

Other Resources

For additional assistance:

American Psychiatric Association
(888) 964-2000
www.psych.org

American Psychological Association
(800) 964-2000
www.helping.apa.org

Mental Health America
(800) 969-NMHA (6642)
www.nmha.org

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)
(800) 950-NAMI (6264)
www.nami.org

NARSAD
The Mental Health Research Association
(800) 829-8289
www.narsad.org

National Institute of Mental Health
(301) 443-4513
www.nimh.nih.gov

National Mental Health Consumers'
Self-Help Clearinghouse
(800) 553-4539
www.mhselfhelp.org

"For People in Recovery, By People in Recovery"

This literature series was created by people with schizophrenia. Currently a collection of three brochures, the series was written with the patient/consumer in mind. Content was developed from the patient's perspective, taking into consideration the possible needs and limitations of any individual who would be reading it.

We hope you have found this helpful, and encourage you to read the other pieces about schizophrenia in the series from the National Schizophrenia Foundation. Other brochure topics include: "Symptoms" and "An Introduction"

TALKING WITH YOUR SIGNIFICANT OTHER

Much like our sibling or parent relationships, we need to inform our significant other about what we are experiencing by being honest and keeping the lines of communication open. It is essential that your significant other knows what is going on so that he/she can provide needed support. That person can detect when you are having a hard time. Tell your significant other to give you feedback when he/she notices that you are experiencing changes in your mood, symptoms or side effects from your medication. You can empower your significant other with knowledge by giving him/her the details of your illness. Share this brochure and others in the series with your significant other so that you can start an open discussion about your illness.

TALKING WITH YOUR BOSS

Before talking with your boss or supervisor, talk about your employment plans with your therapist and then consult the employment resources (human resources department, disability office, personnel office, store manager, etc.) where you work. It is important to talk with other people to discuss your current limitations, and how to adapt to the work requirements so that you will be aware of what you are able to do based on your needs. This prepares you for the things that may come up during the discussion with your boss. Be selective and keep it confidential.

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Do not tell your boss more than he/she needs to know. Your boss does not need to know your diagnosis, symptoms, or the type of medical information you are receiving. Relaying this information could be disastrous. Try not to use words that are too clinical. Please keep in mind that using words such as "schizophrenic" or "schizoaffective" will probably have a negative impact. Consider using other words (such as nervous breakdown, chemical imbalance, neurological disorder, integrative disorder, etc.) to describe your condition. This does not mislead but protects you from negative backlash. In addition, stress to your employer a willingness to perform your work. Emphasize the positives. Know the problems you are having at work so that you can discuss ways in which you can be accommodated.

TALKING WITH YOUR CO-WORKERS

It is best to down play the schizophrenia and focus instead on hard work and courtesy. You can learn from your therapist how to cope with and confront situations that may come up with your co-workers. Your co-workers are not held to the same privacy standards as your boss. Be selective in what you say to them; not everyone is worthy of your trust.

There is the old saying: "Not everyone is going to like you; in fact some will dislike you no matter what you do. But then, there are those who will like you just the way you are. Find them." Chances are there are some of these kinds of folks in everyone's work situation.

Please photocopy the checklist below and discuss it with your mental health professional. They can't help you manage these problems unless they know about them.

SCHIZOPHRENIA SYMPTOMS & PROBLEMS CHECKLIST:

- Have you recently:
- heard voices others haven't heard?
 - had visions?
 - felt odd physical sensations?
 - smelled strange odors?
 - heard unusual and distressing sounds?
 - had someone else's thoughts come into your mind?
 - felt like other people know what you are thinking?
 - suspected others of conspiring against you?
 - felt greater or more important than others?
 - spent more time alone, preferring this to being with others?
 - felt more confused than usual?
 - felt overwhelmed with life?
 - missed time from work or school?
 - had more (or more troubling) conflicts with others?
 - had trouble sleeping/or sleeping too much?
 - felt depressed or down?
 - felt particularly worried or anxious about anything?
 - use alcohol or street drugs to cope with stress?
 - had any thoughts of hurting yourself or others?
 - had any accidents or mishaps?
 - had bad experiences?
 - had health problems?
 - felt distress in your support system between yourself, friends, family?
 - been taking your medication as prescribed?
 - felt like the medications are working?

FOR PEOPLE IN RECOVERY, BY PEOPLE IN RECOVERY



ABOUT YOUR SCHIZOPHRENIA HOW TO TALK WITH...



ADVANCING SUPPORT, INFORMATION AND AWARENESS

WHAT IS SCHIZOPHRENIA

The symptoms of schizophrenia produce suffering that keeps us from seeking help and moving forward with recovery. This brochure explains our experience with schizophrenia so that we become less alone and we open the door to the support of caring people.

Building trust with supportive people, and deciding when and how much personal information to share, is an ongoing process that requires a certain degree of risk. Trusting a mental health professional, such as a psychiatrist or a therapist, is essential to our success in recovery with our schizophrenia, and a trusting relationship has to be earned. That is what this publication is about—building trust while recovering from schizophrenia.

We all know the impact of stigma on the label of “schizophrenia.” We all know that some people look down on others with mental illness. So wise choices need to be part of the process of letting others know about the illness in such a way that supportive people can have an opportunity to help in our recovery. In this brochure, we will discuss how to talk with your psychiatrist, therapist, friends, family, significant other, employer and co-workers so that you can begin the journey of rebuilding trusting relationships.

NATIONAL SCHIZOPHRENIA FOUNDATION

800.482.9534 (Toll-Free) 517.485.7168 Phone
www.NSFoundation.org 517.485.7180 Fax

TALKING WITH YOUR PSYCHIATRIST

A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who specializes in the care of the mentally ill. He or she has completed medical school and has taken additional study in psychiatry and psychology. The psychiatrist interprets medical and psychological tests and makes major decisions about diagnosis and treatment.

A psychiatrist makes diagnoses, prescribes medications, and has the authority to admit someone to the psychiatric hospital. In addition, some psychiatrists also provide psychotherapy (“talk therapy”).

When first meeting a psychiatrist, it helps to realize that the person on the other side of the desk is someone who has been schooled for many years and has an official license to practice.

At first, we might be sheepish about discussing our symptoms. Most likely, the psychiatrist has heard about every odd sort of symptom in existence, and nothing will be shocking to him or her. It is rare to find a psychiatrist who does not genuinely want to help the patient get better. So, the psychiatrist is on our side—an ally.

What many of us do is test the waters. We begin in small ways to be open with the psychiatrist and gradually find out that he or she is someone who can be trusted. Over time, complete openness is often the outcome, and one that leads to a better understanding of our symptoms, and the psychiatrist's improved ability to offer the best treatments.

In the early stages it is always helpful to talk to the psychiatrist about your treatment goals,

to see where the whole process is going. You can find a symptoms checklist later in this publication so that you can make the best use of your visit.

Learn more about schizophrenia. Read about it. Talk about it with other patients to get a better understanding of what the psychiatrist says. Ask questions during the session about things that don't make sense or aren't clear. Rely on your psychiatrist to provide feedback and guidance. You will be surprised that things work about your issues. Give it a try and see how it works out for the better once an open discussion happens.

TALKING WITH YOUR THERAPIST

In addition to medication received from a psychiatrist, most of us participate in various forms of psychotherapy. The therapist is usually a social worker, or counselor with at least a master's degree. Often a psychologist (a doctorate level mental health professional) will also provide psychotherapy and other forms of counseling.

Many of the ideas mentioned above for talking with a psychiatrist would also apply to talking with a therapist. While the psychiatrist has strong training in the medical aspects of schizophrenia, the therapist usually has expertise in how to help with the hang-ups we keep to ourselves. A therapist helps us to keep things in perspective. If we have life problems, the therapist wants to hear about them and wants to join us in coming up with solutions.

TALKING WITH YOUR FRIENDS & FAMILY

How much we tell our friends about schizophrenia is often a matter of how trustworthy we think they are. It is a good idea to seek guidance from your therapist on how much to share. In the case of a trustworthy and loyal friend, perhaps explaining your symptoms, and giving the person a copy of a National Schizophrenia Foundation brochure about schizophrenia, is a good start.

This is a touchy issue, because stigma and rejection are so often the experience of those with schizophrenia. For those of us fortunate enough to have genuine and steadfast friends, sharing the nature of our illness can make the friendship closer.

For most of us with schizophrenia, our family is the core of our support system. It is our parents who initially provide the largest share of help; however, siblings or other relatives become involved as well.

If the family members are to provide needed support, it is important that they have adequate information on schizophrenia and our experience with the illness. You should tell your family what your mental health professional thinks the outlook is for recovery and your adjustment to the illness. This can help your family provide the right support and have a more realistic expectation of you during your recovery. You could pass this information on directly to your family or have them meet with your mental health professional.

Family members can educate themselves on their own through books, the internet, self-help support groups, and by attending conferences.

National Schizophrenia Foundation

800.482.9534 (Toll-Free) • 517.485.7168 Phone
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One out of every hundred people suffers from schizophrenia—undoubtedly you know someone affected. **The National Schizophrenia Foundation** proudly offers hope for recovery, within a mutual aid community, without charge to recipients or their families. We rely on the generosity of our sponsors and donors to continue providing these vital and effective free services. Please call or visit our website to find out how you can support the message of **hope for today!**

Through its programming, the National Schizophrenia Foundation:

- * Sponsors **Schizophrenia Awareness Week** (SAW) to raise public awareness regarding schizophrenia. SAW takes place each year during the last full week (Sunday through Saturday) before Memorial Day.
- * Administers **Schizophrenics Anonymous** (SA), a six-step self-help support network run for and by people with schizophrenia.
- Receives thousands of contacts every year, ranging from information and referral requests to technical assistance calls regarding SA.
- Hosts the only national conference devoted specifically to people with schizophrenia.



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