

## GUIDELINES FOR CREATING A LOW STRESS HOME ENVIRONMENT FOR A MENTALLY ILL PERSON

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1. **Go Slow!**  
Recovery and growth take time. Rest is important.
2. **Keep It Cool.**  
Enthusiasm is normal. Disagreement is normal. Emotions are normal. Help your family members to keep things in perspective and obtain some degree of balance.
3. **Give People Space.**  
Private time and space are important for everyone. It's okay to offer or to refuse and offer.
4. **Set Limits.**  
Everyone needs to know what the rules are. A few good rules that are consistently enforced will help keep things calm.
5. **Ignore What You Cannot Change.**  
Let some things slide. Do not ignore violence.
6. **Keep It Simple.**  
Say what you have to say clearly, calmly, and positively. When you address them, your family members will most likely respond only to the first couple sentences that you say to them at one time.
7. **Follow Doctor's Orders.**  
Encourage your family members to take their medications as prescribed and only those that are prescribed. If you can, have them sign a release of information so that you and the doctor can discuss your family member's treatment program.
8. **Carry On Business As Usual.**  
Reestablish routines as quickly as possible when they are disrupted. Encourage your family members to stay in touch with their supportive friends and relatives.
9. **No Street Drugs Or Alcohol.**  
Emphasize that illegal drugs and alcohol make symptoms worse. Help them find creative ways to avoid or limit the use of those substances in social situations.

10. **Recognize Early Signs Of Relapse.**

Note changes in your family member's symptoms and behaviors, especially those which usually occur just before a relapse. Help your family members to recognize these changes and to make contact with their doctor.

11. **Solve Problems Step By Step.**

Help your family members make changes gradually. Work on one thing at a time and be patient as they learn from the consequences of their behavior. Let them experience the non-dangerous consequences of their choices.

12. **Establish Personal Measures Of Success.**

Help your family members set realistic goals, and then chart these personal goals from week to week and month to month. Remember that success for your relative is in comparison to how they were personally doing last month, not how they were doing before they got ill, or how others their age are doing.