

4 Tips For Supporting People with Mental Illness

People you know and love will suffer with a mental illness. One in three Canadians will struggle with a mental illness at some point in their life.

You might know someone struggling right now and see that with small changes and adjustments their lives can be improved. You want to point these things out to them. You also know that he/she may not listen to you and even might anger them if you do say something.

Do you speak up? Do you walk on eggshells? So the thought arises, how do I act with people who are struggling with a mental illness?

1 **Alleviate the burden that you need to “fix” others:**

- You cannot change anyone
- We all have the right to make life choices (including asking for help)
- Don't tell people what to do
- It is not effective to point out people's issues, it puts them on the defense

2 **Listen:**

- Open yourself to hear what the person is saying
- Make friends with silence (be present)
- Thank them for having the courage to share
- Pay attention to non-verbal cues
- Be empathetic
- Accept your role as “listener”

3 **Practice Self Care:**

- Practice at least one hour of self care every day (a better you, means better support for them)
- Without investing in your physical/mental/social health regularly you will eventually burn out
- Don't take others problems on as your own (or be dragged)
- Accept where people are right now

4 **Resources:**

- Be informed/educated
- Know what resources are available in the community ie. crisis lines, apps, websites, agencies, etc.