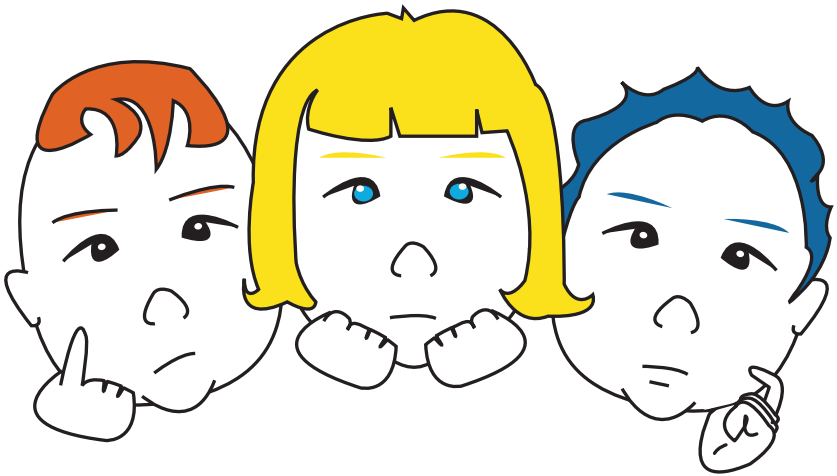


Understanding Mental Illness in Your Family

*When Things Get
Really Weird!*



*For children who
have a parent with
Schizophrenia*



A REASON TO HOPE. THE MEANS TO COPE.
BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY

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JANSSEN-ORTHO

"No. Let's go to your house instead."



I can't understand her, my mom speaks and acts so weird, she seems to talk to herself and they say she is 'paranoid'. I have no idea what is going on with her.

- Mark



It's such a drag! My dad can't come and watch my games. My friends say my dad is strange. They won't come visit me because they are scared of him. Sometimes I am too, so I can't blame them, I guess.

- Denise



When's mom gonna get well? Daddy says she's ill. Mommy can't work anymore, she is acting real different. She does not seem like my mom anymore. I am scared of her sometimes.

- Mikey

So what's with all these moms and dads? They all suffer from an illness called:

Schizophrenia

Pretty big word. Right?

Don't worry! It won't be so hard when you are done reading this. You will even know as much, or even more than some grown-ups!

First let's find out what it means to have schizophrenia.

Let's say you are sitting all by yourself and you hear someone talking to you. You look around... There is no one there! The voice tells you all kinds of stuff to bug you. What would happen? You'd go 'out of your mind' that's what! You'd find yourself arguing with the voices. Talking back to them. If someone were watching you, they'd think you were pretty weird!

That would be a real bad experience to have, huh? Well, guess what? What would happen if, for no reason, you also started believing that people were out to 'get you' or 'poison your food'. You'd be pretty suspicious. What if you tried to watch TV and the TV talked back to you! What if you felt people were reading your mind or putting things in your head. **Life would be real bad...**



What if you then lost interest in everything. You no longer could care for your family. What if you lost the ability to feel love or to smile or the desire to work or play? **Things are not looking too good for you, right?**

Unfortunately this is what happens in the illness called schizophrenia.

It is no fun to be ill!

*Schizophrenia is an illness
of the brain.*

You may have heard or seen someone who has had a 'stroke'. They may not be able to move their legs or hand.

In schizophrenia, the brain does strange things to the person.

At times it produces voices that talk to the person, other times parts of the brain that are involved in thinking get out of joint, which makes the person speak in strange ways.

However when the person is relatively calm, the brain is still not working right. Those parts of the brain that control things like loving another person, being interested in work or hobbies, seem to slow down so much that they can no longer work very well.

What causes it?

I'm sure you know people who have blood sugar problems (diabetes) or blood pressure problems (hypertension). This is no different. In diabetes, a part of your body in the stomach called the pancreas isn't working right. In schizophrenia, a part of your brain isn't working right.

But there are other things too.

To get diabetes, it isn't always that only a part of your body does not work right. If the person eats too many sweets it can make the person ill again. In schizophrenia, there are things that can make the problem worse. One way the illness can get worse is when people start drinking alcohol or using illegal drugs to help them feel better.

Is it your fault? Absolutely NOT!

Sometimes kids wonder whether they did something that made their mom or dad ill.

Sometimes their parents or someone else may even say things like they caused it (probably when they are in a bad mood). **But hey, kids are not the cause of these illnesses!**

Even though it seems like a pretty scary thing to have, there are good treatments for it. As long as a person takes their medications properly they should do well.

Is there treatment?

Just like any other illness, there are ways to treat schizophrenia.

There are pills that are used to treat the illness. These have to be taken for the person's whole life. They can often take away the voices and the strange experiences. However they may not take away the loss of interest in people and work and things like that.

You must remember that like diabetes, where people have to take treatment for a long time, the same thing is true here also. And some people become ill, get better, fall ill and get better again. Some people have to see the doctor all their lives.

It's hard to have any kind of illness.

Schizophrenia is harder because the treatments we have only work partially or some of the time, in many people.

There are a lot of people working real hard to find a better cure for this problem and someday we will.

Maybe you will become a doctor and find better treatments!

GOOD LUCK!

By now, I am sure that if you know someone who has schizophrenia, you also know what they are going through.

Things to know if someone in your family has a mental illness...

It's not your fault. No one can cause another person to have a mental illness.

Your feelings are okay. It's okay to feel sad, lonely, angry, or confused. Other kids have those feelings.

Talk to someone you trust.

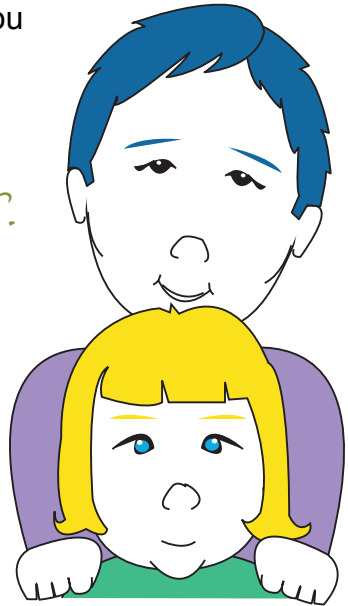
Share your feelings with someone you trust – a grandparent, aunt or uncle, school counsellor, teacher or coach.

Take care of yourself.

Get involved in things you enjoy doing. Develop a hobby, learn to play a sport, read or do anything you find fun.

It can get better.

With medicine and help from doctors, counsellors, family and friends, people with a mental illness do get better.



It's no joke. People should never make fun of mental illness. Ask your teacher, librarian or school counsellor to help you learn more about mental illness.

Remember the three Cs

I can't Cause it

I can't Cure it

I can take Care of myself

Things I Can Do To Help Myself

In an emergency I can call:

If I need someone to talk to I can call:

If I am looking for information I can call:

One person I can go to for help is:

Times when I may need help:

Things I can do to help myself feel better:



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For more information on supporting families with
mental illness, please contact:

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