



# MI Fact Sheet Series

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING MENTAL ILLNESS

## Feeling the impact of mental illness: the emotional journey

Emotional phases of the journey for families/carers	Emotional phases of the journey for people living with mental illness
<p><b>Crisis and stabilisation</b></p> <p><b>Event</b> Acute episode of illness. Could be psychosis, suicidal feelings or attempt, mania, panic attacks or overwhelming anxiety, extreme depression.</p> <p><b>Overall goal</b> Respond to acute episode of illness. Need (most often) to be in pro-active caregiving role.</p> <p><b>Emotional responses</b> Fear, anxiety, disbelief, shock.</p> <p><b>Needs</b> Reassurance, practical support (food, childcare, transport), friendship, information on mental illness and prognosis, information about management and care strategies.</p>	<p><b>Crisis and stabilisation</b></p> <p><b>Event</b> Acute episode of illness. Could be psychosis, suicidal feelings or attempt, mania, panic attacks or overwhelming anxiety, extreme depression.</p> <p><b>Overall goal</b> Respond to acute phase of illness. Accept increased vigilance and care from family and treatment services.</p> <p><b>Emotional responses</b> Confusion, fear, anger, despair, denial.</p> <p><b>Needs</b> Reassurance, safety, security, limited stimulation, medication (in the main), appropriate information, active caregiver/s.</p>
<p><b>Growing awareness</b></p> <p><b>Event</b> Post-acute phase of illness, engaging with own recovery process and that of the person with mental illness.</p> <p><b>Overall goal</b> Finding an appropriate caregiver role, emotional adjustment to the illness, engaging with own educational and support services/people.</p> <p><b>Emotional responses</b> Grief, anxiety, frustration, exhaustion, guilt/anger, depression, hope, preoccupation with illness or the person living with the illness, searching for cures.</p> <p><b>Needs</b> Support to vent feelings, detailed information about mental illness and services, information about common responses to the trauma of mental illness, reassurance and recognition of the trauma they have/are experiencing, debriefing, support to establish relationship with the person with the illness that allows them to take responsibility for their lives and re-establish independence, support for changed expectations and circumstances.</p>	<p><b>Growing awareness</b></p> <p><b>Event</b> Post acute phase of illness, engaging with recovery process.</p> <p><b>Overall goal</b> Re-establishing independence and self esteem, re-engaging with or rebuilding life, connecting with contacts/services that are helpful, emotional adjustment to the illness.</p> <p><b>Emotional responses</b> Grief, lack of confidence, anxiety, frustration, depression, hope.</p> <p><b>Needs</b> To be listened to and accepted, information about illness and services, support to access appropriate services to re-establish independence and self esteem, support to establish social connections, debriefing from the trauma of the acute illness phase.</p>

# Feeling the impact of mental illness: the emotional journey continued...

Emotional phases of the journey for families/carers	Emotional phases of the journey for people living with mental illness
<p><b>Recovery and hope</b></p> <p><b>Event</b> Family/personal recovery.</p> <p><b>Overall goal</b> To look toward the future, understand and accept the illness, return to balance of focus on self, other family members and friends, find a comfortable and appropriate caregiving role.</p> <p><b>Emotional responses</b> Relief, hope, grief.</p> <p><b>Needs</b> Continued support to vent feelings, patience, ongoing information (research, policy, medications), acknowledgment of dedication, social connection, and an opportunity for advocacy and political activity where appropriate. Some people enjoy an opportunity to put their experience of mental illness to good use by supporting others or through political advocacy.</p>	<p><b>Recovery and hope</b></p> <p><b>Event</b> Recovered to best of personal ability and achieving greatest potential.</p> <p><b>Overall goal</b> Strengthen independence, improve self esteem and confidence, develop an identity, deal with stigma and accept mental illness as a factor in one's life.</p> <p><b>Emotional responses</b> Relief, hope, grief.</p> <p><b>Needs</b> Housing, meaningful occupation (study, employment, creative pursuits, volunteerism), social connection, continued support to express feelings, physical activity, ongoing information (research, policy, medications). Some people enjoy an opportunity to put their experience of mental illness to good use by supporting others or through political advocacy.</p>

## Useful references

Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia  
[www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au](http://www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au)

Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria  
[www.mifellowship.org](http://www.mifellowship.org)

Mental Health Services Website (Vic)  
[www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth)

National Alliance of the Mentally Ill (NAMI) (USA)  
[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

Mental Health Council of Australia  
[www.mhca.com.au](http://www.mhca.com.au)

SANE Australia  
[www.sane.org](http://www.sane.org)

Beyond Blue  
[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

## Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia fact sheets

Family and carer supports and services

What can friends and family do to help a person experiencing mental illness?

Effective communication



**Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia**  
08 8221 5072  
[www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au](http://www.mifellowshipaustralia.org.au)  
**Mental Illness Fellowship of Sth Australia Inc**  
08 8221 5160 [www.mifsa.org.au](http://www.mifsa.org.au)

**NT Assoc of Relatives & Friends of the Mentally Ill Inc (NT ARAFMI)**  
08 8948 1051 [www.ntarafmi.org.au](http://www.ntarafmi.org.au)  
**Schizophrenia Fellowship of NSW Inc**  
02 9879 2600 [www.sfnsw.org.au](http://www.sfnsw.org.au)

**Mental Illness Fellowship Victoria**  
03 8486 4200 [www.mifellowship.org](http://www.mifellowship.org)  
**Mental Illness Fellowship Nth Qld Inc**  
07 4725 3664 [www.mifnq.org.au](http://www.mifnq.org.au)

**Schizophrenia Fellowship of Qld Inc**  
07 3358 4424 [www.sfq.org.au](http://www.sfq.org.au)  
**Mental Illness Fellowship of WA Inc**  
08 9228 0200 [www.mifwa.com](http://www.mifwa.com)  
**Canberra Schizophrenia Fellowship Inc**  
02 6205 1349