

Sibling's Guide to Getting Good Care: How to Support Your Sibling and Yourself

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UNDERSTAND YOUR SIBLING'S DIAGNOSIS

If your sibling is struggling with a mental health disorder, it can affect the whole family, so it's understandable that you may be feeling overwhelmed and need some extra help taking care of yourself. Being well-informed and having a support system in place that you can turn to is helpful to maintain good mental health.

You don't need to be an expert on your sibling's diagnosis, but having a general understanding can help you put things into perspective.

1. Talk to your sibling about how they're feeling and what they're going through.
2. Ask your parents what they can tell you about the diagnosis and what you can expect in terms of behavior, your sibling's treatment and how it may affect your entire family.
3. Seek out reliable resources for expert information. You can search for organizations like Child Mind Institute, NAMI, or JED.

HOW TO LESSEN STRESS AND MAKE SURE ALL YOUR NEEDS ARE MET

1. **Reach out to others:** You may feel like you are the only one in your situation, but rest assured this is not the case. Find someone you can confide in -- a close friend, a parent, a teacher, or another trusted individual. It's important that you have someone who is impartial and supportive that you can talk to to relieve your stress.
2. **Make special time for your sibling:** Find an activity that will be mutually enjoyable and set aside "you and them" time that you'll both look forward to on a regular basis. This can help you both step away from the day-to-day stress and allow you to build your relationship around positive experiences.
3. **Support them:** Although it may be tempting to feel responsible for the emotional, physical, and mental wellbeing of your sibling, you are not. Rather than trying to "fix" something, ask your sibling how you can support them.
4. **Make time for yourself:** Getting time away is needed every once in a while, and you should never feel guilty about wanting or needing a self-break. It's not possible to support others unless you feel supported yourself. Find a "go to" activity that allows you to be stress-free, like volunteering, listening to music, or just getting out of the house.
5. **Focus on self-care:**
 - Basic self-care, such as a good night's sleep, staying hydrated, and getting regular exercise can be great strategies for coping.
 - Take care of your emotional and social health by doing something for yourself, spending time with friends, getting out of the house, finding an online or in-person support group, and planning out time for activities that are purely for your own enjoyment, like reading, running or listening to music.
 - Start journaling by writing down how you're doing and how far you feel you've come. This will be a tangible way to help you see how much you've overcome and accomplished.

HOW TO GET HELP AND FEEL SUPPORTED

1. Talk openly about the situation with your family or someone you trust. You may not fully understand what is happening with your sibling or you may feel like you aren't as important as them because you don't get as much attention.
2. Ask your parents to clearly explain what is going on and share any questions you might have. Expressing your concerns and asking for clarification will open up the door for further, ongoing communication.
3. Clearly express your needs. Start a conversation with your parents and tell them how you're feeling.
4. Ask your parents to set aside special time just for you. Planning this dedicated time can help remind you that you are loved and valued within your family. Find an activity that you can commit to on a regular basis that works for both you and your parents. Even a 5-minute check-in at the end of the day can go a long way.

HOW TO FIND TREATMENT

Professionals can be found by talking to parents or other people you trust, using Psychology Today or through an insurance provider. WebMD provides a helpful guide on how to start your search and what to look for.

RESOURCES

HOW TO ADDRESS A CRISIS SITUATION

1. Call 911 immediately if you're concerned that you or a sibling are unsafe, may be in danger of self-harm, or may be suicidal or overdosing. Tell responders as many details as possible so they can be prepared when they arrive.
2. Free, 24-hour, anonymous hotlines:
 - Crisis Text Line: text UROK to 741741
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255

EXPERT INFORMATION

- Child Mind Institute
- National Alliance for Mental Health (NAMI)
- WebMD
- Jed Foundation

COMMUNITIES

- Project UROK
- Born This Way Foundation
- To Write Love On Her Arms
- The Mighty

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