

Strengthening Families Together

The Program Outline:

Class #1:

Session 1 > What is Mental Illness?

- Introduction to the program, facilitators, and other participants
- Facts about mental illness
- Facts about psychosis
- Understanding the role of biopsychosocial factors
- Stigma and myths that surround mental illness
- Where to get help and support

Session 2 > Schizophrenia

- Facts about schizophrenia
- Symptoms of schizophrenia
- Phases of schizophrenia
- Treating schizophrenia
- Activity: Voices
- Discussion: One Word

Class #2:

Session 3 > Mood & Anxiety Disorder

- Facts about clinical depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorders and obsessive compulsive disorder
- Treatment specifics of mood and anxiety disorders
- Organizations that offer help and support
- Activity: Let's Review
- 5 steps to help a family member

Session 4 > Coping as a Family

- Challenges and needs of family members (with discussion)
- Loss and grief (with discussion)
- Caregiving and Caregiver Bill of Rights
- Caregiver burnout and stress in the caregiving family
- Activity: Tense-o-meter Relaxation Exercise

Class #3:

Session 5 > Coping as a Family – Part 2

- Self-care planning
- Support systems and respite

- Effective communication
- Activity: Practicing “I” Messages
- Talking about mental illness
- “IDEAL” problem solving skills
- Activity: Practicing Problem Solving

Session 6 > Treating Mental Illness

- The facts about the brain
- The causes of mental illness
- Treating mental illness
- Medications and their side effects
- Psychosocial Treatments
- Recovery

Class #4:

Session 7 > Understanding the Mental Health System

- The evolution of the mental health system in Canada
- Basic needs of a person with mental illness
- Mental health services
- Activity: Ulysses Agreement
- Who’s who in mental health and building relationships with health care professionals

Session 8 > Mental Illness, Addictions, & Criminal Justice

- Facts about concurrent disorder and addictions
- Impact of drugs and alcohol on the body
- Impact of concurrent disorders on the family
- Warning signs of concurrent disorder
- Activity: Let’s Review
- Mental illness and the criminal justice system
- Discussion: You be the judge
- Mapping the criminal justice system

Class #5:

Session 9 > Living with Mental Illness

- Daily living tips
- Goals and expectations
- Relapse prevention and crisis planning
- Activity: Creating a Crisis Plan
- Facts about suicide (with discussion)

Session 10 > Striving for Change: Advocacy

- How families can advocate for systems change
- The AdvoKit: the steps involved in advocacy

- Activity: Steps to Effective Advocacy
- Evaluation and certificate of completion
- End of group celebration

Class #6:

- Guest Speakers
- Participant Feedback Questionnaire
- Graduation Certificates and Celebration