over time, you'll find yourself becoming more present and mindful.

MINDFULNESS EXERCISES

Mindfulness exercises are practices that help you become more aware of the present moment and cultivate a non-judgmental, accepting attitude. Here are some examples of mindfulness exercises:

Breath Awareness:



- Find a comfortable seated position.
- Close your eyes and bring your attention to your breath.
- Notice the sensation of the breath entering and leaving your nostrils or the rise and fall of your chest or abdomen.
- If your mind wanders, gently bring it back to your breath.

Body Scan:



- Lie down in a comfortable position.
- Start at your toes and slowly work your way up, paying attention to each part of your body.
- Notice any sensations, tension, or relaxation in each area.

Five Senses Exercise:



- Notice five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.

Walking Meditation:



- Take a slow walk, paying close attention to the movement of your body and the sensations in your feet.
- Notice each step, how your weight shifts, and the feeling of the ground beneath you.

Loving-Kindness Meditation:



- Sit comfortably and bring to mind someone you care about.
- Silently repeat phrases like "May you be happy. May you be healthy. May you be safe. May you live with ease."

Mindful Eating:



- Choose a small piece of food (like a raisin or a piece of chocolate).
- Notice the color, texture, and shape. Smell it.
- Take small bites, savoring each one and paying attention to the flavors and sensations.

Gratitude Journal:



- Write down three things you're grateful for each day. They can be big or small.

Noting Practice:



- Label your thoughts and emotions as they arise. For example, say "thinking" when you notice your mind wandering or "feeling" when you become aware of an emotion.

Silent Sitting:



- Find a quiet place to sit comfortably.
- Close your eyes and simply be present, allowing thoughts, feelings, and sensations to come and go without attachment.

Deep Listening:



- Engage in a conversation with someone and focus on truly hearing what they're saying without formulating your response in your mind.

Body Movement:



- Engage in a physical activity like yoga, tai chi, or qigong with a focus on the sensations and movements of your body.

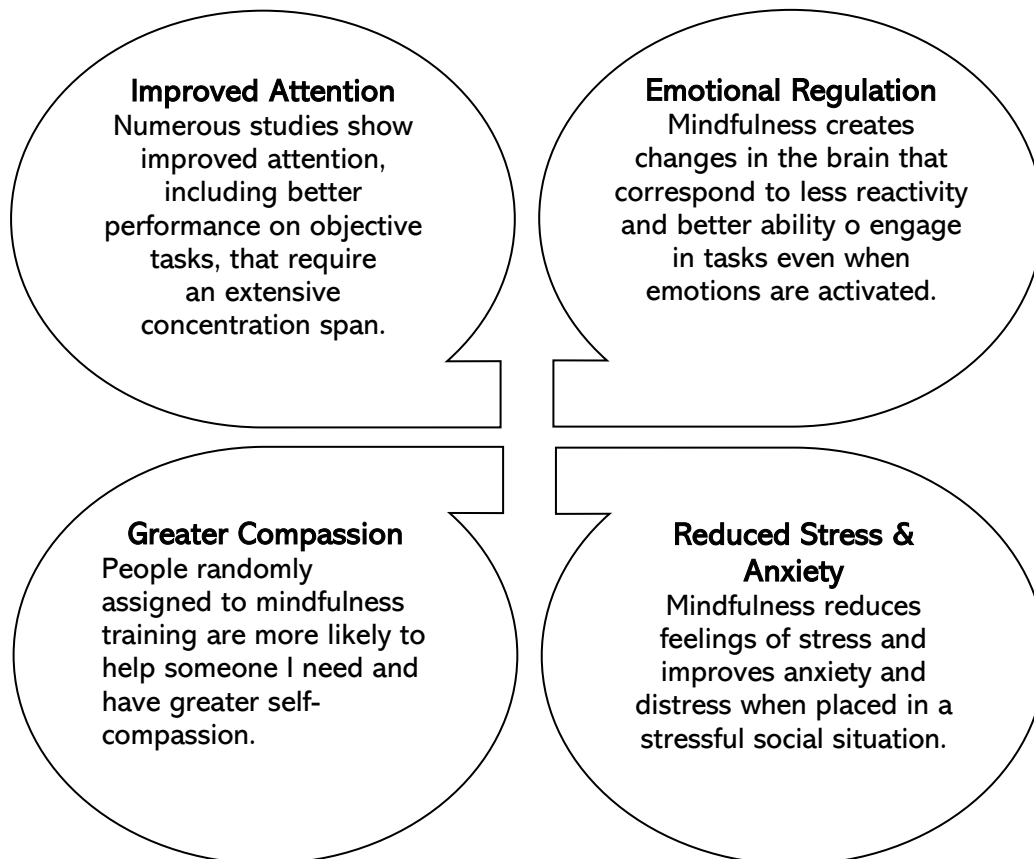
Daily Mindfulness Reminders:



- Set specific times during the day (like when you wake up, during meals, or before bed) to pause and bring your attention to the present moment.

The key to mindfulness is non-judgmental awareness. There's no right or wrong way to do these exercises. The goal is to be present and accepting of whatever arises. Experiment with different exercises and find what resonates best with you.

Practicing mindfulness regularly affects the shape of your brain - neuroplasticity. Even after as little as eight weeks, a regular mindfulness practice can change the size of key parts of your brain, improving your memory and making you more resilient when under stress, promote positive change in the brain pathways involved in stress, focus and attention, memory, and mood.



“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

Victor Frankl

Lesson 11: Emotional Resilience – Navigating Through Difficult Emotions

“There are no positive or negative emotions,
just emotions we feel when our needs are met and emotions we feel when our needs are not met.”
Marshall Rosenberg

WHEN OUR NEEDS ARE SATISFIED, we typically experience a range of positive emotions and feelings. Here are some common types of feelings associated with having our needs met:

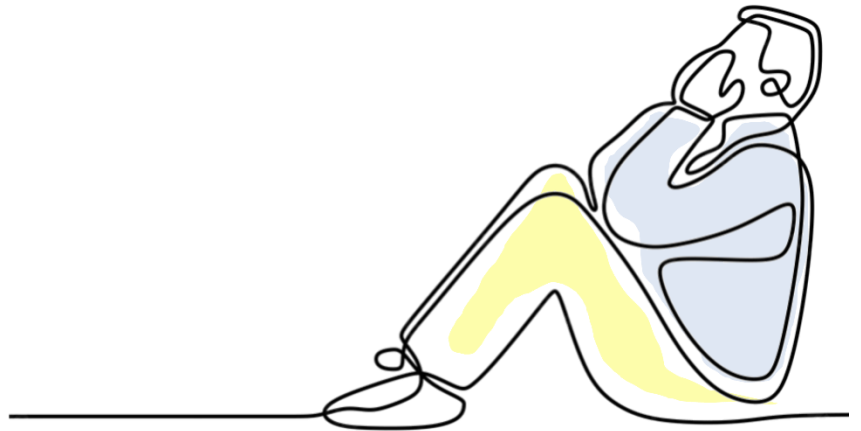
- **Contentment:** Feeling at ease and satisfied with the current state of affairs.
- **Happiness:** Experiencing joy, pleasure, and a sense of well-being.
- **Gratitude:** Feeling thankful and appreciative for what we have received or achieved.
- **Comfort:** Feeling secure, safe, and at ease in our surroundings.
- **Relief:** Experiencing a sense of relaxation and release of tension or stress.
- **Fulfillment:** Feeling a sense of completion or accomplishment, often associated with achieving goals or desires.
- **Satisfaction:** Feeling content with the outcomes or results of our efforts.
- **Peacefulness:** Experiencing a state of tranquility and calm.
- **Safety:** Feeling protected and secure, both physically and emotionally.
- **Warmth:** Feeling a sense of closeness, connection, and emotional intimacy with others.
- **Confidence:** Feeling assured and self-assured in our abilities and decisions.
- **Empowerment:** Feeling capable and in control of our circumstances and choices.
- **Optimism:** Having a positive outlook on the future and believing that good things will happen.
- **Balance:** Feeling a harmonious alignment between our needs, desires, and the resources available to us.
- **Fulfillment:** Feeling a deep sense of purpose and meaning in life.



WHEN OUR NEEDS ARE NOT SATISFIED, it can evoke a range of emotions and experiences. These feelings can vary depending on the specific need that is unmet and the individual's personality, past experiences, and coping mechanisms. Here are some common emotions people might experience when their needs are not met:

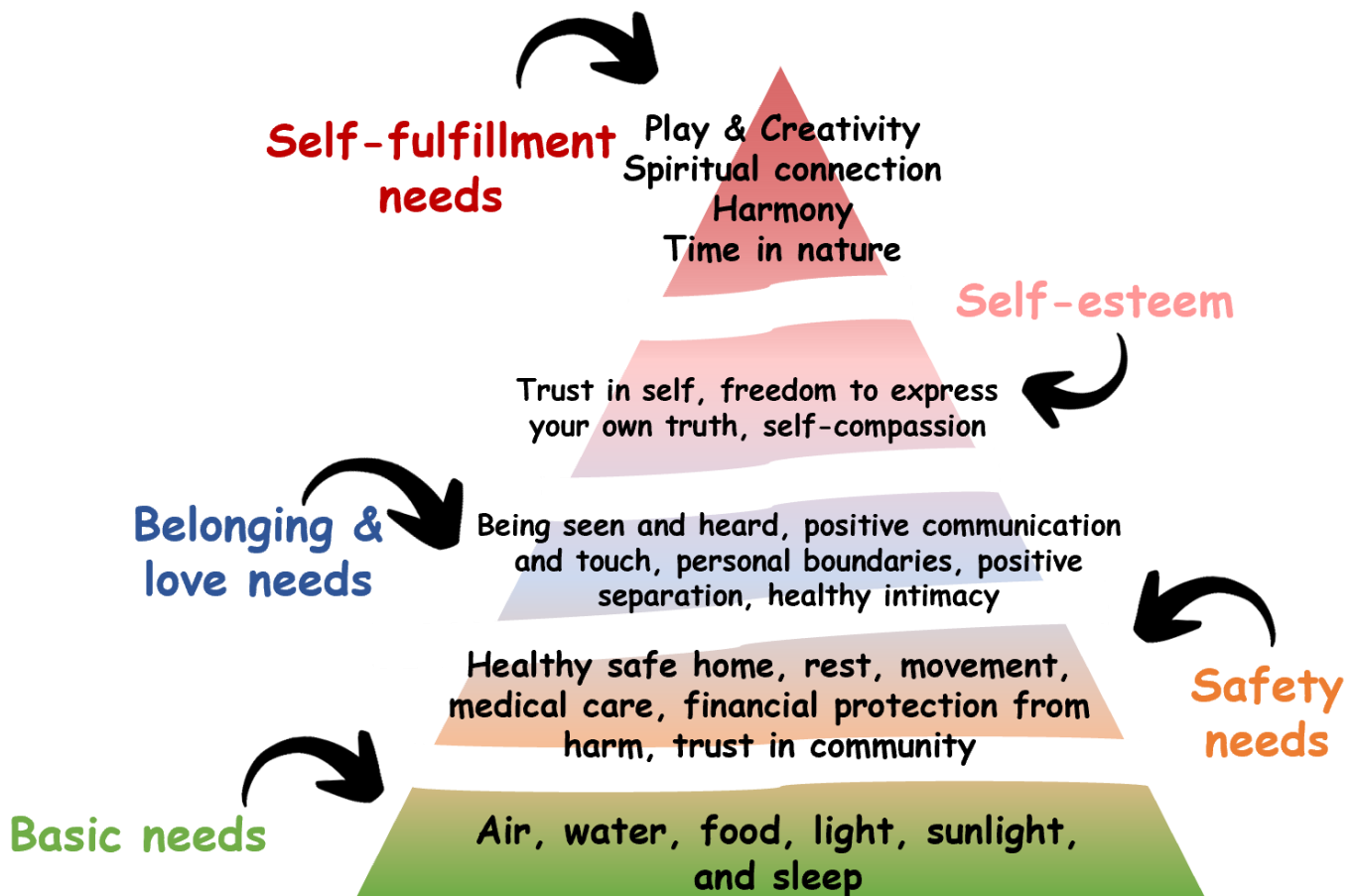
- **Frustration:** This is a common initial reaction when a need is not met. It arises from the sense of being blocked or thwarted in achieving a desired outcome.
- **Anger:** If the unmet need is significant or persistent, it can lead to feelings of anger. This may be directed towards oneself, others, or even the situation itself.
- **Sadness:** When important needs are consistently unmet, it can lead to a feeling of sadness or even depression. This might be due to a sense of hopelessness or helplessness.
- **Anxiety:** Uncertainty or instability regarding needs can lead to anxiety. This can manifest as worry about the future or fear of continued unmet needs.
- **Loneliness:** Certain needs, particularly social and emotional ones, can contribute to feelings of loneliness when they are not met.
- **Disappointment:** When we have expectations about our needs being met and those expectations aren't fulfilled, it can lead to feelings of disappointment.
- **Insecurity:** If core needs like safety and stability are not met, it can lead to a feeling of insecurity. This might manifest as a lack of confidence or trust in one's environment.
- **Guilt or Shame:** In some cases, individuals may blame themselves for their needs not being met. This can lead to feelings of guilt or shame.
- **Vulnerability:** Unmet needs can make us feel vulnerable and exposed. This can be particularly true for needs related to safety or emotional support.
- **Desperation:** In extreme cases, particularly if needs are consistently unmet over a long period of time, it can lead to feelings of desperation.

It's important to note that these emotions are normal reactions to unmet needs, and they serve as signals that something in our life needs attention and adjustment.



There are few examples from our clinical experience that we found in family members caring for loved one with mental illness.

- **Low Self-Esteem or Self-Worth:** Individuals with low self-esteem may feel that their own needs are less important or not worthy of attention. They might derive a sense of validation or self-worth from meeting the needs of others.
- **Avoidance of Personal Issues:** Focusing on the needs of others can serve as a way for some individuals to avoid dealing with their own problems or emotions. By redirecting their attention towards others, they may temporarily avoid confronting their own challenges.
- **Codependency:** Some people may develop a pattern of behavior where they prioritize others' needs to an unhealthy extent. This can be linked to a desire for validation, fear of abandonment, or a need for control in relationships.
- **Caretaker Role:** Some individuals naturally assume a caretaker or nurturing role in relationships, feeling a sense of responsibility for the well-being of others.
- **Guilt or Obligation:** Certain individuals may feel a sense of guilt or obligation to meet the needs of others, whether due to cultural, familial, or personal beliefs.
- **Lack of Boundaries:** Some individuals may struggle with setting and maintaining healthy boundaries, which can lead to an overemphasis on meeting the needs of others at the expense of their own well-being.





TIPS FOR NAVIGATING THROUGH DIFFICULT EMOTIONS

4-6-7 breathing, also known as "relaxing breath," is a simple breathing exercise that is used to promote relaxation, reduce stress, and calm the nervous system. It involves a specific pattern of inhaling, holding the breath, and exhaling for a set number of counts.



- Find a comfortable sitting or lying position.
- Close your eyes if you feel comfortable doing so.
- Inhale deeply through your nose for a count of 4 seconds.
- Hold your breath for a count of 6 seconds.
- Exhale slowly and completely through your mouth for a count of 7 seconds.
- Repeat this cycle several times.

The key is to breathe in a slow, controlled manner, and to focus on the counts to help regulate your breathing. This pattern of breathing can help activate the body's relaxation response, which can be beneficial for reducing anxiety, promoting sleep, and managing stress. It's a technique often used in practices like yoga, meditation, and mindfulness.

The "90-second rule" is a concept that suggests that emotions typically only last for about 90 seconds if they are allowed to run their course without resistance or suppression. It is based on the understanding that when we experience an emotion, it triggers a physiological response in the body, including the release of neurochemicals. These neurochemicals are what give rise to the actual feeling of the emotion.



According to this theory, if we allow ourselves to fully experience an emotion without trying to suppress it or get caught up in negative thought patterns, it will naturally dissipate in about 90 seconds. The key is to be present with the emotion and observe it without judgment.

It's important to remember that while helping and caring for others is admirable, it's equally important for individuals to prioritize their own well-being and needs. Striking a balance between caring for others and taking care of oneself is crucial for long-term mental and emotional health.

Lesson 12: Emergencies – Roadmap From Fear to Best Right Action

Dealing with emergencies when living with a mentally ill family member can be challenging, but it's important to have a plan in place. **Here are some steps you can take to best deal with emergencies:**

Create a Crisis Plan:

- ✓ Sit down with your mentally ill family member (if they are willing and able) to create a crisis plan. This plan should include important information like emergency contacts, healthcare providers, medications, and any specific triggers or warning signs of a crisis.

Know Emergency Contacts:

- ✓ Have a list of emergency contacts readily available, including local crisis hotlines, mental health professionals, family members, and friends who can provide support.

Seek Professional Help:

- ✓ If the situation is immediately dangerous, don't hesitate to call emergency services (911 in the United States or your local emergency number). They are trained to handle crises.

Stay Calm and Non-Confrontational:

- ✓ In the midst of a crisis, it's crucial to remain calm. Speak softly and avoid raising your voice, as this can escalate the situation.

Establish Boundaries:

- ✓ Set clear boundaries for acceptable behavior during non-crisis times and communicate these boundaries to your family member when they are in a stable state.

Educate Yourself:

- ✓ Learn as much as you can about your family member's mental illness. Understanding their condition can help you anticipate and respond appropriately to potential crisis.

Encourage Professional Help:

- ✓ Encourage your family member to seek regular treatment from mental health professionals. Offer to help them find and attend appointments.

Keep Communication Open:

- ✓ Encourage your family member to communicate openly about their feelings and experiences. This can help prevent crises from escalating.

Document and Track:

- ✓ Keep a record of any significant incidents, including dates, times, and a description of what happened. This can be helpful for healthcare providers and for understanding patterns of behavior.

Self-Care:

- ✓ Taking care of yourself is crucial. Make sure you have a support system in place and consider seeking therapy or counseling for yourself to help cope with the challenges.

Consider Support Groups:

- ✓ Joining a support group for family members of individuals with mental illness can provide valuable insights and a sense of community with others who are going through similar experiences.
- ✓ Remember, dealing with a mentally ill family member can be emotionally draining, so it's important to seek help and support for yourself as well. Don't hesitate to reach out to mental health professionals, support groups, or trusted friends and family members.

IN TIME OF EMERGENCY

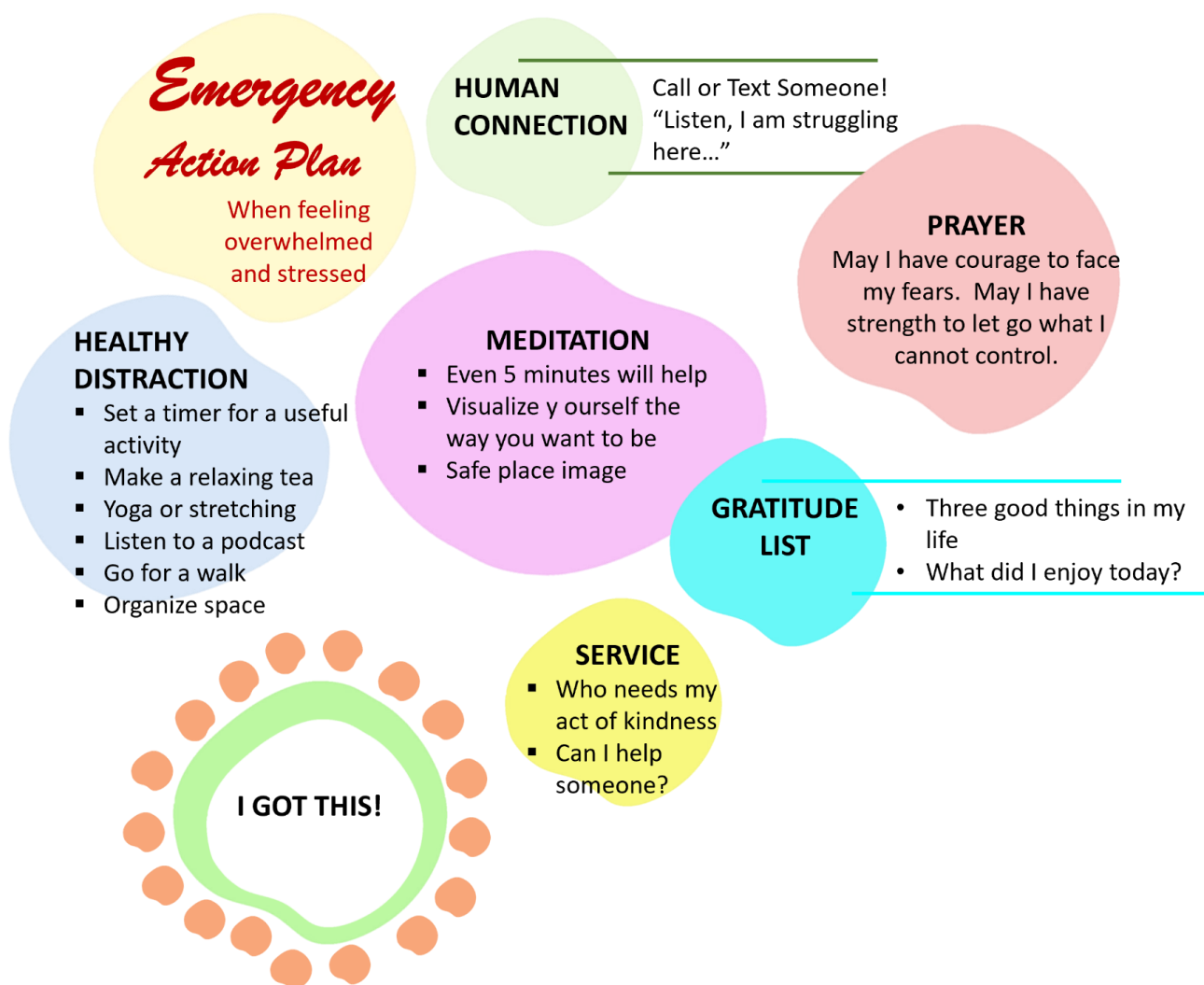
Consider following criteria to determine a true emergency based on a personal story of a mother facing her daughter's chronic mental illness and behavioral struggles. These questions are from her book "Unconditional" by Allison Garner:

Criterion #1: Is this life threatening or dangerous in some way? Her advice is to assume a moderate level of danger and adjust the level if told otherwise. In other words, keep saying to yourself "It is going to be Ok" to avoid the horror of imagining the worst.

Criterion #2: Am I the person who is needed ? Just consider that you might not be the person who is needed the most. Doctors may be needed. Immediate medical attention is needed. The author admits that it is "guilt-ridden" experience but humbling that she cannot "fix it" for her daughter.

Criterion #3: Can I drop what I am doing to be there? There are times when parents choose their adult children crisis over their own life. When this happens repeatedly, many among those parents ask themselves: Is it really helpful to always jump in and try to fix things for them? Is it helpful to send a message "you are not capable of solving your own issues"? Is it helpful for me planning my life around possible crisis of my child?

The next time there is a crisis in the family, take a slow breath and consider the three criteria of an emergency situation. Consider following the "Emergency Action Plan" for yourself as a tool for retuning to a balanced state of mind.




If you or someone you know talks about suicide, self-harm, a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress, get help right away.

You can call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.
Call 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).
Text **HOME to 741741** to access the Crisis Text Line
If it's an emergency, call **911**.

Consider saving these numbers.

MY SAFETY PLAN

Remember: Help is always available.



- 1** MY WARNING SIGNS ARE:
***These can be thoughts, feelings or behaviors that indicate you are at risk.**
- 2** MY EFFECTIVE COPING STRATEGIES ARE:
***These are things you can do to help lift your mood, like meditation or exercise.**
- 3** PEOPLE I CAN REACH OUT TO FOR DISTRACTION:
Person 1: Contact No.
Person 2: Contact No.
Person 3: Contact No.
- 4** PEOPLE I CAN REACH OUT TO FOR HELP:
Person 1: Contact No.
Person 2: Contact No.
Person 3: Contact No.
- 5** STEPS I CAN TAKE TO MAKE MY ENVIRONMENT SAFER:
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-
-
-
-
- 6** IN THE EVENT OF A CRISIS:
Call Emergency Contact #1:
Call Crisis Hotline:
Call Emergency Services:



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