

Guided Self-Help – Advice for Family & Friends

You have been given this leaflet by a *guide* who is helping a family member or friend of yours to tackle their stress, anxiety or depression using guided self-help.

Having a family member or friend who knows about and has some understanding of the problem and how it is treated can be very helpful, even though the changes suggested in these leaflets can usually only be made by the patient themselves.

When people are having problems with anxiety and depression they often feel overwhelmed by their problems, and can't see a way forward. They may also be reluctant to discuss their problems with friends and family because they feel they have failed in some way or are a burden. Also, family members or friends can feel upset or guilty because they don't know how to help.

In fact, you can help in several ways. For example, it's possible you may have had episodes of anxiety or low mood yourself that your family member or friend might not know about. Having the courage to tell them what you have gone through as well as listening to their experience might help them feel less isolated and alone. But remember, each individual is different and the way they face or tackle their problems will not be exactly the same as yours.

The patient will be encouraged to remember the '3 P's':

- > PATIENCE — it may take a long time to see much improvement
- > PERSISTENCE — don't give up, even if there are setbacks
- > PRAISE — give credit for efforts made rather than criticism for setbacks or bad patches

Try to remind them of these and remember them yourself.



The guide may invite you, with the patient's agreement, to some or all of the sessions in which the patient is being encouraged to use guided self-help. This often helps everyone to have a common understanding of the problems being faced and what can be done about them. The patient will be encouraged to read one or more self – help leaflets and to attempt changes to their thinking and behaviour in between self-help sessions. They may ask for your help in attempting these changes or they may prefer to attempt them on their own.

It is often difficult for relatives and friends to understand why a person having problems thinks, feels or behaves in the way that they do, but remember that their fears or depressed feelings are very real to the patient and it takes a lot of courage to face them and try to change them.

It may be very difficult for the person to involve their family or friends so try not to force the pace or push them into opening up their feelings or changing their thoughts or behaviour before they are ready.

Tackling these sorts of problems is difficult and takes time and energy, so you can help the relative or friend to keep their stress levels low and their life as stable as possible while they are tackling their problems.

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Finally, remember that family and friends need support too. It can be very difficult supporting a relative or friend who you care about and who is going through a difficult time. They may even reject your support at times, isolate themselves or express frustration towards you. You may feel frustrated yourself that you cannot do more, that they cannot do more and that things don't seem to be improving quickly enough. It is impossible to get it right all the time but the most important thing you can do is to offer care and support and be there when the person needs your support as a person to talk to and to encourage them to work on their goals.

If you feel in need of support for yourself, talk to the guide – they may be able to put you in touch with a person or organisation that can help you to cope with the stress of living with or supporting a person who is suffering from anxiety, stress or depression.