



The
Sibling's
Guide
To
Psychosis

- Con



Let's go on an
adventure!



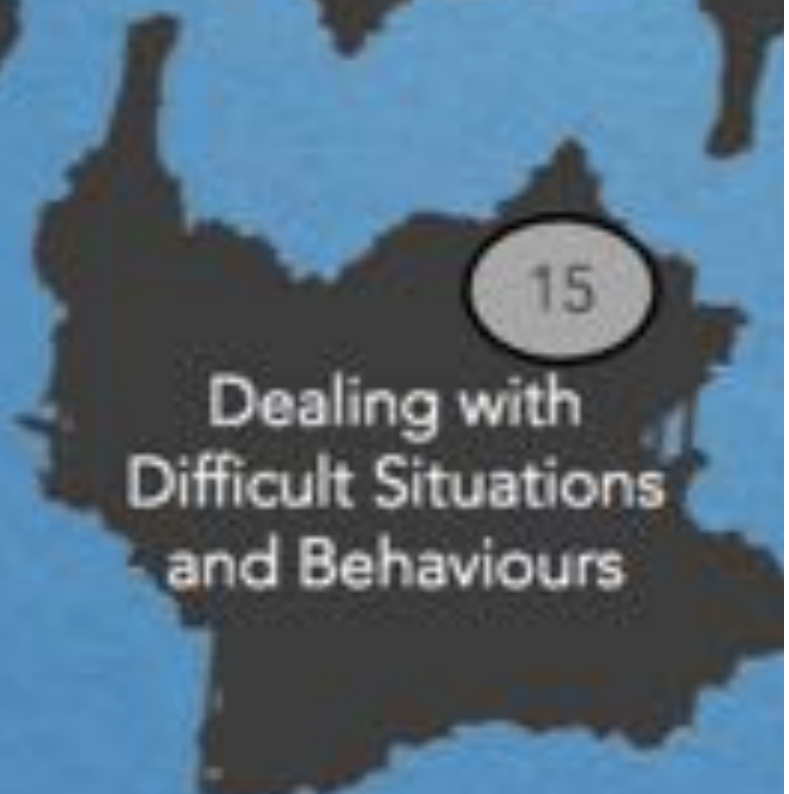
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Follow Brainy on his adventure as he travels far and wide in search for answers regarding his sibling...



Let's go!



ABOUT PSYCHOSIS

What is Psychosis?

Psychosis is a serious but **treatable** medical condition affecting the brain.

It is characterized by loss of contact with reality and can dramatically change a person's thoughts, beliefs, perceptions and/or behaviours.

Being related to someone with psychosis does not necessarily mean that you will also develop Psychosis.

It is important to note that while having a relative who has Psychosis is a risk factor for yourself, a combination of a **number of different risk factors** are needed to actually develop Psychosis.



Psychosis is associated with chemical imbalances in the brain.

What are your chances of getting Psychosis? Here are some quick stats.

QUICK STATS



If an identical twin has Psychosis, the risk is **50%**

If there is no known family history, your risk of developing Psychosis is **1%**



If a grandparent, uncle or aunt has Psychosis, the risk of developing Psychosis is **3%**

If a parent, brother or sister (including a non-identical twin) has Psychosis, the risk increases to **10%**



RECOGNISING THE SIGNS OF PSYCHOSIS

Early Stage Psychosis

Restlessness

Low Mood

Difficulty Concentrating

Suspiciousness

Sleep Changes – Sleeping too much or not enough

Fear

Withdrawal from family and friends

Later Stage Psychosis

Disorganized speech - switching topics erratically

Suicidal thoughts or actions

Difficulty functioning

Delusions

Hallucinations

Low mood

Anxiety

Delusions

These are beliefs that the young person feels to be true but others do not. The young person is so convinced of the delusion, that even the most logical argument cannot make them change his/her mind.

Some examples of delusions are:

1

A belief that the behaviour and/or remarks of people on the street, on TV, radio, newspapers, etc. are meant for the young person.

2

A belief that people are following, watching or trying to harm the young person.

Hallucinations

"Voices" are a common type of hallucination.

They often sound like a person or a group of people talking about or to the young person.

They are noises heard when there is nothing there, however they seem real to the young person.

"Voices" are often nasty and may make the young person distressed and uncomfortable.

Other hallucinations that are less common than "voices" can include:



The experience of **seeing things** that are not really there.



The experience of **being touched or touching something** that does not exist.



The experience of **smelling something** that is not really there.



The experience of **tasting something** (often unpleasant) that is not really there.

A feeling or belief that your thoughts are either being taken away or put into your mind.

A feeling or belief that your thoughts are being broadcast out loud. This can often be very stressful leading a young person to withdraw socially.

Other experiences include:

A feeling or belief that other people can read your thoughts and know what you are thinking.

A feeling or belief that you are under the control of an external force or power. E.g. aliens

Talking irrelevantly or jumping from one topic to another.

During a psychotic episode, people may also experience:

1

Change in behaviour

-Becoming more isolated and withdrawn

2

Loss of energy or drive

3

Loss of interest and enjoyment

4

Loss of emotions

-Not laughing at something they used to find funny
-Feeling "flat" , E.g. feeling low and lacking of emotion

5

Reduction in ability to concentrate or pay attention

- Being less able to read a newspaper or remember what was on TV



These symptoms are often referred to as "negative symptoms." This list does not include everything - people can experience lots of other strange symptoms or peculiar feelings that are not mentioned here.

THE FEELINGS I MAY FACE

When Psychosis comes into the lives of siblings, like yourself, you are likely to experience a range of difficult emotions in response to your brother's or sister's experience of Psychosis. It's important to acknowledge these feelings and share them with someone you trust.



Frustration

Frustration and hurtful feelings that are turned inwards can lead to depression. Hence, it's important to release our frustration in appropriate and healthy ways.

TIP!



Listen to calm music to release your frustration! Listening to music can be an excellent distraction to help you release your anger.

Loss and Sorrow

Grieving is an essential part of our development and is the way we let go of how things were or might have been and move on in our lives.

TIP!



Share your feelings with others. Talking to someone you trust is one form of allowing yourself to start letting out some the sorrow you're experiencing.

Guilt

Siblings often experience a feeling of guilt and concern that they might have contributed to the development of their sibling's illness. That is not true. Psychosis is a medical condition. **No one can cause it.**

TIP!



Take 2 minutes and think about who are the people you can trust and talk to!

Stress Responses

Our reactions are determined by our personality, our relationship with those around us and our own way of coping with stress. These are normal responses to stressful situation and **they don't last forever.**

Common responses that you may experience include:



Difficulty in Sleeping



Difficulty concentrating



Crying



Loss of appetite



Acting out your anger



IMPACT ON THE FAMILY



Your family are the central care providers for your sibling who is experiencing First Episode Psychosis. Psychosis can bring tremendous stress to your family. Family members deal with the issues presented in their own ways.

A mother's experience is different from a father's experience and your parents' experience is different from your own experience as a brother or sister.



Family members may disagree regarding the best way to address any problems and there may be confusion about what is going to happen.

There may be guilt about having possibly mismanaged Psychosis, anger at oneself and/or others, and fear about treatments, hospitalization and future.



For family bonding tips and ideas, scan the QR code or go to everybodycares2k15.wix.com/ohana

MANAGING MY OWN WELLBEING

When supporting your sibling, it can be hard to keep the balance between focusing on yourself and your own needs, your sibling, family and their needs.



Research has shown that social support reduces psychological and physiological consequences of stress. So go out and talk to someone!

Why is it important to take care of yourself?

It is important for you to look after yourself both for your own **physical and emotional** wellbeing because when you are well, you are better at taking care of your siblings!

How to take care of your wellbeing

Talk honestly and openly with your family about your feelings

When difficult times are managed well, it can and will **strengthen all members of the family**. Talking to your family is an avenue to pour out your feelings and it is where you can find someone who experienced similar things as you.



THE ROLE OF A SIBLING

How to be more involved with your siblings

being Positive
Encouraging your brother or sister to do things that they are good at
being Available to talk
giving your sibling genuine Compliments
Showing that you Care
Educate yourself about condition



Psst! Try remembering these tips using the acronym PEACCE.

How to communicate well

Active Listening

It requires us to pay full attention to our siblings when they are expressing themselves. **Listening is the most fundamental component of interpersonal communication skills.** It shows the other party that we are concerned and is willing to listen to them.



Although it is useful to know what you can do as a sibling, it is also very important to know your limitations. Don't neglect your personal life and talk to your family about what you **can** and **cannot** do to support your brother or sister.

Practice **Active Listening** by :

1

Acknowledge what your sibling says with words like, "I see", "I understand", "Mm hmm"

2

Being aware of their eye contact, body language, hand gestures and tone of voice.

3

Concentrate on what they are saying

Try to **AVOID** :

1

Interrupting them, for example finishing their sentences, as they may need more time expressing themselves.

2

Assuming what they wish to say before they complete their sentences.

Gentle Questioning

1

Ask OPEN questions starting with, "who, what, where, when, or how"

- Using **open ended questions** help direct their thoughts and choices.

2

REPEATING and RE-PHRASING what we want to say to them may help to get their attention.

- Sometimes, our loved ones may not pay enough attention or may be **distracted by other thoughts, sounds or visions.**

Try to AVOID :

1

Taking it personally when your sibling are rude, or they are shouting or scolding you.

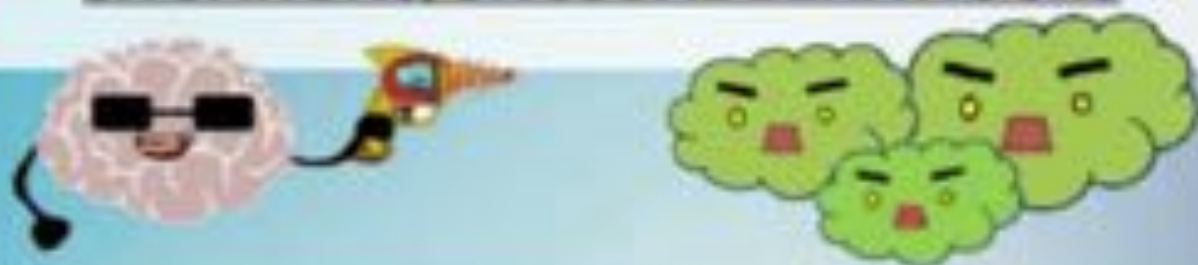
- Let them know that you will postpone the conversation until they have calmed down.

2

Getting into an argument or scold them.

- It may result in negative consequences.

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS/UNUSUAL BEHAVIOURS



1. Sleeping or Withdrawing Frequently or Sleeping at Odd Times

It is common for individuals who have just experienced Psychosis to:

- **Sleep longer hours** during the night (or even during the day).
- Feel the need to be **more quiet and alone**.
- Be **less active** and not want to do much.

These behaviours are natural ways of slowing down to **help the brain and body recover**.

1

Remind yourself that your sibling may need to sleep more during the recovery phase.

2

Leave your brother or sister alone but make regular contact whenever they are up and about.

3

Let your sibling know that you are there if needed.

Avoid:

Coaxing your sibling to come out of his or her room.

1

Fussing or worrying too much about your brother or sister.

2

Having too many visitors at home as it may be too overwhelming.

3

2. Hallucinations

(Psst! Refer to page 4)

Remember:

The hallucinations may be distressing to the person experiencing them.

Act calmly.

Distract your brother or sister if you can, by involving them in something else.

For example, ask your sibling to help you find something.

Engage your sibling in conversation.

Avoid:

Assuming another breakdown is happening.

Figuring out **what** he or she is talking about or to **whom** he or she is talking.

Asking your sibling to try to **force the voices to stop**.

3. Strange Talk or Beliefs

Recognize that your sibling's thoughts are very real to him or her and acknowledge the resulting emotions.

"I can see that you are upset because you think that we are laughing at you."

1

2

Withhold agreement with strange ideas.

Even though your sibling's belief may not be real, acknowledge that it can be real to your sibling.

3

4

Change the subject to something routine, simple or pleasant in real life.

Show understanding of your sibling's feelings and encourage him/her to talk openly.

5

Avoid:

Arguing about the strange ideas – arguing never changes the ideas and only upsets both of you.

Keeping up a conversation that you feel is distressing, annoying, or too confusing for you.
It's ok to say "Let's talk about this later."

4. Self-Harm /Attempt of Suicide

Do not panic if your sibling talks about suicide, but do take his or her feelings seriously and ask for help.



SOS (Suicide Crisis Service)
hotline number: 1800 221 4444

Have our loved ones agree not to attempt to harm themselves.

Tell your parents or main caregiver if thoughts about self harm or suicidal ideas persist and encourage your sibling to discuss their feelings. Take any suicidal talk seriously.

If there is an immediate concern about your sibling's safety, **get help immediately**. Involve other family members, call SOS (suicide crisis service), the police, or take your sibling to the nearest hospital in case of an emergency. **Do not leave your sibling alone.**

Misconception about suicide

People who talk about suicide won't do it.

All threats must be taken seriously and treated as a call for help.

Suicide will never happen to me or my family!

Suicide occurs regardless of family status and background.

Suicidal people are fully intent on dying.

Most of our loved ones would want to continue living if they feel they are understood and are able to identify an alternate course of action for their hardships.

I think suicide happens out of a sudden, often without warning.

Our loved ones usually provide either verbal or non-verbal clues to show their intention.

Threats-Violence-Aggression

In such events, try to calm your sibling down by applying the:
REAL rule

Respect your siblings' personal space. Try not to move too close, or touch them.

Evaluate/Discuss with other family members on the next course of action, including the possibility of obtaining help from the police.

Appearing calm by speaking slowly, clearly and softly using simple language.

Listen with care and concern. Ensure that your sibling know he/she is being heard, by summarizing, repeating in a different way what they said and clarifying what was said.

Avoid: The 4Ds

Do not portray negative body language such as crossing of arms, hands on hips or pointing of fingers.

Do not make promises that cannot be kept or are beyond your control.

Do not hesitate to remove yourself from a situation that may bring harm.

Do not disagree with our loved ones if they are angry or agitated.



MORE INFORMATION

Here's a list of resources specially listed out for you, to help you with your journey with your siblings...



1



2



3

1. **Circles Around the Sun** by Molly McCloskey

Tracing the history of her family and her brother's schizophrenia through letters, photos and interviews with old friends and relatives, McCloskey describes her quest to learn more about her brother and his illness and her battles with her feelings as a sibling.

2. **Surviving Schizophrenia: A Manual for Families, Patients and Providers** by E. Fuller Torrey

Torrey's well-known reference guide, perfect for families affected by schizophrenia, includes information on the causes, symptoms and treatment for schizophrenia along with the latest research findings on the illness.

3. **Living with a Black Dog** by Matthew and Ainsley Johnstone

An excellent picture book guide for the partners, family, friends and colleagues of people affected by depression.

Video Version: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2V8Rx7Mtep8>

More information

Websites:

Creative Hub: www.samhealth.org.sg/creative-hub/

A platform to promote psychological wellness and mental health recovery through expressive arts and creative therapies in a supportive environment to meet the individual needs of clients.

Caregivers' Workshop: www.epip.org.sg/services.html

A psychoeducational programme aimed to provide information about the illness, different forms of interventions, relapse prevention, role of caregivers and self-care, crisis management, and various community resources.

You may not be the main caregiver of your sibling but still take on some caregiving roles or may eventually have to take on the caregiving role.

The Tapestry Project Singapore:

www.thetapestryproject.sg/

Real people. Real Stories. Mental Health stories for Connection, Education and Empowerment.

More Information: Case Study



Here, we have a case study by a sibling with a loved one going through Psychosis.

What are the initial feelings you face after finding out the diagnosis of your siblings?

I was unaware of my brother's condition so I felt very confused and helpless. Only after a case manager explained to me then was I clearer about his condition.

How did you overcome the negative emotions faced, if any?

Thanks to the help of trusted facilities like IMH (Institute of Mental Health) and spending time accompanying and learning to assist and listening. There was a private help and counselling group that I participated in which helped me to see clearer the condition my brother was in, along with a weekly session from this private counselling group to assess my own emotions and feelings so that I am in the best condition to help my brother.



It is strongly encouraged for you to contact your brother's or sister's case manager for more information and support.

Important Contacts

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Emergency Ambulance

Tel: 995

Hrs: 24 Hours (Daily)

Ambulance NON-Emergency

Tel: 1777

Hrs: 24 Hours (Daily)

CRISIS HOTLINE

Samaritans of Singapore (SOS)

Anybody in crisis and the suicidal

www.samaritans.org.sg

Tel: 1800 221 4444

Hrs: 24 hours (Daily)

CHILDREN & YOUTH

NUSSU Helpline (National University of Singapore Students' Union)

For undergraduates experiencing difficulties

Tel: 1800 776 2242

Touch Youth Service

A hotline that provides advice and support for youths facing problems.

Tel: 1800 377 2252

eCounselling Centre

www.ec2.sg

For youths and young adults to talk to trained counsellors in confidence regarding any issue he or she may have.

Name of case manager: _____

Contact of case manager: _____

Note

Note

Acknowledgements

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Caregivers and siblings of young persons going
through Psychosis who have shared their
experiences with us.

A note to you...

You may find it difficult to come to terms with the challenges presented by your sibling's mental illness, you are not alone. There are many others who share your difficulty.

Most siblings of people struggling with Psychosis find that a brother or sister struggling with mental illness is a tragic event that changes everyone's life in many ways.

Strange and unpredictable behaviours in a loved one can be devastating, and your own personal anxiety can increase as you worry about the future.

Through this booklet, we hope to give you resources that will provide you with information and tips, so that in many ways possible, your doubts and concerns can be answered.

This booklet is an overview of Psychosis for siblings. We strongly encourage you to contact your brother's or sister's case manager for more information and support.