

Families can play an important role in supporting recovery, reducing stress, and helping to prevent the onset or worsening of symptoms.

## **CONSIDER:**

- Psychotic illnesses are influenced by **both biological and environmental factors**
- **Reducing stress** within family relationships, schedules, and daily interactions can make it easier for someone to manage day-to-day life
- Family support can also **buffer** against outside stressors.
- People experiencing psychosis may be particularly sensitive to the following:
  - Warmth, structure, support, space: help them recover at their own pace
  - Criticism: negative comments and interactions can lead to increased symptoms
  - **Over-involvement:** intrusiveness or doing too much can overwhelm people
  - Complex, unclear communication: is hard to process and can worsen symptoms

## **GUIDELINES:**

- *Take one step at a time.* Go slow. Progress may be gradual. Recovery takes time.
- **Lower expectations for the short term.** Compare this month to the last month rather than last year. Increase expectations only after a period of improvement or stability.
- **Use symptoms as a guide.** If they worsen, slow down, simplify, reach out, and ask for more professional help. If they improve, continue forward gradually.
- **Know and watch for early warning signs**. If you notice subtle changes in behavior or increases in symptoms, slow down or take a break. Ask for help early, when a little may go a long way.
- *Keep it cool.* Enthusiasm is normal. Disagreement is normal. Just tone it down.
- *Give each other space.* It's okay to offer. It's okay to refuse.
- **Observe your limits.** It's okay to say "no." A few good rules keep things clear and safe.
- Ignore what you can't change. Pick your battles. Let some things slide.
- **Don't tolerate violence or threatening.** Contact your clinician or emergency services immediately if you notice any behaviors suggesting risk for suicide or violence.
- *Keep it simple.* Keep sentences short and to the point. Stay calm and positive
- Keep or re-establish family routines. Stay connected to friends and family.
- Solve problems step by step. Work on one thing at a time. Consider alternatives.
- **Support the reduction of cannabis (and other drug use).** They make symptoms worse, can cause relapse, and prevent recovery.
- Consider therapy for yourself. if you experience changes in mood, sleep, capacity to cope
- Stay Hopeful. You are not alone. Recovery is possible. Treatment can help.

## **CONNECT:** Educate yourself and connect with family support networks, such as:

- **NAMI Connecticut -** offers virtual family support groups (namict.org)
- FAVOR Connecticut family and youth support and advocacy (www.favor-ct.org)