



COULD MY PARENT HAVE

SCHIZOPHRENIA



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WHERE?

In Print : [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Online : [TeenMentalHealth.org](https://www.teenmentalhealth.org)

INTRODUCTION

Having a parent with Schizophrenia can be frightening, frustrating, and stressful. When someone you care about has a mental illness, you can feel helpless and wonder if it's your fault. You are not to blame. There is nothing you could have done to cause your parent's Schizophrenia. Although it may feel like everything is out of your control, try not to lose hope. Schizophrenia is treatable and there are people who can help you and your parent recover. You are not alone!

This book will help you understand more about Schizophrenia and what you can do to cope with your parent's illness.





FACTS ABOUT SCHIZOPHRENIA

NORMAL VS. ABNORMAL BEHAVIOUR

Schizophrenia is a complicated brain disorder that makes it difficult for someone to know what is real and what is not. People with Schizophrenia experience delusions (beliefs in things that aren't true) and/or hallucinations (sensing things that aren't really there). They also might be difficult to understand, either because their speech is hard to follow or because they rarely speak. Some people with Schizophrenia also act in strange ways, such as acting exceptionally silly, acting inappropriately, or becoming agitated for no obvious reason.

If your parent has Schizophrenia, he or she may not realize that anything is wrong. To your parent, his or her behaviour seems perfectly reasonable, even though you can tell that something is clearly very wrong.

It's important to note that believing or sensing something that other people do not is not always a sign of Schizophrenia. We can all believe things that other people do not – whether it's that a higher power exists, that an old house is haunted, that the government is monitoring our internet use, or something else entirely. Age-appropriate or culturally-appropriate beliefs are not considered delusions. The same goes for hallucinations. If you can hear your neighbour's conversation on the other side of the wall but your parent standing on the other side of the room can not – you are not “hearing voices” (e.g., a hallucination). A child's imaginary friend is also not a hallucination. Age-appropriate displays of imagination are not hallucinations. A hallucination is when you experience something through your senses (sight, sound, smell) that is not there. Delusions and hallucinations are diagnosed when people believe or sense something despite many other people giving evidence that the belief or sensory perception does not exist. Delusions and hallucinations are considered breaks from reality and are symptoms of psychosis. Psychosis can occur in multiple disorders, not just Schizophrenia.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT SCHIZOPHRENIA?

- ◆ Approximately 1 in 100 people will develop Schizophrenia. [Statistics Canada (2012) Health State Descriptions for Canadians.]
 - ◆ The onset of Schizophrenia is usually in the late teens/early twenties for men and the twenties/early thirties for women. [American Psychiatric Association (2013) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – Fifth Edition.]
 - ◆ It is rare for Schizophrenia to start before adolescence or after age 45, although some women who develop Schizophrenia do so after age 45. [American Psychiatric Association (2013) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – Fifth Edition.]
 - ◆ Immediate family members of someone with Schizophrenia are at 10 times greater risk for developing Schizophrenia than people without the disorder in their immediate family. [American Psychiatric Association (2013) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – Fifth Edition.]
 - ◆ Schizophrenia can be effectively treated, although it may require lifelong maintenance medications. [Mayo Clinic (2012) Schizophrenia: Treatments and Drugs.]
 - ◆ Schizophrenia is a break from reality. People with Schizophrenia do not have multiple personalities or a “split” personality.
-

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF SOMONE HAS SCHIZOPHRENIA?

Schizophrenia is diagnosed by a mental health professional (e.g., a doctor, psychologist, or clinical nurse practitioner with training in mental health) when someone has a number of specific symptoms. It may take a long time for the mental health professional to determine whether your parent's problems are due to Schizophrenia or due to other medical or environmental causes.

WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

It's really important that people seek help at the first sign of psychosis. Getting the correct diagnosis and treatment early can help to reduce the impact of future problems.

WHAT CAUSES SCHIZOPHRENIA?

Schizophrenia is caused by multiple genetic and environmental factors that affect brain development, many of which we do not yet understand. It is not caused by the usual stresses of everyday life.

CO-OCCURRING DISORDERS

It's not uncommon for someone with Schizophrenia to experience other mental health problems or mental disorders. When Schizophrenia is not treated, the symptoms can be overwhelming; causing the person to feel out of control and to drift from loved ones, becoming isolated. This isolation increases the risk that he or she will develop significant depressive symptoms or even Depression. Substance abuse may develop as a way for the person to cope with the symptoms of Schizophrenia. Alcohol or drug use (including smoking cigarettes) may help the person to relax and numb his or her delusions or hallucinations, but there are several serious problems with using this



coping strategy. First, it's only a short-term solution; when the effects of the substance wear off, the symptoms remain. Second, alcohol or drug use may actually worsen symptoms of Schizophrenia instead of numbing them. For people at risk for Schizophrenia, marijuana use in particular appears related to the onset of the disorder. Third, consistently using drugs and alcohol to avoid the symptoms of Schizophrenia may lead to addiction in some people. Many people with Schizophrenia also have an addiction problem in their lifetime. With continued use of a substance, the person will need more and more of the alcohol or drugs to get the same relief, putting him or her at increased risk for addiction and increasing his or her chance of overdose or other kinds of harm. See page 23 for more information on how to recognize the signs of alcohol poisoning or a drug overdose.

TREATING SCHIZOPHRENIA

Schizophrenia is treatable but it takes time, work, and consistency. Your parent won't get better overnight. Although the amount and type of medication may change over time, your parent will likely need to be on medication for his or her entire life in order to prevent relapse (when an illness comes back after it has been effectively treated). Most treatments take at least 12 weeks to see noticeable improvements, so it's important to be patient and supportive.

Well-established treatments for Schizophrenia include certain medications and some types of psychotherapies (i.e., talking therapies). Often a combination of psychotherapy and medication will be prescribed together.

TYPE OF TREATMENT

1 Medication

Medications often help lessen symptoms by helping your parent's brain function better. There are a number of different medications that his or her doctor might choose to prescribe.

Medications called antipsychotics help with psychosis (i.e., delusions and hallucinations). There are a number of different antipsychotics and your parent's doctor may need to try different medications to find the one that works best for your parent. Certain antipsychotic medications have side effects, like restless movements, stiffness, and dry mouth. If your parent is taking one of these medications, he or she may also be prescribed other medications to help prevent these side effects from happening.

Once your parent's symptoms are under control, they will likely still need to continue taking these medications in order to reduce their risk of relapsing.

For important information on how to get the best treatment, check out:
teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/evidence-based-medicine-patients/
teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/communicating-health-care-provider-every-person-ask/



2 Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is talk therapy that also works to help your parent's brain function better. It can be done one-on-one (just your parent and the therapist) or in a group (with other adults who also have Schizophrenia). For someone with Schizophrenia, psychotherapy might be used as an add-on to medication but medication is usually necessary. Some treatments used in psychotherapy include:

- ◆ **Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT):** CBT can help reduce the severity of your parent's symptoms. In CBT, your parent will learn to identify problems and symptoms, and develop cognitive and behavioural coping strategies that can help.
- ◆ **Family-Based Therapy:** Family interventions educate your family about Schizophrenia and how to cope, and provide crisis intervention and emotional support.
- ◆ **Assertive Community Treatment:** This type of treatment involves a high level of contact between a variety of mental health professionals and the person with Schizophrenia and helps to decrease hospitalizations and homelessness.
- ◆ **Supported Employment:** Supported Employment helps people to look for a job and be effective in that job, once found.
- ◆ **Skills Training:** Skills training helps people with Schizophrenia work on their social skills, ability to live independently, and any other skills necessary for living in the community.

WHAT YOU CAN DO?

Start by putting yourself first. Do things that you enjoy and that help you cope with stress. When you look after yourself, it makes it easier to deal with the challenges of your parent's Schizophrenia. Don't forget that you're the kid in this relationship - it's not your responsibility to look after your parent. Putting yourself first does not mean that you're abandoning your parent or that you don't love him or her. Here are some ways that you can help your parent, without making his or her Schizophrenia your responsibility:

1 Educate yourself about the illness.

Understanding what Schizophrenia is and how it affects your parent will help you feel less frustrated and more supportive. Page 28 has a list of helpful websites that can be trusted.

2 Talk to someone.

Talking to other family members about your parent's Schizophrenia can be a relief because they often understand what you're going through. Just remember that not all people will have the same experience as you and not everyone is comfortable talking about mental illness. If you can't find support within your family, it's okay to talk to a trusted friend. Try to respect your parent's privacy (and consider asking your parent how he or she feels about you sharing that he or she has a mental illness) but remember that you have nothing to be ashamed of. Some people may be judgmental or unkind. This is usually because they don't understand Schizophrenia or what it's like to have a family member who has Schizophrenia. Your parent's illness is not a reflection of you and does not make your family less than any other family. You can choose to react negatively to these people; you can choose to ignore the things they say; or you can choose to stand up to them and increase their awareness of mental illness. It's up to you. As important as it is to try to increase people's understanding of mental illness, not everyone is willing to listen. Pick and choose your battles and try to confide only in people you trust. There's no shame in just ignoring someone's negative comments if it doesn't seem worth your energy.

3 Be patient and don't take it personally.

Schizophrenia affects the way your parent thinks. He or she may not want to do the things he or she used to like to do and it may be hard for your parent to attend or participate in your school events or games. Although it's difficult, try not to take it personally. Be patient with your parent when you can and recognize that Schizophrenia is making him or her act this way. It's not a reflection of how he or she feels about you.

4 Be prepared for emergencies.

It's tempting to pretend that everything is fine but it's so important for you to be prepared in case something goes wrong. Have a plan about what to do and where to go, as well as a list of emergency contacts, just in case. Use the tear out pages at the back of this book to write down your emergency contacts.

5 Let your parent know you care.

Having a parent with Schizophrenia can be really frustrating and upsetting. It's easy to focus only on the negative, especially when your parent is feeling negative. Remember that having Schizophrenia alters the way your parent sees the world and can make things seem worse than they really are. Sometimes your parent's beliefs about the world may actually be incorrect and a consequence of his or her Schizophrenia. Try not to let his or her negative thoughts and comments affect your own thoughts and behaviours. Remind your parent that you care and that you are trying to help him or her keep perspective.

6 Learn how to communicate.

Try to avoid arguments and accusations when you get frustrated. Page 12 has some tips for communicating with your parents.

7 Keep in mind quality, not quantity.

Sometimes it's better to spend shorter periods of time with your parent doing something enjoyable when he or she is feeling good, rather than giving up lots of your time trying to care for him or her. It's okay to set boundaries; it doesn't make you a bad kid.

8 Understand your feelings.

Become familiar with how your parent's illness affects you. Do you worry too much or do you feel neglected? Talking to a counselor, or a trusted friend or family member can help you sort through your thoughts. Keeping a journal of your feelings can also help you put things in perspective and understand yourself better.

9 Accept what you can't control.

You can't control your parent's behaviour or the fact that he or she has Schizophrenia. People can only control their own thoughts, feelings, and actions. Trying to change your parent is frustrating and futile. Focus on the things you can control (like your reactions to your parent's behaviour) and try to let the other things go.

10 Appreciate the fun times.

Remember that your parent's symptoms may come and go. Take advantage of the good times and have fun with your parents. Try not to hold a grudge because of how your parent acted when his or her symptoms were worse. It's important to have fun together when you can, because having good times to remember will help get you through the difficult times.

11 Do what you love.

Doing things you love to do can take your mind off problems with your family and remind you of the good things in your life.



TALKING TO YOUR PARENT

Having a parent with Schizophrenia can be frightening and overwhelming. You may think that talking to your parent will burden them unnecessarily but it's important that he or she knows what's on your mind. Here are a few tips to help you out:

- 1 Be respectful and polite.** This can be a challenge if your parent's symptoms are especially bad or your parent has missed out on something that he or she promised you they would do. Try taking a deep breath and remember that Schizophrenia is making him or her act this way and you don't have to join in.

2 Think of your parent as a person and talk to them the way you would want someone to talk to you. It's easy to think of our parents only as parents or only as someone with a mental illness. They're more than either of those roles and treating them as such goes a long way.

3 Avoid blaming. Even if your parent was at fault, blaming them for whatever has happened will only make them defensive and less likely to listen. Use "I" statements whenever you can. They communicate your message without causing the other person to feel as defensive. For example, instead of saying "You didn't come to my soccer game again," say "I was hurt when I realized that you weren't at my soccer game." This puts the emphasis on how it made you feel, instead of what your parent did wrong.

4 Express your feelings. Even though your parent has Schizophrenia, he or she is still your parent. Tell your parent when you're upset, stressed out, scared, and even happy. Your feelings are important and expressing them will help improve your mood. It's important that your parent is aware of how you're feeling.

5 Choose a suitable time and place to talk to your parent if the topic is sensitive. If you have something important to discuss, make sure that you have some privacy. The middle of the grocery store is probably not a great spot for an intimate or emotional conversation. Try to approach your parent at times when they are generally calm or relaxed. It will make it easier for both of you. Avoid having a serious conversation with your parent if he or she is feeling sick or using alcohol/drugs.

6 Speak with a trusted adult first. If you have to discuss something important with your parent, whether it's about you or about his or her Schizophrenia, it can help to speak with a trusted adult first. This can mean another family member, a family friend, or a counselor. You can run things by the trusted adult as a trial run and they can even accompany you to talk to your parent, if you feel that's appropriate and helpful.

7 Be prepared for denial and negativity. Your parent may not be ready, willing, or able to admit that he or she has a problem. Schizophrenia impairs a person's link to reality, making it hard for your parent to realize that there is a problem. Even if your parent has already been diagnosed with Schizophrenia, he or she may not notice when his or her symptoms have worsened. This can make it really challenging and stressful for you. Remember that you are the kid in this situation and you don't have to take responsibility for your parent. This is the perfect time to bring in a trusted adult for help.

8 If you are not comfortable speaking to your parent face-to-face, writing a letter can be a good alternative. A letter allows you to express how you feel without your emotions confusing you. It also gives your parent the opportunity to read it on their own time. Giving them some time to process what you needed to say allows them to be less defensive than they may be if they were confronted in person. A good idea when writing a letter is to put it away for a day when you've finished, and then read it again to make sure you've said what you really want to say.

It is not your job to take care of your parent. This information is meant to help you better understand your parent's illness so you can know what to expect and be better prepared to cope. Your job is to take care of yourself and to do your part in trying to have a good relationship with your parent.

QUESTION & ANSWER



Q Am I betraying my parent if I talk about them?

A No, it's important for you to talk about how your parent's Schizophrenia is affecting you. Just make sure that the person you talk to is someone that you trust (and if possible, someone that your parent also trusts). Remember that you have nothing to be ashamed of.

Q Did I cause my parent's Schizophrenia?

A No, absolutely not. Nothing you could do would cause your parent's Schizophrenia. Schizophrenia is a medical illness of the brain, just like diabetes is a medical illness of the pancreas.

Q Does my parent even like me?

A Sometimes people with Schizophrenia don't have the ability to put themselves in another person's shoes and realize how their words and actions affect other people. Schizophrenia can make it difficult for your parent to see beyond his or her own perspective. Remember that even though your parent has Schizophrenia, it is not okay for him or her to say rude or hurtful things to you. Although it can be really tough, try not to take what your parent says personally. If conversations become very negative, do what you can to remove yourself from the situation.

Q Will I get Schizophrenia too?

A You get your genes from your biological parents, and although your genes contribute to Schizophrenia, that does not mean that you will get the disorder. Therefore, although it's possible that you will develop Schizophrenia, there's also a possibility that you won't. There are many things you can do to stay healthy and perhaps even decrease your risk of developing Schizophrenia. Look after yourself, eat healthy, get plenty of sleep, and learn to use positive coping skills (see page 18). Practicing healthy behaviours and coping positively with stress is important!



DEALING WITH YOUR EMOTIONS

GUILT

When someone you love has Schizophrenia, it's not unusual to experience guilt about feeling:

- ◆ Happy
- ◆ Carefree
- ◆ Angry with your parent
- ◆ Like you don't want to spend time with your parent
- ◆ Like you can't make your parent better

Although it's totally normal to feel guilty, remember that your parent's illness is not your fault. You haven't done anything to cause his or her Schizophrenia and you have every right to feel and express happiness, anger, sadness, fear, or any other emotion. Try to remind yourself that you can't control or change your parent's emotions, thoughts, or behaviour. Be caring and thoughtful, but put yourself first. Just because Schizophrenia is trying to control your parent's life, doesn't mean you have to let it control yours.

ANGER

Anger is an important emotion. It's totally okay to feel angry at times. Rather than feeling guilty about your anger, try to focus on learning ways that you can better manage your anger and understand what it means to you. Effective anger management takes practice. Here are some tips that may help:

1 Burn off some steam.

Exercise is a great way to manage your anger. Go for a run, try yoga, take a kickboxing class – whatever works best for you. Working out helps your body “release” emotions, plus you get the benefits of exercise.

2 Breathe deeply.

Take a minute and try the box breathing exercise on page 19. Taking deep breaths slows your heart rate and helps you calm down.

3 Learn to problem solve.

Figuring out what exactly is making you angry can make a huge difference in how you feel. Often, what we think we're angry about and what we're actually angry about are not the same thing. Later on, when you have some distance from the situation, think about the point when you got angry, what happened, and what thoughts were going through your head. Understanding the problem goes a long way towards finding a good solution.

4 Give yourself a break.

If you feel yourself getting angry, walk away from the situation for a little while, if you can. This works in a similar way as counting to ten, giving you time to calm down and think rationally about how to deal with the situation that is making you angry.

5 Count to ten.

It sounds cliché but it can help. Taking a pause before you respond helps your body and your mind calm down and you can then think more rationally about how to react.

6 Express your feelings.

Sometimes, telling someone why you are angry can help you feel better. Instead of being aggressive, try to calmly and assertively express your feelings. When you're calm, it's easier for people to listen to what you are actually saying, instead of only reacting to your anger.

If you've tried all of these tips and are still having a hard time managing your anger, it is a good idea to talk to a counselor. For information on how and where to find support, see page 27.

DEALING WITH YOUR STRESS

Having a parent with Schizophrenia can be really stressful and that stress can show itself in many ways:

1 **Physical symptoms.**

Headache; neck ache; indigestion; stomach ache; sweaty palms; racing heart; irregular sleeping patterns.

2 **Emotional symptoms.**

Crying; anger; loneliness; forgetfulness; diminished sense of humour; irritability; hopelessness; unhappiness; indecisiveness; sensitivity; anxiety

3 **Behavioural symptoms.**

Drinking, smoking or using drugs; needing to be in control; withdrawal or avoidance; acting aggressively; feeling restless; grinding teeth; eating poorly; having nightmares.

Although a little bit of stress is healthy, the stress of having a parent with Schizophrenia can at times feel overwhelming. The coping strategies below can help you stay calm and prevent the stress from taking over your life. If after a little practice, these strategies don't seem to be helping, it's a good idea to talk to a counselor. See page 27 for information on how to find support.

COPING STRATEGIES

1 **Exercise.**

Daily physical activity improves your health and mood, and helps you get rid of stress. Even something as simple as going for a walk can help.

2 **Eat healthy.**

Eating a balanced diet gives your body the fuel it needs to help combat stress. Try not to skip meals, eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, and go easy on the junk food.

3 **Limit caffeine.**

Caffeine can make your heart race, which can make you feel worse.

4 **Sleep.**

Getting 8-9 hours of sleep each night will help you feel better the next day. If you have trouble sleeping, try the Sleep tips on next page.

5 **Daily relaxation time.**

Take time each day to relax. Read a book, watch a movie, play a game, listen to music – whatever helps you relax. Also learn and use the Box Breathing exercise on the next page.

6 **Build healthy relationships.**

It's important to have a good support network of people you trust.

7 Manage your time.
Learn how to schedule and prioritize your projects and other responsibilities — it will help you feel more in control, more productive, and less overwhelmed. Use a timetable organizer and check it out every morning to help you plan your day.

8 Acknowledge your feelings.
It's okay to feel angry or upset once in a while. You don't have to bottle up your feelings. Try talking to the people in your support network. Sharing your feelings with someone else can feel like a weight is lifted off your chest.

9 Be realistic.
Remember that Schizophrenia can make your parent interpret things as much worse than they actually are and he or she may believe things that may not be true. Remind yourself that Schizophrenia skews your parent's perspective and things may not be what they seem.

10 Stay away from alcohol and drugs.
Although you may feel better in the short-term, alcohol and drugs will not resolve your stress. They'll only give you a false sense of confidence and may make your problems worse in the long run. This includes cigarettes!

11 Go outside.
Staying inside all the time can be really draining. Getting outside and enjoying the sun and fresh air can improve your mood. Try to link this with exercise if you can, even a brisk walk outdoors may help.

12 Accept what you can't change.
Not being able to change your parent's behaviour can be really frustrating. It's important to remember that the only thing you can control is your own behaviour. Try not to dwell on the things you can't change and focus on the things you can (e.g., how you react to other people's behaviour).

BOX BREATHING

If possible, sit and close your eyes. If not, just focus on your breathing.

- ◆ Inhale your breath (preferably through your nose) for 4 seconds.
- ◆ Hold your breath for 4 more seconds. You're not trying to deprive yourself of air; you're just giving the air a few seconds to fill your lungs.
- ◆ Exhale slowly through your mouth for 4 seconds.
- ◆ Pause for 4 seconds (without speaking) before breathing in again.


Repeat this process as many times as necessary. Even 30 seconds of deep breathing will help you feel calmer and more in control.

SLEEP TIPS

- ◆ Go to sleep and wake up within 30 minutes of the same time every day.
- ◆ Follow a regular nightly routine before you go to bed. A series of steps that you follow every night cues your body that it's time to fall asleep.
- ◆ Don't read, do homework, or text your friends from your bed. This teaches your body that when you're in bed, you should be sleeping.
- ◆ Avoid electronic screens (TV, computer, phone, tablet, etc.) for at least one hour before bed, and try not to bring them into your bedroom.

For more information about sleep, check out: teenmentalhealth.org/learn/healthy-sleep/





FAMILY RULES

You might have unspoken “rules” in your family. It’s important to be aware of these hidden “rules” because sometimes they may be unhealthy. Here are some rules that are worth breaking:

1 Don’t trust. When you’re frequently disappointed by broken promises, eventually you learn not to trust what people say to you. Sometimes you don’t trust other people at all.

Break it! We make our assumptions about the world based on our experiences – that can make it easy to not trust anyone else when you come from a family that constantly breaks your trust. Not everyone will disappoint you. There are lots of honest and trustworthy people in the world. Give someone a chance to be there for you when you need it.

2 Don’t feel. When you’re constantly disappointed and hurt by someone you love, you learn to shut off your emotions so that other people can’t hurt you the same way.

Break it! Although it’s tempting to sometimes not feel at all, emotions are an essential part of living a fulfilling and rewarding life. Don’t let your parent’s illness stop you from living the full life you deserve.

3 Don’t talk. When a lot of negative things happen in a family, you can learn not to talk about your problems because it’s uncomfortable.

Break it! It may be uncomfortable at first, but it’s so important to talk about what’s going on in your family. Chances are – someone else feels the way you do. Sharing your feelings with each other can help to release stress and starts you on the path toward resolving family issues. You can’t solve a problem if no one will admit it exists.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Sometimes people with Schizophrenia turn to drugs or alcohol to try to control their symptoms. If this helps at all, it's usually only for a very short period of time, as their symptoms reappear when the substance wears off. For some people, using drugs and alcohol may actually make their symptoms worse. Drug and alcohol use also can be quite dangerous as some people may build up tolerance when they use alcohol and drugs often. This means that they need more and more of the substance to get the same effect. If someone is frequently using drugs or alcohol to cope with Schizophrenia, they are at risk for substance use problems (also called alcohol or drug addiction). This includes cigarettes! Addiction can cause family problems, social problems, financial problems, and health problems, including:

- ◆ Neglecting, hurting, and losing family and friends because they spend so much time using or trying to obtain the substance.
- ◆ Engaging in moody, unstable, or violent behaviour, often accompanied by anger management problems.
- ◆ Trouble keeping a job because they show up late, are hung over, or even use the substance at work.
- ◆ Spending a lot of money on the substance and sometimes failing to pay necessary bills and expenses (e.g., electricity, groceries).
- ◆ Behaving in dangerous or risky ways. People with addictions can go to great lengths to get a hold of the substance and may put themselves or others in danger.
- ◆ Incurring a number of health problems, including problems with the stomach, heart, liver, and central nervous system.

For more information, check out schizophreniaandsubstanceuse.ca

MARIJUANA

Research has found that marijuana use (i.e., pot, weed, cannabis) may trigger the start of Schizophrenia in people who are at risk. Because your parent has Schizophrenia, you are considered at risk. You should strongly consider avoiding marijuana altogether (use or exposure through second-hand smoke).



SIGNS OF DRUG OVERDOSE & ALCOHOL POISONING

SIGNS OF DRUG OVERDOSE

- ◆ Loss of consciousness
 - ◆ Chest pain
 - ◆ Heavy sweating
 - ◆ Delusions/ Hallucinations
 - ◆ Faster breathing
 - ◆ Seizures or uncontrollable twitching
 - ◆ Fever
 - ◆ Racing or irregular heartbeat
 - ◆ Cold or pale skin
-

SIGNS OF ALCOHOL POISONING

- ◆ Loss of consciousness
 - ◆ Slow or irregular heart beat
 - ◆ Vomiting
 - ◆ Seizure
 - ◆ Low body temperature
 - ◆ Pale or bluish skin
-

CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY

Someone with alcohol poisoning or a drug overdose may get brain damage or die. It is essential that you call for help immediately if you notice any of the symptoms above.

SUICIDE

Although your parent has Schizophrenia, he or she is not necessarily suicidal. Many people with Schizophrenia do not have suicidal thoughts and never attempt suicide. However, having Schizophrenia does increase the risk for suicide so you should be aware of the warning signs that your parent may be considering suicide, just in case:

- ◆ Intense hopelessness or sadness
 - ◆ Preoccupation with death
 - ◆ Loss of interest in regular activities
 - ◆ Withdrawal from family and friends
 - ◆ Talking about what it will be like when they're gone
 - ◆ Giving away valued possessions
-

WHAT CAN I DO?

It's okay to ask your parent if they are suicidal and tell them that you are concerned. Asking about suicide will not put the idea in his or her head. If you suspect your parent is suicidal, the best thing you can do is tell a trusted adult. If there is no one you trust, call 911. Suicide risk is serious and you cannot handle this on your own.

Knowing your parent is suicidal may cause you to feel extremely anxious, sad, angry, or guilty. Talking to a counselor about what you are going through can be really helpful. See next page for help getting support.

WHY WOULD SOMEONE WANT TO DIE BY SUICIDE?

There are many reasons why someone might attempt suicide, including:

- ◆ To escape from problems that may seem overwhelming
- ◆ To end painful feelings of sadness, rejection, or loss
- ◆ To avoid disappointing others
- ◆ To stop feelings of shame and guilt
- ◆ Because they feel worthless and hopeless about the future
- ◆ Because alcohol or drugs have altered their thinking and mood
- ◆ Because they feel that life isn't worth living
- ◆ Because they believe that others would be better off without them

People who die by suicide usually believe that it is the only way out. Their thinking is clouded and they are not able to realize how their actions will affect the people who care about them. Treating Schizophrenia decreases risk for suicide.



GETTING SUPPORT

Surrounding yourself with a good support system of friends, relatives, neighbours, and other people you trust is really helpful. A good support system will:

- ◆ Understand the challenges that having a parent with a mental disorder creates for you
 - ◆ Listen to you when you need someone to talk to
 - ◆ Notice when you're not acting/feeling like yourself
 - ◆ Give you honest and helpful advice when you need it
 - ◆ Encourage you
 - ◆ Help you cope when you're having a rough time
 - ◆ Be there for you when you need them
 - ◆ Remind you that you're not alone
 - ◆ Hang out with you.
-

1 Find a safe environment.

If you feel unsafe at home, it's okay to go to a friend's house. Just make sure that a trusted adult knows where you are. Don't run away and put yourself in danger.

2 Join a support group for families.

Many communities have support groups for mental illness where you can talk openly about what you are going through. Some communities have groups that are specifically for family members. If there are no local groups, there are also online groups for families affected by mental illness.

3 Talk to a counselor.

If you have a school counselor, it may be helpful to talk to them. They can often provide information on Schizophrenia or tell you about other local resources or support groups for families.

4 Know emergency contacts.

If your parent gets abusive or out of control, it's important to know the phone numbers of trusted people you can call for help.

EMERGENCY CONTACT

NAME: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

VIOLENCE:

If your parent becomes violent or if you are unsure about your safety or the safety of others, you need to act. Call 911. If violence is occurring, it is important that you get help from a counselor, police officer, or doctor. **DO NOT WAIT!** The sooner the issue is addressed, the better the outcome.

MAKE A ULYSSES AGREEMENT

A Ulysses agreement is like a safety plan for your family. The purpose of this agreement is to make sure that you and your siblings will be taken care of if your parent's illness gets to the point that your parent is not able to take healthy control of his/her life. It's a good idea to sit down with your entire family and come up with a list of warning signs that your parent's illness may be worsening and what you should do if that happens. The agreement should also include who you should contact and a safe place you could go if your parent is unwell. It would also be a good idea for your family to include trusted relatives or close family friends when creating this agreement, so that they know what could happen and how to provide support if necessary. There is a sample Ulysses agreement in the back of this book for you to use.



INFO

These are places you can find more information about mental health/mental disorders and get help:

1 Family Doctor.

Talk to your family doctor about your concerns. Your doctor can answer questions you may have and may be able to connect you with a good psychologist, counselor, and/or support group.

2 Emergency.

If you or your parent are feeling suicidal or are in crisis, go to your local hospital's emergency room immediately.

3 School Counselor or Nurse.

Your school counselor or nurse may have helpful resources for you, including books, pamphlets, and contacts in the community.

4 Kids Help Phone.

The Kids Help Phone has counselors who answer phone calls and online questions from young people 24/7. You can reach them at 1-800-668-6868 or at kidshelpphone.ca

5 Health Boards.

Many communities have a health board with information on different support groups and other resources. They are often located in community centres, malls, and grocery stores.

6 Phonebook.

The yellow pages have lists of local support groups, counselors, and youth health centres, some of which may be helpful for you.

7 Library.

Check your local community or school library for books to help you understand more about Schizophrenia.

8 Internet.

The internet has loads of information about mental illness; just know that not all of it is accurate. In fact, the information on some websites is more wrong than right. The next page has a list of helpful websites that can be trusted.

TALK TO A COUNSELOR OR FAMILY DOCTOR

Sometimes you may need to talk to someone who is experienced in helping teens, like a counselor, psychologist, or doctor. Don't be afraid to ask for this if you need it. Realizing you need more help and looking for it is a sign of strength, not weakness. A counselor or doctor can help you:

- ◆ Understand more about your parent's mental illness
- ◆ Understand and express your emotions in a positive way
- ◆ Learn to cope in healthy ways
- ◆ Make positive changes in your own life
- ◆ Build healthy relationships
- ◆ Set limits and protect yourself

Sometimes it helps to make a list of questions before visiting a counselor or doctor. Remember, what you say will remain confidential unless you are in a situation where harm can happen to you. Discuss with your doctor or counselor how they will keep your discussions in confidence.



HELPFUL WEBSITES

Teen Mental Health: www.teenmentalhealth.org

Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre: www.keltymentalhealth.ca

National Institute of Mental Health: www.nimh.nih.gov

Canadian Mental Health Association: www.cmha.ca

Mayo Clinic: www.mayoclinic.com/health/schizophrenia/DS00196

Mental Health Foundation: www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Schizophrenia Society of Canada: www.schizophrenia.ca

Because Your Mind Matters: www.becauseyourmindmatters.ca

WRITE ABOUT YOU

Writing in a journal can be a really good way to express your feelings. Reading over what you've written later may help you make sense of your feelings and you might even feel better. Feel free to use the questions below if you're having trouble getting started.

I still have questions about _____

I'm concerned my parent will _____

I'm worried I will _____

I'm going to share my feelings with _____

My friends will help me _____

I'm going to take care of myself by _____

Things that make me feel better include _____

When I am scared, I will _____

I can trust _____

Things I like about myself include _____

I will stay connected to my family by _____

What I love about my family is _____

I get frustrated when _____



EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

My parent's doctor's name: _____

My parent's doctor's phone number: _____

Trusted adult/relative #1: _____

Trusted adult/relative's phone number: _____

Trusted adult/relative #2: _____

Trusted adult/relative's phone number: _____

Police phone number: _____

Crisis hotline: _____

Closest hospital phone number: _____

If I need to leave and go to a safe environment, I will go: _____

Phone number: _____

Medication my parent is on: _____

**IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR SAFETY OR THE
SAFETY OF SOMEONE ELSE, CALL 911!**



ULYSSES

AGREEMENT

NAMES OF PEOPLE AWARE OF THIS AGREEMENT:

Name			
Signature			
Contact Info			

PARENT'S MEDICAL CONDITION:

Diagnosis			
Symptoms			
Medications (name, dose)			



IF PARENT IS UNWELL, CHILDREN WILL BE TEMPORARILY TAKEN CARE OF BY:

Name			
Relation			
Contact Info			

SPECIFIC NEEDS OF CHILDREN (dates of births, health card number, medical issues):

SPECIFIC CARE CONTACTS FOR CHILDREN INCLUDE:

	Name	Contact Info
Family Doctor		
Dentist		
School		
Friend		



learn, live, care, check out our new website:
teenmentalhealth.org



TRANSITIONS



amazon.com

Available on the
App Store

Available on the
iBookstore

Available on Amazon.com and the Apple iBookStore. The App is free for download at the Apple App Store & online: teenmentalhealth.org/transitions

imTEEN

Taking charge of your health

- ASSESSMENT
- VISUAL REPORTS
- CHECKLIST
- CALENDAR

imTeen empowers youth to track and take care of their health on a daily basis. It supports self-monitoring of signs and symptoms of common mental & physical illnesses. It also facilitates the communication of their health status & longitudinal trends with a healthcare provider, family member or friend.



Available on the
App Store



FAMILY PACK

better mental health for you & your family

Support yourself and your family members in better understanding mental disorders and how to deal with them. If you have a mental disorder, are supporting a family member with one or are interested in how you can support a friend and their family, the Family Pack can help.

ANXIETY DISORDER
DEPRESSION
EATING DISORDER
SCHIZOPHRENIA
DRUG & ALCOHOL ADDICTION
BIPOLAR DISORDER

