

HOW TO SUPPORT SOMEONE STRUGGLING WITH THEIR MENTAL HEALTH

- **Don't try to play therapist.** Encourage them to get professional help. Offer to take them to a doctor or mental health professional.
- **Offer your support.** Mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety and bipolar disorder can make people feel isolated and alone. Offer to be there for them.
- **Listen.** Many people with mental illnesses feel like they don't have anyone to talk to. Open the lines of communication and try to make them feel comfortable.
- **Communicate effectively.** Be understanding and let them know you care. Don't judge, laugh, get angry or dismiss the conversation. Don't pretend there isn't a problem, but don't try to solve it either.
- **Offer practical support.** Cook dinner, arrange to go for a walk, make a date to see a movie or offer to run errands. Don't feel slighted if they don't take you up on your offer. Mental illnesses can be debilitating and people often feel exhausted. If you make an effort and they don't respond, don't give up. Keep letting them know you care.
- **Don't criticise or blame.** Realise that mental illnesses are real illnesses. You wouldn't criticize a heart patient, telling them to "stop having heart attacks! You could stop if you would just try harder!" Don't tell them to stop being "negative", it's an illness not a choice.
- **Be patient.** People with mental illnesses may have more bad days than good days. Don't give up on them.



Accessing professional help can be a lengthy process, which is why family and friends need to step up, not step away. These are suggestions, but ultimately how each person wants to be treated is different- ask them how they want you to help.