

PUTTING THE SERENITY PRAYER TO WORK
AS CAREGIVERS FOR PERSONS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

GOD, GRANT ME THE SERENITY TO ACCEPT THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE...

The things that we do not have control over:

- ✓ Severity of a biologically based mental illness (symptoms, insight, etc.)
- ✓ Person's response to medication
- ✓ That the person will face stigma and rejection
- ✓ That you have & are experiencing a tremendous loss

... THE COURAGE TO CHANGE THE THINGS THAT I CAN...

Love the person, hate the illness

- ✓ Do not personalize the words and actions of your relative – see them as symptoms of the illness. This enables you to reach out to the person and not the illness.
- ✓ Stay away from blame. Approaching mental illness as “no-fault” illness helps to focus on the essential ingredients of recovery.

Seek the best treatment

Identify goals & steps

- ✓ Engage in conversation to identify personal goals, using “back doors” – identify interests, hobbies, admired qualities in others – when persons say “I don't have any goals”
- ✓ Break down goals into small, achievable steps
- ✓ Positively reinforce, complement, admire, cheer, celebrate, etc. the person's efforts and accomplishments. Use criticism when necessary.

Maintain effective, low expressed emotion in your communication

- ✓ Use mirroring in your communication

... AND THE WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE.

This is all about Limits & Boundaries

Choose to take on the caregiving role vs. victim role

- ✓ Choose the extent which the caregiving role plays in your life

Take in your own sustenance

- ✓ Acknowledge your own conditions & seek the right help (you model for your relative)
- ✓ Use personal and professional supports

Identify the “Loving Distance” which is most beneficial to your relative

- ✓ Balance Hope & Expectations
- ✓ Balance Encouragement and Criticism

Identify your values & limits and stick to them

- ✓ Doing all the right things is no guarantee. Recognize that there are limits to what you can do for the person. Sometimes, there may be no “right” decision, only one that seems to work best for your situation given the information you have at the present time.
- ✓ If you make a decision, “stick to your guns” – Make an ultimatum only if you are willing to back it up. Know that this decision is based on your values & cannot be made for you.