

'Supporting Our Family' Kit

COMIC

Children Of Mentally Ill Consumers
under the auspices of The Mental Illness Fellowship of SA

<http://www.howstat.com/comic>





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Introduction

We are a group of Adult Children that have grown up with a parent living with a mental illness. As we were growing up there were some things that could have helped us. We would like to share these with you.

COMIC promotes awareness of the children's needs. Acknowledgment and education about mental illness is our top priority. Parenting is challenging, and we empathise with the added challenges that living with mental illness can bring.

Children may often not understand what is going on. They may need to have your illness explained to them. If you are unwell and require help, do not be afraid to ask for it. Your key worker or case manager are there to assist you. Please let your worker know that you are a parent so that they can source extra support for you and your child/children.

This "Supporting Our Family" Kit has been put together with the aim of encouraging discussion of mental illness with your child/children and maintaining the family unit.

We hope this letter shows you that you are not alone. We want to stress that it is **alright** to ask for help, it is **alright** to link into services and it is **alright** to talk with your child/children about your mental illness. If you do not feel comfortable speaking to your child/children please ask your key worker, case manager, psychiatrist, general practitioner or a trusted close relative or friend to do so.

Yours in caring

Paola and Nerrelle

Paola Mason and Nerrelle Goad
Co-convenors



Example Letter to a school

To - The Class Teacher/School Counsellor/ The Principal

I am writing to you to negotiate a school plan for

Child's Name Class

who has a family member that at times experiences symptoms of mental illness. Generally the person in question functions well within the community and prefers not to be labelled. However, there may be times when the child would benefit from extra support through the school system.

- At home I have - Explained the mental illness to my the child
- I have a care plan in place (we could discuss whether the school would like a copy?)

I nominate (relationship, i.e. husband, grandma)

telephone number address.....

to advise the class teacher should our family be experiencing a stressful time. Our family would greatly appreciate it if you try to reinforce with the child that mental illness is just another form of illness and not something to be frightened or ashamed of as this is the attitude we try to reinforce within our home.

In the event the primary carer in the family is hospitalised the child will be cared for by

.....(relationship ie. husband, grandma)

Ph. no: Address.....

I trust that if you have any further questions about mental illness that I can answer them myself or direct you to someone else or perhaps we could make an appointment. Should you have any concerns about the child's behaviour or learning capacity, please feel free to discuss this with me. I have taken steps to ensure that the impact of the family member's condition on the child is kept to a minimum. The schools cooperation in helping educate and support the child about this important matter is valuable to me.

Yours sincerely

Signature



Checklist

Tick these off as they are completed.

Your child needs to know what your illness is and how it can affect you.

Acknowledge that you have a child/children when you seek help with your doctor, key worker, etc.

Have a Care Plan for your child should you go into hospital or need to go away. Make sure your key worker has a copy (You could also give a copy to your child's school.)

Encourage your child to link into sports groups, youth groups, go out and have some fun.

Do not be afraid to ask for help - it may be the best thing you will ever do. We all need help sometimes. You are not alone.

Do some nice things for yourself. Join a support group, craft group, a walking group. Make time for yourself too.



A few recommended Resources are:

For a more comprehensive list please visit the COPMI (Children Of Parents with a Mental Illness) National Initiative Resource Centre at: <http://www.copmi.net.au>

Children 0 - 5 yrs

- ∞ **JAKE'S DINOSAUR** *Anne Sved – Williams (1996)*
A picture book for 3-6 years olds
- ∞ **ROBBY ROSE AND MONKEY** *A. Louis*
A picture book for 3-6 year olds

Children 9- 12yrs

- ∞ **YOU'RE NOT ALONE** *SANE Australia*
SANE Guide to mental illness for children
- ∞ **HANDLE WITH CARE** *ARAFMI (WA)*
Association of Relatives & Friends of the Mentally Ill

Adolescents 13-18yrs

- ∞ **ABOUT MENTAL ILLNESS** *ARAFMI (WA)*
Association of Relatives & Friends of the Mentally Ill
- ∞ **THE ILLUSTRATED MOTHER** *Jacqueline Wilson*
- ∞ **JOE'S DIARY** *SANE Australia*

ADULT CHILDREN (over 18 years)

- ∞ **HIDDEN VICTIMS/HIDDEN HEALERS** *Julie Tallard Johnson (1988)*
- ∞ **WOMEN WHO LOVE TOO MUCH** *Robin Norwood (re-issue 1991)*
- ∞ **MY PARENT'S KEEPER** *Eva Marian Brown*

PARENTS

- ∞ **THE BEST FOR ME AND MY BABY** www.copmi.net.au

FAMILIES

- ∞ **FAMILY TALK** www.copmi.net.au

VIDEOS

- ∞ **HARD WORDS**
ARAFEMI Melbourne Victoria
- ∞ **KOPING**
The KOPING Forum Queensland

Please turn over to find a list of Supporting Our Family Kits and Care Plans



List of "Supporting Our Family" Kits and 'Care Plans' adapted from the original 2002 COMIC version

- ∞ 2002 developed original "Supporting Our Family" Kit which includes a 'Care Plan' in Archives Section. Download at website: <http://www.howstat.com/comic>
- ∞ 2003 COMIC SA expanded the "Supporting Our Family" Kit in conjunction with DECS (Department of Education and Children Service South Australia), beyondblue and the COPMI (Children Of Parents with a Mental Illness) National Initiative to produce the "Teacher's Kit" with Curriculum mapping, a COPMI National Initiative Teacher's Sheet and a CD. Download at website: <http://www.howstat.com/comic>
- ∞ 2008 updated the 'Supporting Our Family" Kit and 'Care Plan' - Electronic will soon be available for download at website: <http://www.howstat.com/comic>
- ∞ Western Australia developed a Supporting Our Family Kit download at website: <http://www.mental.health.wa.gov.au>
- ∞ Western Australia Drug and Alcohol with Women's Health have produced a Kit Download at website: <http://www.whs.org.au/services/publications>
- ∞ Tasmania developed the Kit into of folder for training mental health care workers. Contact KIMT (Kids in Mind Tasmania). Email: Jane.Austin@dhhs.tas.gov.au
- ∞ The Australian Capital Territory developed three 'Coloured Books' visit website: <http://www.youthcoalition.net/public/Projects/coloured.html?u=261423860110>
- ∞ Queensland adapted the 'Care Plan' Download from website at: http://www.health.qld.gov.au/rch/professionals/cymhs_early_interv.asp
- ∞ The Northern Territory developed the "7 Steps to Safety" Plan. Download at website: <http://www.nt.gov.au/health/facs/sevensteps.shtml>
- ∞ Maldivian Child Protection Workers have adapted a 'Care Plan' from the 7th Step of the Northern Territory "7 Steps to Safety" Plan (only an electronic copy available)
- ∞ The Australian COPMI (Children Of Parents with a Mental Illness) National Initiative Developed a 'Baby Care' Plan visit website: <http://www.copmi.net.au>
- ∞ New Zealand Kites Project 'Care Plan'
Can be downloaded from Kites website - <http://www.kites.org.nz/downloads.html> in the section "Parents who experience mental illness". It has been adapted from the Australian Kit first designed by COMIC and has been adapted for use in New Zealand
- ∞ Parramatta Mission New South Wales requested permission to use the 'Care Plan' for children attending a Camp
- ∞ Malta distributed the "Teacher's Kit" and translated the "Supporting Our Family" Kit Teacher's Kit available in English at <http://www.howstat.com/comic>

This fact sheet is especially for you



If your Mum or Dad has a mental illness
it is likely there are many questions you would like answered

What is it? Will I get it too?

When we think about being ill we might think of something like measles or chicken pox. You can not see mental illness like you can see spots. Sometimes it might not be so obvious which often makes it harder for doctors to diagnose. It is important for you to know, that unlike chicken pox, you can't catch a mental illness from someone else. We all have times when we feel sad. Those feelings often go away when something good happens. Mental illness is different to normal emotions. Mental illness involves our mind and feelings. It takes more than something good to happen for the feelings to change.

- ✓ It is important that you understand that your mum's or dad's mental illness is not your fault.

How can I tell if a parent is becoming unwell?

Mum or Dad may want to stay in bed, sleep a lot, want to be left alone, or may be very sad and cry for a long time. A parent may not want to do things that they used to enjoy, like kicking a ball, cooking, going out and visiting friends. Sometimes a parent could be confused or unable to do things like having a shower or change their clothes.

Different kinds of mental illness and some of the words you might hear are:

Depression (de-presh-on) Bi-polar (bi-po-lar) Schizophrenia (skit-so-free-ne-a)

Whats going to happen to my parent?

Sometimes a parent may need to talk to the family doctor, a counsellor or a psychologist (sy-kolo-gist) who may encourage your Mum or Dad to spend some time with a psychiatrist (sy-kia-trist) to decide what type of care or medicine could be helpful. Many people will need to take tablets (medicine) each day. A parent may need to stay in hospital for a while.

- ✓ It is ok to ask to visit your Mum or Dad if they are in hospital

Talk to someone!

You might be feeling a lot of things at once. You might be sad, angry, hurt or afraid. It is ok to feel this way and talking is helpful because it might make you feel better. Find someone you can trust such as an auntie, uncle, grandparent, teacher, school counsellor or a close friend. They can listen and help you to understand what is happening. It can help to share your worries and fears. It is much easier when you understand.

- ✓ It is important to know that you can ask questions or ask for help if you are afraid or worried

What can I do to help myself?

- Keep doing things you enjoy, like playing with friends, playing sports or watching a movie.
 - Ask for help when you need it
 - Write down or draw how you feel about what is going on. You could share it with an adult you trust.
 - Keep a list of the good things that happen each day on your wall or somewhere you can see it.
 - Make a Care Plan – who you can stay with if mum or dad is not well. Important people to telephone. Check out the care plan in this kit or get a copy of the care plan by going to www.howstat.com/comic
 - Talk...Talk...Talk... about your worries and feelings.
- ✓ Take special care of yourself – treat yourself, do stuff you like
 - ✓ Remember, anyone can have a mental illness. It can happen to all sorts of people. There is nothing to feel bad or ashamed about
 - ✓ It is not kind to tease or bully anyone about mental illness

Important phone numbers & websites if you need talk, are seeking help or looking for more information (Remember it can cost more if you ring from a mobile phone)

	Phone No's	Web Sites
Kids Helpline	1800 551 800	www.youngcarers.net.au
Parents Helpline	1300 364 100	www.howstat.com/comic
Lifeline	131 114	www.copmi.net.au
Emergency (Ambulance, Fire, Police)	000	www.reachout.org.au



You Are Not Alone



An initiative of COMIC (Children of Mentally Ill Consumers)
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Website: www.howstat.com/comic

Sincere thanks to John, Lynne, Larine for all your help and Isabella for your wonderful drawing
This Fact Sheet is a guide only. COMIC accepts no responsibility for people relying on, or using the information in this Fact Sheet.



Feedback

We would welcome your comments about the content of this kit.

We do not need to know who you are but some data is essential.

- 1. Are you a parent? Yes No
- 2. Are you a child? Yes No
- 3. Are you a consumer? Yes No
- 4. Are you a carer? Yes No
- 5. Did you find this information helpful? Yes No

6. What other information would you like to see included in the kit?

7. Do you have any other comments?

We appreciate your time and effort in completing this feedback sheet. Please post to:

COMIC (Children Of Mentally Ill Consumers)
PO Box 310
Marleston SA 5033

Thank you