

## WHEN SOMEONE YOU LOVE IS STRUGGLING, IT CAN BE EXHAUSTING

Whether you're the one directly providing care (such as a parent or guardian) or whether you're just someone who cares (like a friend or sibling), it can take a lot of time, patience, and energy to live with someone who is struggling mentally and emotionally.

**You can find yourself feeling angry, impatient, burnt-out, frustrated, or scared among many other negative feelings.**

These feelings are normal – fighting an “invisible illness” is difficult for everyone involved.

So how can you, as a caregiver, help someone you love manage a mental health challenge?

**CAREGIVING OFTEN CALLS  
US TO LEARN TO LOVE PEOPLE  
WE DIDN'T KNOW POSSIBLE.**

— Tia Walker

## STRUGGLING OR WORRIED ABOUT A LOVED ONE?

**Reach out anonymously to a  
crisis hotline to get real help for  
yourself or someone you know:**



Call 1-800-273-8255 (TALK)



Text 741-741



Chat [ImAlive.org](https://www.ImAlive.org), [CrisisChat.org](https://www.CrisisChat.org)

LEARN MORE ABOUT PLEASE LIVE AT

**[WWW.PLEASELIVE.ORG](https://www.PLEASELIVE.ORG)**



## LOVING SOMEONE WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGE



please  
**LIVE**

PLEASE  
**LIVE**  
.ORG

# WHAT ARE MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES?



A mental health challenge can be several things. It could look like a diagnosable illness such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia; it could be a circumstantial issue such as grief and loss, abuse or assault, poverty, or toxic stress; or it could be related to brain health such as autism, concussions, or dementia.

**A mental health challenge at its core is anything that affects one's ability to live, laugh, learn, and play.**

## EDUCATE YOURSELF

Take the time to learn about whatever is ailing your loved one. In today's age of the internet and search engines, this shouldn't be too difficult! Just be sure you're looking into trustworthy websites such as [PleaseLive.org](http://PleaseLive.org), [AmericanMentalWellness.org](http://AmericanMentalWellness.org), [NAMI.org](http://NAMI.org), [NIMH.NIH.gov](http://NIMH.NIH.gov), or [TheNationalCouncil.org](http://TheNationalCouncil.org).

### **Mental Health Challenges:**

- Are not your loved one's fault
- Are not attention-seeking behavior
- Cannot always be controlled or contained
- Can often be treated with medicine, therapy, or specialized programs
- Are common
- Can affect anyone regardless of age, income, culture, religion, orientation, or creed
- Often takes time, patience, and a lot of "trial and error" to find a treatment or resource that works

**Loving someone with a mental health challenge is often more about being a consistent, loving support as opposed to always doing or saying the right thing.**

## WHAT IS A CAREGIVER?

A caregiver is professionally described as an individual who is hired to look after someone — such as a nanny for a child or a nurse for someone who is sick, disabled, or elderly. However, anyone can be a caregiver in that they "give care" to someone else. As a parent, guardian, sibling, or friend, you can certainly fit the bill as a caregiver.

### BE PATIENT

Mental health challenges by their definition affect our mental, emotional, and behavioral well-being. Someone who is unwell did not become that way in a day, and they will not recover in a day either. Treatment for an illness of any kind takes time. A new medicine takes two weeks before it begins to take effect, therapy often takes 3-5 months before noticeable change begins. Know that when you love someone who is struggling, you're in it for the long haul. Prepare yourself by practicing patience every day. What can you do to fill up and recharge?

### BE CONFIDENT

Your loved one's confidence likely either doesn't exist or fluctuates heavily during good and bad days. Your confidence in the midst of this can be reassuring. Be confident in your loved one's ability to recover, the progress they have made so far, and the effort they put into tackling another day. Be confident in the bright future that is ahead of them. Be confident in their abilities, their talents, their worth and value. **They may not have confidence themselves, but your confidence will make a huge difference in their willingness to keep moving forward.**

### BE CONSISTENT

A good caregiver doesn't always know the right thing to do or say, and that's OK. Loving someone with a mental illness is more about being a consistent and available support as opposed to doing or saying the right thing. Someone who is struggling mentally and emotionally will often become exhausted with their own emotional fluxuations, and will find comfort in your consistency. They need to know that despite their own changes and challenges, that you are there for them and love them no matter what.

### BE PREPARED

An emergency can happen at any time, even if your loved one is in treatment and things appear to be going well. Have a written safety plan with your loved one to enact if things get bad. Know the phone numbers to call in an emergency (such as 911, your local crisis intervention, or 1-800-273-8255 National Suicide Prevention Hotline) and know where to go for help. If possible, get updates from your loved one's care team such as their doctor or counselor so you know how to help best.

### **DON'T FORGET TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, TOO.**

It's easy to spend all of our time and energy focusing on our loved one, but our effectiveness as a caregiver decreases when we don't take care of ourselves too. If you're feeling burnt out, stressed, anxious, depressed, or other negative emotions or are having difficulty coping with your loved one, reach out for help. Talk to your doctor or see a mental health professional yourself; this will give you the tools to continue loving others to your best ability and to debrief your own thoughts and feelings in a safe place.