

Encouraging People to Seek Help for Early Psychosis

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- A sudden decline in self-care
- Trouble thinking clearly or concentrating

A young person's willingness to seek help is often complicated by delusions, fears, stigma and feeling unsettled. Families can find this situation extremely difficult, but engagement strategies exist to encourage a young person to seek help.

Engagement strategies

Start with a conversation in a quiet and calm location. Because a loved one is likely feeling afraid and worried, remain calm and controlled. Remember, if they are experiencing delusions, their feelings and beliefs are real to them.

Finding help and effective treatment

The most effective treatment for early psychosis is coordinated specialty care (CSC). CSC focuses on helping young people reach their goals with a team-based and person-centered approach. The NAMI HelpLine can share information about early psychosis and CSC programs.

Connecting with support

If your loved one is not ready to get help, don't give up. You may need several conversations and professional support before he or she is willing to get help. If you can't successfully engage your loved one, consider contacting a CSC program for help. NAMI is also here to support and help you and your family. You are not alone.

Youth and young adults first experiencing psychosis may feel worried and fearful about what is happening. Concerned family and friends seeing changes in a young person may not know what to do. However, help and support are available.

Addressing psychosis early or during the first episode offers the best outcomes for young people. However, many people experiencing early psychosis may not realize they need help or may not be willing to accept help. As part of supporting a loved one during this time, family and friends should learn more about early psychosis.

Early psychosis and what works

A young person experiencing early psychosis often shows one or more warning signs:

- Hearing, seeing, tasting or believing things that others do not
- Suspiciousness or extreme uneasiness with others
- Persistent, unusual thoughts or beliefs
- Strong and inappropriate emotions or no emotions at all
- Withdrawing from family and friends

Need help to start the conversation?
NAMI offers tips on the next page.

Tips for Starting the Conversation

DO...

- Stay calm, speak quietly and avoid body language that shows distress.
 - Share your observations. “I’ve heard you talking in your room when you’re alone, and I’m worried.” Perhaps mention activities the person is no longer doing. “I’m concerned that you no longer leave the house and do things you used to enjoy, like spending time with friends.”
 - Listen carefully and reflect what you hear so the person knows you’re listening. Be open and accept what the person shares. “I know it must be frightening to think that your thoughts are being transmitted. I’d feel the same way.”
 - Ask about the person’s goals and concerns and share how getting help can address them.
- If possible, provide examples. “I noticed you’re having trouble with sleeping/school/thinking clearly. There are services and supports that can help. They provide skills and strategies that will help you sleep better/stay in school/think more clearly.”
- Suggest that the person try getting help. Reassure him or her that, if the support doesn’t feel right, then you’ll work together to find another option.
 - Share that programs also provide non-clinical services that support education and employment goals, if those are important to the person.
 - Be hopeful, supportive and encouraging. “I’m here to support you. We’ll get through this together.”

DON'T...

- Become confrontational, be judgmental or argue with what the person is telling you, even when the person’s thoughts and beliefs may not be based in reality.
- Talk about psychosis because the person may not be ready to hear this. Focus on getting help to keep the young person’s life on track.



Contact NAMI to learn more



Visit NAMI’s website:
www.nami.org/earlypsychosis



Call the NAMI HelpLine:
800-950-6264
(Monday–Friday
10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. ET)



Email NAMI:
info@nami.org



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