

# CONNECTIONS

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## FAMILY CAREGIVERS MONTH: Caring for Someone with a Mental Illness

by Mental Health America

So often people with mental illnesses are being cared for by family members or close friends. It can be a complex and complicated relationship that can be challenging—for both the individual dealing with the illness and their caregiver to navigate.

Recovery from a mental illness is not one-size-fits-all and what works for one person might not work for another. Just as recovery looks different for everyone, so do relationships between caregivers and their loved ones with mental illness. You may be a spouse caring for your partner or a young person caring for your parent; caregivers vary across the board in their roles, resources and abilities to support someone in recovery. While no two caregiver relationships are alike, there are some things we know are essential to everyone's recovery.



This November is National Family Caregivers Month and Mental Health America is sharing tools to help caregivers strengthen relationships with their loved ones with mental illness through materials that educate and empower. If you are a caregiver, with the right tools and perspectives you can work together with your loved one as a team to accomplish goals, find a treatment plan that works, and be prepared in the event of a crisis.



Greetings City employees,

On occasion we have the unfortunate event take place when an employee or an employee's significant family member dies and the workplace is left wondering how to respond. Because responses to death and grief can differ between each individual, this can create a unique dynamic in departments that can be difficult to navigate.

In this month's Leadership Matters we have included an article on how a supervisor or manager can support a grieving employee, as the support the grieving employee feels from the workplace can be key to supporting a successful return to work. Additionally, November is National Family Caregivers Month, and we have included some information from Mental Health America on this topic, such as tips on talking to treatment providers or how to be supportive to the person you care for.

November is also Alzheimer's Awareness month, and we have included some tips for employees on how to approach and communicate with a person with suspected dementia, as well as information on how you can request the dementia friendly workplace training from the EAP office.

~ The EAP Team



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# SETTING GOALS FOR RECOVERY

THE GOAL SETTING PROCESS IS ABOUT HELPING YOUR LOVED ONE THINK ABOUT WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO THEM AND DEVELOPING A VISION OF WHAT THEY WOULD LIKE THEIR LIFE TO BE. RESEARCH SHOWS THAT WORKING TOWARDS ESTABLISHED GOALS PROMOTES HOPE AND ENHANCES MOTIVATION.<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT ARE RECOVERY GOALS?

Recovery goals are objectives that a person sets that are related directly to their recovery (mental health-based goals), and that may have been put on pause due to their mental health condition (work, family, physical health, social life, etc.) Recovery is not one size fits all. It is important to have a discussion with your loved one about what is most important for them. For instance, one person's goal may be to live independently once they have reached a certain point in their recovery, while another person may be content to live with a roommate or caregiver.

It is important to remember that you are not there to do the work for your loved one as a caregiver. Goal setting should be a collaborative process as you assist your loved one through setting specific and challenging, yet attainable, goals. Once goals have been set, being supportive and encouraging of the choices that your loved one has made can help them stay on a path to recovery.

## CAREGIVER TIPS FOR GOAL SETTING

When trying to help your loved one come up with goals, think about the steps they will have to take in order to achieve their long-term objectives. Consider smaller actions and short-term goals that could be related or require the same skill set—anything you can think of that is realistic for the *now*. For example, if your loved one has indicated that receiving their GED is a long-term goal, suggest they start reading 30 pages per day of material from a topic that interests them and go from there. Furthermore, finding a topic that interests them may be a short-term goal in itself.

**FINDING OUT WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR LOVED ONE MAY BE DIFFICULT AT FIRST. HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLE QUESTIONS TO GET THE CONVERSATION GOING:**

- > What would you like to be different about your current situation?
- > What do you like about your life now?
- > What is your greatest achievement?
- > What do you miss about your life before recovery?
- > What makes you feel better, if only for a second?
- > What do you hope to be doing one year from now?

## BEING SUPPORTIVE

Here are some tips for being a supportive caregiver during the goal setting process.

- > **Do it together.** Find out what is important to your loved one and ask questions. Revisit what may have been put on hold because of their condition - such as their employment status, social or family life, dreams or aspirations. To get down to the core of a goal and make it more engaging and exciting, ask follow-up questions about what it would mean for them. The more you know, the better you can help them arrive at goals that are meaningful.
- > **Set short- and long-term goals.** For a person recovering from mental illness—especially when they are beginning treatment—the idea that their life could someday be different may seem out of reach. Achieving smaller, more immediate, measurable, and realistic goals can help generate momentum in the recovery process. Goals like getting out of bed at a certain time can help one stay motivated and focused so that they are able to work towards long-term goals, such as reconnecting with family.
- > **Keep your loved-one accountable.** Caregivers can support ongoing and long-term goals by holding their loved one accountable through tracking goals and celebrating progress along the way. Gentle check-ins can be useful to monitor progress. It is important not to make the loved one feel guilty if they are not reaching goals as quickly as anticipated, however. This can make the process more difficult, potentially prompting the person in recovery to be untruthful about their recovery progress.
- > **Be flexible.** The road to recovery is not linear. At times it may feel like your loved one is taking one step forward and two steps back, but even slow progress is progress. Priorities change, life happens, and you may have to make some adjustments along the way. Periodically revisit goals to ensure that the benchmarks you are focusing on still fit your loved ones needs and values at the time.
- > **Remember your place.** The ultimate goal of being a caregiver is to help your loved one experience recovery. They will be most successful in their recovery when they have a degree of control and are actively involved in the process. This fosters the self-determination and independence needed for sustainable recovery.
- > **Be prepared for times of crisis.** Part of your discussion around your loved one's needs should focus on what happens when they are in crisis so that you are prepared to move forward together when you are the only person to act on their behalf. If you must make decisions for your loved one or act without involving them, it should only be done as temporary crisis management. Once they have stabilized, you should help return them to pursuing their recovery goals.

### CARING FOR YOURSELF IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF BEING A CAREGIVER

Did you know that caregivers tend to experience higher levels of stress<sup>2</sup> and frustration<sup>3</sup> than those who are not caregivers?



Being a caregiver can be hard, so it's important to check in on your own mental health from time to time.

Visit [mhascreening.org](http://mhascreening.org) to take a free, anonymous, and confidential screen.

### SOURCES

<sup>1</sup>Clarke, S. P., Oades, L. G., Crowe, T. P., & Deane, F. P. (2006). Collaborative Goal Technology: Theory and Practice. *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, 30(2), 129-136. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2975/30.2006.129.136>

<sup>2</sup>Pinquart, M. & Sorensen, S. (2003) Differences between caregivers and noncaregivers in psychological health and physical health: A meta-analysis. *Psychology and Aging*, 18(2), 250-267.

<sup>3</sup>Center on Aging Society. (2005). *How Do Family Caregivers Fare? A Closer Look at Their Experiences*. (Data Profile, Number 3). Washington, DC: Georgetown University.



# TALKING TO TREATMENT PROVIDERS

TREATMENT DECISIONS ARE BEST MADE WHEN ALL PARTIES INVOLVED CAN COMMUNICATE CLEARLY AND OPENLY WITH ONE ANOTHER; CAREGIVERS CAN HELP ENSURE OPEN LINES OF COMMUNICATION DURING APPOINTMENTS BY HELPING THEIR LOVED ONE PREPARE BEFOREHAND. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR INDIVIDUALS RECOVERING FROM A MENTAL ILLNESS TO HAVE A SAY IN THE CARE THEY ARE RECEIVING. BUT IT CAN BE HARD FOR YOUR LOVED ONE TO REMEMBER EVERYTHING THEY WANT TO SAY TO THEIR CARE PROVIDER DURING A VISIT; THAT IS WHY IT IS ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA TO PREPARE IN ADVANCE OF AN APPOINTMENT.

**PEOPLE WITH SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS ARE MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE A HOST OF CHRONIC PHYSICAL CONDITIONS.<sup>2</sup>**

How much a person feels involved in their own treatment has been positively associated with satisfaction and empowerment during recovery.<sup>1</sup> By talking with your loved one beforehand and helping them come up with a list of symptoms, side effects, concerns and questions they may have, you can help ensure your loved one gets the most out of the valuable time spent with their care provider.

## TIPS FOR MAKING THE MOST OUT OF APPOINTMENTS

- > **Talk to your loved one.** Individuals vary in what is most helpful to them. Start by asking your loved one about whether they need or even want help. Your loved one may need you to take the lead in the doctor's office or they may just want you in the room for moral support. Never assume you know what they want - always ask.
- > **Make lists.** Before the appointment, outline all the topics your loved one wants to discuss, to ensure you use your time wisely and nothing is left out. Start by making a list of any current side effects, symptoms or concerns your loved one may be experiencing. Encourage them to review any mood tracking materials or journals. If they are seeing a new provider, consider listing some specifics about their condition, like triggers. Any information you can provide that will help paint a clearer picture about your loved one and their condition is helpful. Getting your loved one to talk about these things may not be easy at first. Here are some example questions to help those conversations:
  - What symptoms are you currently experiencing? Which of these symptoms do you find to be the most challenging?
  - Overall, do you feel better, worse or about the same since the last appointment?
  - How well do you think your medications are working?
  - Do you have any challenges with your medication(s), like negative side effects?
  - Are there any concerns you would like to talk about?
  - Have you noticed anything different physically with your body?
- > **Address physical health.** Get an update on your loved one's physical health; make a list of any changes to treatment, new medications or ailments. See what physical side effects they might be experiencing. Doctors need to know about any medications your loved one may be taking for other conditions; it helps them avoid prescribing anything that could interact negatively. Update the provider about any changes.

# November is Alzheimer's Awareness Month

The City of Madison Employee Assistance Program is a trainer of the Aging and Disability Resource Center's Dementia Friendly Workplace training. The City of Madison interacts with members of the public on a daily basis. This free 30-45 minute training for businesses and organizations is required to be recognized as a dementia friendly workplace, which can increase customer satisfaction, as well as staff confidence in handling interactions with members of the public who may have dementia. If you would like to learn more about this training, please call the EAP at 266-6561.



## DEMENTIA FRIENDLY GUIDE

**DEMENTIA** is a general term used to describe a set of symptoms resulting from disease such as Alzheimer's, strokes, Parkinson's, Lewy body, frontotemporal dementia, and more. It can affect memory, thinking, language, personality and behavior.

### APPROACH

- From the front
- Smile
- Make eye contact
- Friendly facial expression
- Open & friendly body language
- Kind tone of voice



### COMMUNICATE

- Speak clearly
- Simplify & slow down
- Short sentences
- Pause between sentences
- Give one direction at a time
- Ask one question at a time
- Repeat
- Re-phrase
- Use gestures



### THINGS TO DO

- ▶ Offer to help
- ▶ Reduce distractions
- ▶ Acknowledge feelings
- ▶ Show acceptance
- ▶ Include
- ▶ Remain calm



### THINGS NOT TO DO

- ▶ Take things personally
- ▶ Ignore
- ▶ Isolate
- ▶ Overwhelm
- ▶ Argue
- ▶ Talk too fast

### PATIENCE IS KEY



HAVE IT...SHOW IT...MODEL IT.



- S** - smile
- L** - listen
- O** - one thing at a time
- W** - words clear
- E** - eye contact
- R** - remain calm

*(Devised by Ginny Nelson, caregiver)*

**For more information please contact:**



**ADRC of Dane County**  
 608-240-7400  
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**Alzheimer's Association**  
 608-203-8500  
[www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)

**Alzheimer's & Dementia Alliance**  
 608-232-3400  
[www.alzwisc.org](http://www.alzwisc.org)

# LEADERSHIP *Matters*

## Supporting a Grieving Employee - Ideas for Managers

by Washington State Employee Assistance Program

As a manager of a grieving employee, you become keenly aware of a balancing act needed to support an employee or a work team and get the needs of the workplace met. You still have work responsibilities and deadlines that must be met. Work still must be done, although initially at lower productivity; and employees must have a safe and productive work environment. As a caring manager, you are also aware of the importance of your workers feeling supported and valued, and that they can contribute to the success of your workplace. This balance can be hard to find and maintain.

Following are some suggestions for maintaining that delicate balance. And if you need additional help, the Employee Assistance Program is there to help you in a consultative way as you work with your affected work force.

### The Role of the Manager

- Grief is an important and necessary process for your impacted employee(s), and recovery takes time. Telling an employee to “snap out of it” will not return an employee to a productive life and is not conducive to a comfortable and productive work force.
- Grief work is hard work and is lonely work, and you, as the manager, cannot make it “go away.” Your job as a manager is not to “manage the grief” but to create an environment where work can progress as your employees move through the grief process.
- Your caring support and professionalism can set an example that will last long after the experience and is one of the most conducive elements to beginning the healing process for your work force.
- For your employee who has not yet returned to work, stay in touch. The coworkers themselves may also remain in contact, but supervisors should make sure they stay in touch as well.
- Taking care of yourself as an individual and getting guidance and support in your managerial role is very important at this time. Managers can play an important role in workplace healing.

### When the Employee Returns to Work

Before your employee comes back to work, ask how you can help. Some questions you might consider with your returning employee include:

- Would you like me or another person to share any information with the others? If so, what information or details would you like them to know?
- Do you want to talk about your experience when you return, or would you prefer to concentrate on the work?
- Are you aware of any special needs at this time? Privacy? Initial reduced work hours? Help to catch up on your work?
- The answers to the above questions may change on a daily basis in the beginning. Employee emotions are not yet stable. Keep asking the questions and listen to your employee’s response.
- Offer specific help. Many people in grief will find they are too tired, too numb, too overwhelmed to decide what they need. Help offered such as grocery shopping, childcare, or bringing meals, can be a huge help to the employee.
- Don’t rely on the worker to bring up the loss. Acknowledge the loss. There really is no right or wrong thing to say. The wrong thing is to say nothing at all.
- Avoid comparisons such as “I know just how you feel because my brother.....” What you know is how you felt, and we will not really know what another’s feelings might be. Everyone’s reactions are very unique.
- Expect to hear repetition in the telling of the story. Part of the healing is telling the story....talking. However, if this is not the proper time or place, you can acknowledge that they want to talk and schedule the conversation at a more appropriate time and place (“I can’t talk right now. Can we talk at 3:00PM today?”).
- You may also need to set limits. You may find listening is difficult for you at any given time for various reasons. Acknowledge what they are saying is important, but listening is difficult right now.
- A touch can communicate more than words to those who feel alone. If you are comfortable doing so, ask permission to hug the person.
- Remember holidays and anniversaries as being especially difficult times for a grieving person. Ask what you can do to provide extra support during these times.

## 3 Ways to Help Your "Lazy" Adult Child

by Jeffrey Bernstein, Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist, *Psychology Today* (Used with the author's permission)

### Losing a toxic label and finding peace.

Feeling frustrated and burnt out from your struggling adult child's lack of motivation and self-defeating behaviors? If so, I really do get it! As a parent coach for those with struggling adult children, I hear many stories of major frustration about adult children who:

- Live at home, sleep in late, and are too tired or demotivated to get a job.
- Are good at getting jobs but can't manage to keep them.
- Expect, rather than truly appreciate, their parents subsidizing costs of an apartment, car insurance, or college tuition.
- Say they will clean up the dishes or complete other household tasks—but don't.
- Can't make the transition to remain in college.
- Get through two-thirds of the way through college and then give up.
- Involve themselves with, and settle for, problematic (maybe even abusive) significant others.
- Have lofty ambitions but lack the persistence to pursue them in a practical way.
- Are not able to get themselves together but are resourceful when it comes to getting weed or other drugs.

And that list goes on! But affixing the "lazy" label to any of these above representative situations is not the answer.

Many parents in these situations understandably think or verbalize (or both) that their adult children are lazy. But this toxic label, "lazy", is very problematic because when you give someone a label, they are influenced to live up to it. Rather than negatively labeling your adult child in that way, here are three ways to be supportive:

#### 1) Stop the "lazy" label

Okay, so what are you supposed to think if your adult child's behaviors include one of more of the bullet points at the beginning of this post? Aren't these adult children truly—lazy? Well, hold on! How about, Struggling at Times, Feeling Shutdown, or even Motivationally Constipated as alternatives to the lazy label?

Look, I am not about making excuses for your adult child's very upsetting behaviors and choices. But I am about trying to help you bypass their, and your own, emotional reactivity. Seeing your adult child without the lazy label attached will open up new ways for you to understand, connect, and show support!

#### 2) Be calm, firm, and non-controlling

No one likes to be told what to do, especially a struggling adult child. The calm, firm, and non-controlling approach is the heart and soul of my book, *10 Days to a Less Defiant Child* (2nd Ed). This approach has been found to be very helpful for managing difficult adult children with whom it is difficult to have a constructive conversation. After all, isn't that the goal?

In short, this approach helps you become an emotion coach versus a nagging, adversarial parent in the eyes of your adult child. A sample soundbite of being calm, firm, and non-controlling with your adult child may be something like:

"I hear you're annoyed that I asked again if you got a job. I'll keep working on backing off. I realize that putting yourself out there to get a job can feel super overwhelming. At the same time, we both know you'll feel better having more independence and structure in your life. Just know I am here to be supportive to you."

#### 3) Notice and build on "islands of motivation"

The more you look for instances of your adult child showing initiative, motivation, and persistence, the more you will see it. As a separate example, if you go out and buy a certain make, model, and color of a type of car today, isn't there a higher chance you will notice others like it on the roads tomorrow? This is because of what is referred to as **selective attention**, which is the process of focusing on one thing and ignoring others.

So, the more you see the clothes not put away or the dishes in the sink, the less you may notice the trash taken out or even the lawn being mowed by your adult child. Or, even that he got up earlier than usual. I'm not saying you should, as the parent, completely ignore the clothes or the dishes. Nor am I saying that you should throw a party if your son or daughter gets up in a timely manner.

Rather, just try more to notice the trash being taken out or the lawn being mowed. Or, that she got up early and contacted admissions staff about re-enrolling in college. Do your best to see and reinforce the good stuff when it comes to your adult child. After all, I never hear adult children complaining of parents who take the time to truly understand them and notice what they do well, even if in other ways, they appear to be "lazy."

Dr. Jeffrey Bernstein is a parent coach and family psychologist. For more about him please visit his website, [drjeffonline.com](http://drjeffonline.com). He is the author of [The Stress Survival Guide for Teens](#), [Mindfulness for Teen Worry](#), [Letting Go of Anger for Teens Therapeutic Card Deck](#), and [10 Days to a Less Defiant Child](#).

# Healthy Communication and Workplace Well-Being

Communication plays a key part in our relationships.

Whether verbal, quasi-verbal or nonverbal, you spend 75% of your day communicating with others. Sometimes what we believe are normal interactions can unintentionally trigger certain behaviors in our peers, family members or co-workers. Communicating effectively, however, allows you to build teams, ease interpersonal discomfort and relieve pressure in your relationships and environments – at home or at work.

## Boost your communication skills by:

- **Improving your communication.** Use “I” statements, monitor your tone of voice and clearly convey your intentions.
- **Improving your listening.** Ask open-ended questions, maintain eye contact throughout interactions and clarify or summarize as necessary.
- **Understanding your communication style.** If you’re about to say something that feels impulsive, spontaneous or out of character, take a step back and think before you speak!

Need help? Your EAP can provide additional guidance and resources.



## WEBINAR

11.20.19

11:00am CT

REGISTER

### Effective Communication and Why You Want It

We spend 75% of our time communicating in one way or another, and some even say we’re always communicating. Many of the problems we have in both our personal and professional lives are traced back to communication. Join us for an engaging discussion on effective communication and walk away with tips and tools you’ll need to become a better communicator.

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resilience

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*Thanks for reading,  
we hope you found the information useful!*

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