

Caregiver DOs and DON'Ts

DOs

- ✓ DO realize there is not a quick and easy solution.
- ✓ DO talk to your loved one about your concerns; ask questions and listen.
- ✓ DO use "I" statements as a way to communicate your concerns, feelings and needs.
Example: "I feel _____ when you _____."
- ✓ DO honestly express your feelings to your loved one.
- ✓ DO genuinely let your loved one know which qualities/characteristics (other than physical) you appreciate about them.
- ✓ DO plan social activities and time for connection.
- ✓ DO encourage your loved one to trust and follow the advice of their treatment team.
- ✓ DO allow your loved one to provide input regarding daily routines, reminding them to align their ideas with their treatment plan.
- ✓ DO encourage your loved one to remain consistent with their treatment appointments.
- ✓ DO know that your loved one is unique, and may need to try different treatments and medications in order to find the best fit for them.
- ✓ DO express interest in your loved one's mental health journey.
- ✓ DO inform yourself about mental health conditions and their treatment, attend support groups and read current literature.
- ✓ DO ask your loved one how you can support them with medication management (if applicable).
- ✓ DO know that your encouragement, presence and consistency are precious to your loved one, even if they don't tell you so.
- ✓ DO know that your loved one is a whole person and can have ups and downs like the rest of us that may not be tied to their diagnosis.
- ✓ DO express gratitude for each other.
- ✓ DO realize that unstructured time, especially in the evening and nighttime hours, can be challenging for your loved one..
- ✓ DO separate your loved one from their mental health disorder. They *have* a mental health disorder; they are not their mental health disorder.
- ✓ DO take care of yourself. You need rest and rejuvenation to better support your loved one.

DON'Ts

- ⊗ DON'T ever give up. Continue to offer support and know that recovery is possible.
- ⊗ DON'T ignore behaviors. Validate and offer emotional and practical support.
- ⊗ DON'T take it personally when your loved one is struggling. Separate their diagnosis from the person you love.
- ⊗ DON'T discuss financial costs; this can make your loved one feel like a burden.
- ⊗ DON'T panic. Seek support from the community, support groups or your loved one's treatment team.
- ⊗ DON'T assume your loved one isn't struggling if they appear "fine."
- ⊗ DON'T take on the role of mental health provider. Refer to the treatment plan for suggestions on how to support your loved one and, if possible, check with the treatment team for additional ideas.
- ⊗ DON'T make your love conditional on your loved one's achievements, successes or any other attribute.
- ⊗ DON'T comment positively or negatively on appearance or weight as medications and mental health conditions can cause fluctuations in body shape and activity levels.
- ⊗ DON'T feel you need to walk on eggshells. Work with the treatment team to learn effective communication skills.
- ⊗ Don't let the mental health disorder disrupt family routines. Take your lead from the treatment team on how to adjust schedules and routines so that your loved one feels supported in recovery.
- ⊗ DON'T try to control your loved one's behavior, as this can lead to conflict.
- ⊗ DON'T blame yourself, feel guilty or dwell on what caused your loved one's mental health disorder.
- ⊗ DON'T expect to be a perfect caregiver, family member or friend.

To learn about free community resources and education, email Resources@ERCPATHLIGHT.COM

Contact us to schedule a free consultation with a master's-level clinician. [1-877-825-8584](tel:1-877-825-8584) | PATHLIGHTBH.COM