



When a family member is unwilling to seek help

When a family member is unwilling to seek help

People experiencing mental health or addiction concerns are not always willing to seek treatment. They may not believe there is a problem. Or they may feel that they can address the issue on their own, without treatment. The person may also have fears about the mental health system, or concerns about the stigma of a mental health or addiction diagnosis.

This is a difficult situation for family members. While your loved one may not see the need for treatment, you are witnessing the situation and feel they need support.

How should I talk to my family member?

You may be tempted to nag, plead or even threaten your loved one into seeking treatment. Unfortunately, this often results in a breakdown of communication and the person shutting you out.

Try to use “I” statements rather than “you” statements to express your concerns about the importance of treatment. “I” statements focus on your own feelings or beliefs rather than criticizing or directing the other person. This approach may allow you to get your point across without making your family member feel defensive.

For example, instead of:

You need to get help!

Say:

When I hear you talking about how unhappy you are I feel worried. I think it would be really helpful for you to talk to someone about how you're feeling.

What can I do?

Learn about mental illness and addiction

It can be easier to cope when you feel informed about what your family member is experiencing. Many websites, books and articles are available, but sometimes it is difficult to know what information is accurate. The “Resources” section here is a good place to start. There may also be education sessions that you can attend.

Talk to your family member about your concerns, and encourage them to seek support

Let your family member know you are concerned. It can be helpful to consider how best to express your concerns. See the previous section, “How should I talk to my family member?”, for suggestions.

Suggest that the person see their family doctor or make an appointment at a treatment centre. Sometimes it may be possible for your loved one to make a self-referral to a treatment centre, and in other cases a physician referral may be required.

Get support for yourself and your family

It is helpful to get connected with family support. This could include attending an education session, meeting with a therapist or joining a support group. There are also peer family supports in the community. See the “Resources” section for some suggestions on where you can find family support.

Take care of yourself

Supporting a family member with a mental illness and/or addiction can be overwhelming. It can be a challenge to balance your own needs with being there for your loved one. Take time for yourself and ensure that your own needs are being met—you cannot support your family member effectively if you are not also taking care of yourself.

- Make time for activities that you find helpful in coping with stress.
- Make time to see other family members and friends.

- Don't be afraid to ask friends and family for help.
- Be aware of your boundaries and set limits to make sure they are respected.
- Look after your own physical and mental health, and seek support if necessary.

Support other family members

Mental illness and addiction concerns affect the whole family, as well as the person's friends. It is important that everyone affected receive the support they need. Give what support you can, without overwhelming yourself, and direct others to the resources listed at the end of this pamphlet.

Children in particular may need help to understand what is happening. If you are concerned about how a child is coping, you could speak to their family doctor. Support may also be available from a school social worker or through a community organization (see the “Resources” section for suggestions).

Get to know the Mental Health Act and crisis resources

It is helpful to know what resources are available to you if there is a crisis. See “How do I prepare for a crisis?” and “Can I force my family member into treatment?” for more information.

How do I prepare for a crisis?

Try to predict possible crises and plan what you would do. A crisis plan should include contact information for:

- the nearest hospital
- crisis lines
- the local police department
- a treatment provider
- a child care provider, if relevant
- family members or supportive friends.

The CAMH pamphlet *When a Family Member Is Suicidal* lists crisis lines and other resources for support.

What if I think my family member may harm themselves or someone else?

- If there are immediate concerns for your family member's safety, take them to the nearest hospital emergency department, if you can do so safely.
- If they are unwilling to go to the hospital, call 911. Explain that it is a mental health emergency, in case there is a mental health crisis response team.
- Keep yourself safe. If your family member is agitated, threatening or aggressive, call 911 while making sure you and others are safe.
- The Mental Health Act provides another way, known as a "Form 2," to have your family member assessed. See "Can I force my family member into treatment?"

Can I force my family member into treatment?

Everyone has the legally protected right to decide if they want treatment. Also, treatment is usually most effective when the person has agreed to it.

However, in some situations, the Mental Health Act provides ways for people to receive an emergency assessment without their consent:

Form 1

If a physician believes a person is a risk to themselves or others, they can write a Form 1. With a Form 1, the person may remain in hospital for up to 72 hours while they receive an emergency assessment. If the person is not found to be a risk to themselves or others, they can leave the hospital if they wish, even if it is against medical advice. If the psychiatric team finds that the person is a risk to themselves or others, they may be held in hospital under other Forms in the Mental Health Act until they are found to be safe to leave.

Form 2

If a family member is concerned that a loved one is a risk to themselves or others, they can request a Form 2 from a justice of the peace. This form allows the police to take the person to a hospital for assessment. At the hospital, a physician will assess the person to see if they should be put on a Form 1.

The police may also take a person to hospital if they, or someone else, have seen the person behaving dangerously as a result of a mental health concern, or if they have a Form 1 or Form 2.

Resources

ConnexOntario

If you, or someone you know, needs help with substance use, problem gambling or mental health issues, call:

Drugs or alcohol: 1 800 565-8603

Problem gambling: 1 888 230 3505

Mental health: 1 866 531-2600

www.connexontario.ca

Ontario Court of Justice

(click on the "How do I?" tab to find a justice of the peace)

www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj

Family resources

CAMH

Access CAMH: 416 535-8501 ext. 2

www.camh.ca

Office of Family Engagement: Family Resource Centre, 100 Stokes Street (Bell Gateway Building), ground floor, room 1314; familyengagement@camh.ca; 416 535-8501 ext. 33202

Canadian Mental Health Association

www.cmha.ca

Family Association for Mental Health Everywhere (FAME)

www.fameforfamilies.com

Mood Disorders Association of Ontario

www.mooddorders.ca

Schizophrenia Society of Ontario

www.schizophrenia.on.ca

Supports for children

FAMEkids

FAME supports children 7 to 12 and youth 13 to 17 who have a family member with a mental illness in this 10-week specialized program.

Toronto: 416 207-5032

Mississauga: 289 232-1225

www.fameforfamilies.com

CAMH publications

What Kids Want to Know series (*When a Parent Drinks Too Much Alcohol, When a Parent Has Bipolar Disorder, When a Parent Is Depressed, When a Parent Has Experienced Psychosis*)

Can I Catch It Like a Cold? Coping with a Parent's Depression

Wishes and Worries: Coping with a Parent Who Drinks Too Much Alcohol

Available at <http://store.camh.ca>

Crisis resources

Kids Help Phone

1 800 668-6868 (for children and youth)

Toronto Distress Centre

416 408-HELP (4357)

Gerstein Centre

416 929-5200

Youthdale Psychiatric Crisis Services

416 363-9990

(for children and youth; parents must call)

For more information on addiction and mental health issues, or to download a copy of this resource, please visit our website:

www.camh.ca

This publication may be available in other formats. For information about alternative formats, to order multiple copies of this brochure [or booklet], or to order other CAMH publications, please contact CAMH Publications:

Toll-free: 1 800 661-1111

Toronto: 416 595-6059

E-mail: publications@camh.ca

Online store: <http://store.camh.ca>

To make a donation, please contact the CAMH Foundation:

Tel.: 416 979-6909

E-mail: foundation@camh.ca

If you have questions, concerns or compliments about services at CAMH, please call the Client Relations Office at:

Tel.: 416 535-8501 ext. 32028

E-mail: client.relations@camh.ca

Family members are welcome to contact the Office of Family Engagement for information and help getting connected:

100 Stokes St. (Bell Gateway Bldg.), ground floor, room 1314

Tel.: 416 535-8501 ext. 33202

E-mail: familyengagement@camh.ca

Disponible en français.

camh

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
Centre de toxicomanie et de santé mentale

A Pan American Health Organization / World Health Organization Collaborating Centre
Fully affiliated with the University of Toronto