



Caregiving and workplace mental health

Mental health conditions can have a devastating impact on both the individual and his/her family and friends. Caregiving for someone with a mental health condition can be a rewarding experience, but it can also be confusing, frustrating, and emotionally exhausting.¹

Here are some key tips for how to be a responsible caregiver.

Understand the Condition

One of the most important things for a caregiver is understanding the condition. It is important to know condition signs/symptoms, effective treatment options, and common therapeutic side effects. Moreover, it is critical to understand how the individual experiences the condition. Engage in an open and honest discussion. How do they feel, what situations or events aggravate the condition, what actions or activities make them feel better, and how you can help? Lastly, learn the appropriate resources and the individual's preferred treatment(s) in the case of a crisis.²

Provide Support and Encourage Help

A critical part of caregiving is helping the person overcome his/her mental health challenges according to his/her needs. Communicate your support, listen non-judgmentally and discuss treatment options. Remember to be patient about his/her willingness to talk about his/her thoughts and feelings surrounding the condition. It is important to be there for support even if he/she does not want to talk. Encourage help-seeking behaviors and help guide him/her to the appropriate treatment. If he/she wants to discontinue medication or therapy, find out why and discuss alternative solutions. Promote skill-building practices, including mindfulness, yoga, meditation, resilience training, and engaging in groups and activities that provide continued support and a sense of purpose.

Remember that YOU Matter

In the process of helping others through their challenges, we often neglect our own care. It is critical to take time to support your own mental health by practicing self-care.³ Set boundaries and make sure that your physical and mental health are still prioritized. It is very difficult to provide appropriate help if you are in a bad emotional state. If you are feeling overwhelmed, do not be afraid to ask for help and support. Find someone who you can talk openly with and who can provide practical advice.

For more information and resources on caregiving, try these links below:

National Alliance for Caregiving website: <https://www.caregiving.org/>

Caregivers Guidebook: http://www.caregiving.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/CircleOfCareReport_Final-Web_December-2017.pdf

Anxiety and Depression Association of America Online Support Group: <https://adaa.org/adaa-online-support-group>

References

1. Mental Health America. <https://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/caregiving-person-mental-illness>
2. Mental Health America. <https://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/being-effective-caregiver>
3. National Alliance of Mental Illness. <https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/November-2018/Supporting-Your-Own-Mental-Health-as-a-Caregiver>

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