



**Mental Health  
Ireland**



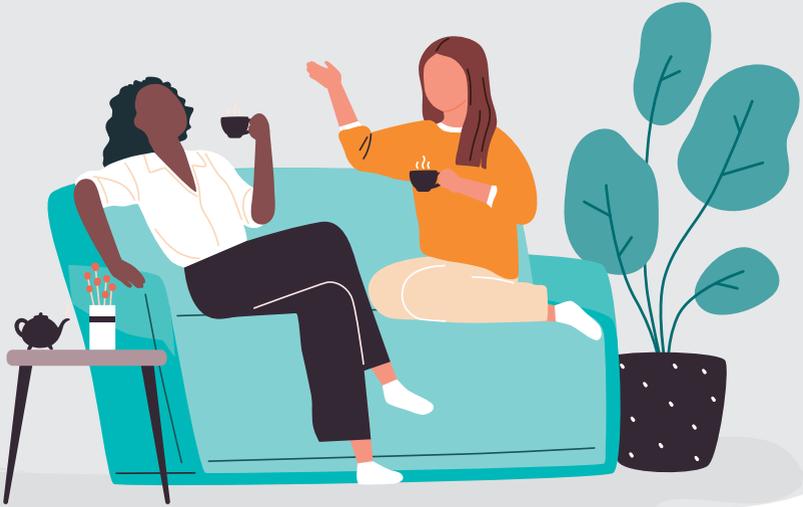
**Family  
Carers  
Ireland**

No one should have to care alone

# **Mental Health & Family Caring: Supporting the Supporters**

*Supporting families to look after  
their own wellbeing while caring  
for a person living with a mental  
health challenge.*





# Mental Health & Family Caring: Supporting the Supporters

*Supporting families to look after their own wellbeing while caring for a person living with a mental health challenge.*

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## Introduction

Family Carers Ireland are the national charity dedicated to supporting Ireland's 355,000 family carers. Mental Health Ireland is a national voluntary organisation whose aim is to promote positive mental health and wellbeing and to support recovery in Ireland. Working in partnership, these two organisations brought together a group of people with a range of experience and expertise to coproduce this booklet.

The content in the booklet is based on a five-week education programme that was coproduced by Mental Health Ireland and Family Carers Ireland for the families and supporters of people living with mental health challenges. Learning from the delivery of the programme, and the lived experience of those who took part in it, we have distilled some of the key learning points and essential information into this booklet.

The booklet aims to give you information, guidance, and practical tips to

- support good mental health
- promote a model of family recovery
- enhance communication skills
- explore and define boundaries
- access appropriate services and supports

It has been designed for all family members and supporters. Keep an eye out for **TIME TO REFLECT** sections throughout the booklet. These are worksheets and exercises which will help you tune into your needs and that of your family. We hope you and your family will find it of use on your recovery journey.

The booklet was kindly supported by the Dormant Accounts Fund.



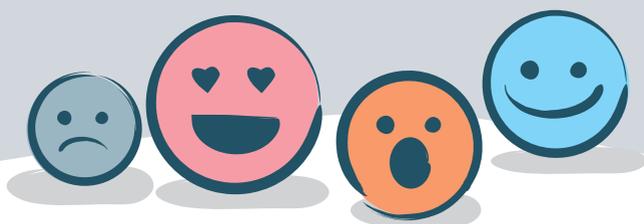
# Chapter 1

## Let's Talk Mental Health

### What is mental health?

**“ A state of well-being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”**

*(World Health Organization, 2004)*



**“Every day may not be good, but there is something good in everyday”**

*Alice Morse Earle*

Based on that definition, how many of us can say that we are mentally healthy all of the time? Some days we are in good form, we feel good in ourselves. Then, there are days when we may feel disconnected. In other words, our mental health and wellbeing fluctuates. It is like a journey from flourishing to languishing and back again. We need to be kind to ourselves when we have those low moments. This is why it is important to look after our mental health, in good times and hard times.

When we build self-care into our daily lives our mental health is strengthened and our wellbeing is supported. It is good to get into a daily habit of doing something for yourself, making time to have that cup of tea without interruptions, treating yourself when out shopping. As you read through this booklet you will build up a list of things to consider for your self-care.

## Our Emotions & Mental Health

**Being a family carer or supporter can be a fulfilling role. It can also be a demanding role with multiple competing commitments. The role can impact on our emotions and cause a variety of feelings, from sadness to joy.**

It is helpful to view emotions like a biological message that informs us or prompts us to take action. Sometimes we view emotions as being bad or good but there are no ‘bad’ emotions. It is important we give ourselves the opportunity to acknowledge and express them. We can find healthy and safe ways to do this. If we dig a little deeper and try to identify the trigger of our emotions we can use this awareness to help ourselves navigate life’s ups and downs.

For example, when we experience fear, we can feel the worst is about to happen. But fear can actually be a prompt to take a breath, observe what’s happening inside and out and to take action if necessary. We will discuss how to express our difficult emotions and other communication skills in Chapter 3. However, if we keep calm and take control of the situation the fear can be allayed. Fear can be reduced by asking for help or support. Joy is the emotion of connection and sharing, not just with others but also yourself. It generates good feelings of happiness and positivity. An emotion we all experience from time to time is anger. As with all emotions, take a positive view on it. It is not about aggression; often it is telling us about the need to set boundaries for ourselves. We can find ways to express our anger in constructive ways which are safe for ourselves and others.

## What is Wellbeing?

**“ Wellbeing is present when a person realises their potential, is resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their life, takes care of their physical wellbeing and has a sense of purpose, connection and belonging to a wider community. It is a fluid way of being and needs nurturing throughout life.” (World Health Organisation, 2001)**

The key messages in this particular definition of wellbeing include taking care of your physical wellbeing and maintaining connection with people both close to you and beyond your family circle. This can involve linking in with organisations such as Family Carers Ireland, Mental Health Ireland and similar agencies that can provide support, guidance, information and on occasion a friendly opportunity to have a chat.

The biggest challenge for family carers is not a lack of knowledge or insight of the need for self-care, often it is about prioritising and making the time for self-care. The Five Ways to Wellbeing is a very practical self-care strategy. It is set out in such a manner that you can design your own five steps for daily wellbeing.

## Five Ways to Wellbeing (New Economics Foundation, 2008)

These are simple, practical, effective, and evidence-based actions you can take to increase your sense of wellness.

They are also useful to share with your family and friends.



**Connect** with your inner self, community, your family and friends and the wider community in which you live.

**Be active** in the ways that you enjoy and that fit with your lifestyle, so it could be a daily walk or taking up a personal hobby.

**Take notice** of how you are feeling, and if you need to give yourself a boost. Review if you are taking sufficient care of yourself.

**Keep learning** We can keep our minds active by signing onto an online course, joining your local library, listening to audio books, staying in contact with organisations who can provide up to-date information on new developments and available supports.

**Give** You are already giving a lot of yourself to your family and friends, so give yourself the gift of me-time. This is not selfish, looking after yourself is just as important!



## TIME TO REFLECT

## Action Plan for Self-Care

Think about small self-care goals you can set yourself. When we put pen to paper, and commit to taking small steps, we can make great changes. It is also good to remember that our loved ones will be pleased to see that we are making self-care a priority for ourselves. A useful tool when working on your personal action plan is **SMART**. i.e. set **Specific Goals**, ensure that they are **Measurable, Attainable, Relevant** and **Time Specific**. Use this worksheet to help set yourself some self-care goals.

### INITIAL GOAL

Write a self-care goal you have in mind.

### SPECIFIC

What exactly do you need to do to achieve this goal? Who else might you need to involve?

### MEASURABLE

How can you measure your success and know that you are reaching your goal?

## ACHIEVABLE

**What do you need to help you achieve your goal?  
How can you overcome any barrier?**

## RELEVANT

**How is this goal related to making you feel better? Why is it worth pursuing?**

## TIME SPECIFIC

**Set a timeline – when will you achieve this goal?**



## Space for Reflection

# Chapter 2

## Family Recovery

In this chapter we will look at family recovery, share different perspectives from families and find out how family recovery is supported by services in Ireland.



### What is Family Recovery?

When all members of the family are supported and empowered, alongside the person who is experiencing the mental health challenge, then there are better opportunities for whole family recovery. Family recovery is about re-establishing our roles, goals, ambitions, and lives. It's about learning to maintain our wellbeing and resilience so that we can continue to support our family members / friend's recovery. (*Mental Health Engagement and Recovery - HSE, Mental Health Ireland, and REFOCUS- Irish College of Psychiatrists of Ireland, 2020*).

*“ Recovery is individual and personal, based on what you decide is important for yourself. This can be applied to the family also.”*

*“ Family recovery is about empowering ourselves and each other to have opportunities to fulfil our hopes and ambitions. It is about accepting what has happened and who we are now as we move forward on this journey together.”*

*(Quotes from family members)*

## Recovery Narrative from a Family Member Perspective:

*My name is Belinda Coyle. I am a family member with lived experience of both my parents having mental health and addiction challenges. Life was chaotic and unpredictable for my siblings and me. Symptoms may appear one day and other got worse the next day. For years it was unthinkable and living this way was “the new normal” for us going forward as a family. My siblings and I lived through this difficult period in our young lives and we are now all living in recovery and wellness.*

*As a Family Peer Educator with lived experience supporting my own family and I through recovery and now I understand how the mental health services work. I have the skills and knowledge to share with other families and individuals through their challenges and support them in their recovery within the mental health services.*

### ***What were the challenges?***

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*Feeling powerless as there was no support for navigating the mental health and addiction services as a family member. Learning more about my parent’s illness and the supports available would have made this journey much easier for me, my parents and siblings, being included by services in care planning for my family would have given us all hope and made this recovery journey easier.*

### ***What supported recovery?***

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*What supports me through my recovery is recovery education and my involvement with the Recovery College South and Peer Led Involvement Centres. I have grown with confidences and strength to learn about recovery from all aspects and to accept that caring for me was equally important. Knowing that there were other families like myself with lived experience has helped me to understand that recovery is possible for everyone. I couldn’t have gone through this without peer support and family support groups in the area of recovery.*

### ***What did you take from this?***

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*I have learned that there are two sides to the role of the family; we can be so much help in our loved one’s recovery, but we need help and support ourselves in our own recovery. Encourage more partnership working and value the unique contribution that family members have to offer when supporting a person in recovery. We have to instil hope and empowerment as it the cornerstone for recovery.*

## What are the Values of Family Recovery?

CHIME (Leamy et al. 2011) is a set of five processes that can encourage recovery in individuals and families. Each letter stands for a value: connectedness, hope, identity, meaning and empowerment. Things do not need to be perfect, nor do we need to strive for perfection. We can tell which value we would like to work on by how satisfied we feel with it. This can also help us identify what in particular within that value we would like to work on.



### CONNECTED

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Having a sense of **connectedness** means feeling content with the relationships we have with others and ourselves.



### HOPE

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Being **hopeful** and optimistic about the future helps us to believe that things can get better, there is something to look forward to.



### IDENTITY

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Our sense of **identity** is important so that we can accept who we are. We can see the good parts of ourselves, our positive roles in life.



### MEANING

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The **meaning** we have in our lives gives us a sense of purpose day to day and an overall sense of contributing to the world around us.



### EMPOWERMENT

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**Empowerment** is having an inner strength that we can call on when we need to achieve something for ourselves and when we need to reach out for support in achieving a goal.

## TIME TO REFLECT

## CHIME, My Family & I



Take a few minutes to fill out the following worksheet. Or copy the questions to a journal to give yourself more room.

CHIME Process	Me	My Family
What makes you feel connected?		
Where do you find hope?		
How do you view your identity?		
What gives you meaning?		
When do you feel empowered?		

*Choose one of the above you could develop for yourself and with your family.*

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Doing just one thing as a family can improve our sense of recovery.

## Recovery Narrative from a Lived Experience Perspective:

*My name is Michael Norton and I have lived experience of mental health challenges. My mental health deteriorated during school from being bullied and I started hearing voices when I went to college to study nursing. This continued until I eventually had to leave my studies. I eventually told my mother everything and her reaction was to insist that this remained a secret from the rest of the family and from everyone else.*

*During my time in hospital I learned that the source of these feelings of intense sadness and despair was from hiding that I was gay because of our family's religious beliefs so coming out was a challenging and upsetting time. While I still hear voices, I have not relapsed and I am now thriving. Through my recovery journey I have gone back to education, where I got an honours degree in Health Care Studies and progressed to a Masters of Arts degree through research.*

*I dedicate my time to supporting others, through a number of different roles including: a Peer Support Worker, a Peer Recovery Educator and Development Officer and now as a National Engagement and Recovery Lead. I feel that I have excelled professionally, but also socially and personally. I have been on foreign holidays and proudly expresses my sexuality through various pride events both nationally and internationally. I also looking into buying my own home and I am looking forward to what the future holds.*

### **What were the challenges?**

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*Being gay and feeling that this was contrary to my religious beliefs.*

*The fear of coming out to my family, especially in a rural area.*

### **What supported recovery?**

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*Family and friends who understand me. My ability to speak honestly and openly with my family has brought us closer together.*

*Being able to utilise my experiences gives me inner strength and belief in my achievements in working in the area of recovery.*

### **What do you take from this?**

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*All aspects of recovery are possible for the whole family. People can regain their ability to do the things they thought were lost: attend concerts, enjoy driving, shopping, socialising. Life can be good again. I have the confidence to write and research in the area of recovery to benefit others and build a system that looks at a whole family approach in recovery.*

# How are Family Recovery values incorporated into Mental Health Services in Ireland?

**Recovery is**



**Someone to love**



**Somewhere to live**



**Something to do**

## Recovery-Focussed Services

In 2018, *The Framework for Recovery in Mental Health 2018-2020* was coproduced to support the development of more consistent recovery-oriented mental health services and to set out our understanding of recovery and a recovery-oriented service. The framework defined four recovery principles which mental health services have committed to working by.

- 1. The centrality of the lived experience as it relates to family.** *e.g. having access to Family Peer Support and Recovery Education; ensuring representation of family members in policies and procedures and service planning.*

2. **The co-production of recovery and promoting services between all stakeholders.** *e.g. Co-produced recovery care planning and discharge planning; Co-produced and co-facilitated recovery training and recovery education.*
3. **An organisational commitment to the development of recovery orientated mental health services.** *e.g. An information pack to support family recovery; Opportunities for family members to engage in recovery initiatives within the mental health services.*
4. **Supporting recovery orientated learning and recovery- orientated practice across all stakeholders.** *e.g. Having families involved in co-producing, designing and facilitating family recovery educational workshops; Providing family recovery training to staff.*

## Partnership-Working

The mental health services are actively adopting a family recovery approach.

The following is a list of tips for services and families to support partnership working between families and mental health services. They hold family recovery values at their core. It is worth keeping them in mind as we navigate our recovery journeys. These tips are adapted from the coproduced Recovery Principles & Practice workshop for staff of the mental health services. (Adapted from the Scottish Recovery Networks Top Ten Tips)

<p><b>1. Actively listen to help the family make sense of their loved one's mental health challenges.</b></p>	<p><b>by</b></p>	<p><i>Responding to family's views, their understanding of their experiences and advice on what they find helpful.</i></p>
<p><b>2. Help the family identify and prioritise recovery goals.</b></p>	<p><b>by</b></p>	<p><i>Finding out what's important to the family.</i></p>
<p><b>3. Demonstrate a belief in the family's existing strengths and resources.</b></p>	<p><b>by</b></p>	<p><i>Showing empathy and resourcefulness in communicating and responding to their concerns</i></p>
<p><b>4. Identify examples from our own lived experience that inspires and validates the families hopes.</b></p>	<p><b>by</b></p>	<p><i>Developing your own recovery narrative to become more confident in what you share.</i></p>

<p><b>5. Pay particular attention to the importance of goals which enable family members to actively contribute to the lives of their loves.</b></p>	<p><b>by</b></p>	<p><i>Promoting collaborative relationships to gain an understanding of each person's strengths and opportunities.'</i></p>
<p><b>6. Identify and share non-mental health resources relevant to the achievement of goals in family recovery.</b></p>	<p><b>by</b></p>	<p><i>Promoting community services for wellbeing and recovery that are available for families to achieve their personal needs.</i></p>
<p><b>7. Promote self-management in recovery.</b></p>	<p><b>by</b></p>	<p><i>Providing the relevant support towards establishing a good routine of self-care.</i></p>
<p><b>8. Discuss what the family want in terms of supports (interventions), respecting their wishes wherever possible.</b></p>	<p><b>by</b></p>	<p><i>Mental health services providing supports (interventions) to achieve the best outcomes for families in recovery.</i></p>
<p><b>9. Behave at all times so as to convey an attitude of respect for the family and a desire to encourage equal partnership working alongside families.</b></p>	<p><b>by</b></p>	<p><i>Service providers responding to families feedback and taking their lead in identifying recovery goals.</i></p>
<p><b>10. While accepting that the future is uncertain, continue to express support for the possibility of achieving family recovery.</b></p>	<p><b>by</b></p>	<p><i>Using family-centred and simple language that promotes hopefulness in recovery.</i></p>



## How do I collaborate with the Mental Health Services to support my family's recovery?

### Tips for partnership working:

- Be aware of your family's needs and articulate them well
- Find out what is available in your area
- Come prepared to meetings
- Ask for follow up on all actions agreed



## Is it ok to ask questions?

**Absolutely. We all have many questions, especially when big changes are happening in our lives. It is perfectly fine to ask these questions of the staff in mental health services. Knowledge is empowering.**

This following is a list of the kinds of questions that come up for families. This list was co-produced by Recovery College South East and Carlow Involvement Centre:

- What services are devoted to family recovery?
- What is recovery education for families?
- What if my loved one doesn't want me involved in their recovery?
- How do the mental health services work?
- What kind of family supports are available to me around mental health and recovery?
- Where can I access information about my loved one's care and treatment to help best support my loved one?
- What are the limits to confidentiality in the adult mental health service?
- Where can I get a better understanding of the medication my loved one may be on?
- Will my loved one have to engage with mental health services indefinitely?
- What is a discharge plan?
- What do crisis houses offer?
- What is recovery for families?
- Will my loved one ever recover?
- How can I get a better understanding of my loved one diagnosis?

Have a look at Chapter 5 for a list of services and supports who can help you answer these questions and any other questions you may have.

## **TIME TO REFLECT**

**You might like to use this page to jot down your own questions.**



# Chapter 3

## Communication

In this chapter we will look at communication tools. This may assist you in gaining insight into your personal communication style and how certain communication tools might work for you. Everyone is different and our caring roles are also unique.

### How does having good communication skills help in our relationships?

Good communication skills can help us feel valued, understood, supported and at ease. They can prevent miscommunication, confusion, and frustration. Open, honest dialogue can improve our relationships and help ensure that both we, and those around us, are heard and understood.



### Communication - Tips and Tools

When we have something important to say, we want to get the best from the conversation.

*We would like to acknowledge The Meriden Family Programme for allowing us to use and adapt the worksheets and content in the following sections.*



To do this, we can ask ourselves:

- Is this a good time for me to raise this issue?
- Do I need to talk about this right now?
- What is the other person feeling just now?

When we are sure it is a good opportunity to discuss the topic, the following tools may be useful:

- Noticing the Positives
- Active Listening
- Asking for what I want
- Expressing Difficult Feelings

## HOW TO... notice the positives

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When people have encountered a series of difficulties, they tend to focus on the problems around them and forget to notice the good things that people do. Telling people about the little things they do that please you helps to encourage them to keep trying when things are difficult, improves morale in the family, and creates an atmosphere where people are more able to work together to solve problems.

There are three steps:

1. Gain the person's full attention (use eye contact, say their name, lightly touch their arm, sit or stand at their level).
2. Say exactly what they did that pleased you.
3. Tell them how you felt.

### Example:

Tom is an adult son who lives with his mum Jane. When he sees his mum Jane coming into the kitchen with the shopping, he opens every press door. From time to time Tom will close the presses and other times he refuses. Jane sits with Tom at dinnertime, "Tom, I just wanted to say, this morning when you closed all of the press doors for me, after we put away the shopping, that was really great, I was really happy that you did this."



## TIME TO REFLECT

### Noticing the Positives



#### NOTICING THE POSITIVES

<b>Day:</b>	
<b>Person who pleased you:</b>	
<b>What exactly they did that pleased you:</b>	
<b>What did you say to them?</b>	

#### NOTICING THE POSITIVES

<b>Day:</b>	
<b>Person who pleased you:</b>	
<b>What exactly they did that pleased you:</b>	
<b>What did you say to them?</b>	

#### NOTICING THE POSITIVES

<b>Day:</b>	
<b>Person who pleased you:</b>	
<b>What exactly they did that pleased you:</b>	
<b>What did you say to them?</b>	

## Recovery Narrative from a Family Member Perspective:

*"I put 'noticing the positives' into practice during the course. My son who has Asperger Syndrome was very agitated because his local hairdresser had closed. He has major sensory issues and because he likes routine and familiarity, he refused to have his hair cut by another hairdresser. But it was quite obvious he was suffering with the length of his hair.*

*Eventually we made contact with his old hairdresser and she came to the house. After his hair cut, I sat down with him, made eye contact and smiled. I acknowledged how difficult it must have been for him and how good he looked with his new cut. I went on to remark how proud and happy it made me feel also.*

*My son later came to me and announced he may try a different hairdresser going forward, this was a brilliant result for my son and our family. It will allow us both to move forward with this issue".*

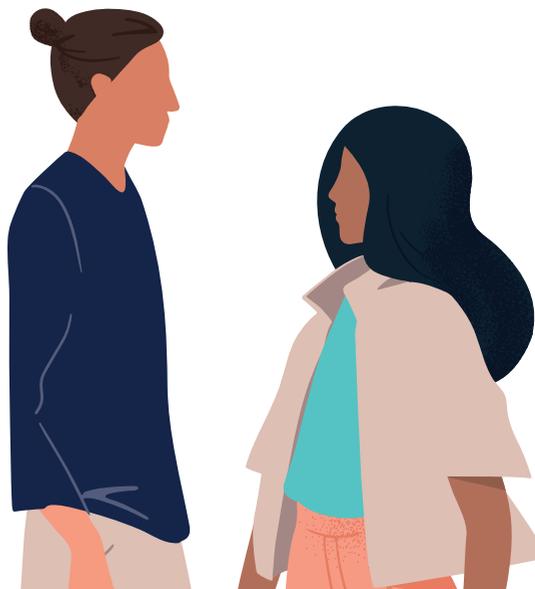
Sandra

## HOW TO... *listen actively* © Meriden Family Programme

The skill of active listening involves much more than being quiet when someone else is speaking. Active listening aims to draw out a person's ideas, goals or problems so that we can fully understand what they are communicating. Developing our listening skills helps us to gain a better understanding of other people's needs and perspectives. This makes it easier for us all to find solutions and to make plans to improve our lives together.

There are five steps to active listening.

1. **Good eye contact, but don't stare.**
2. **Give attention to the person who is speaking. Minimise distraction.**
3. **Use little words like 'mm', 'ah ha' or 'okay' to show that you have heard what is being said/ encourage the speaker.**
4. **Ask questions.**
5. **Summarise what you have heard.**



## Why use the Active Listening tool?

The active listening skill is beneficial as it allows the listener to concentrate and really hear what is being said.

- It allows the speaker the opportunity to say whatever they really need to convey to the listener, without interruptions or judgment.
- It may give the speaker a sense of autonomy within their life.
- Active listening helps to build connection, trust and acceptance of another person and their viewpoint.

## Example of Non-Active Listening

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Mary's older brother John, who lives with severe anxiety, has an upcoming doctors appointment. John seemed very anxious and agitated and Mary asked was everything all right. John started to speak very quickly saying why he didn't want to go to the doctor's appointment. Mary jumped in and told John he had to go because it was booked and that he couldn't cancel it because he has to get his medication. Mary continued to say you always do this, last minute you decide not to go places and have an excuse for everything. Mary started to retell other past events where John didn't want to go places and Mary became more agitated. John retreated to his room and refused to come out. Neither sibling spoke to each other for the next three days.

## Example of Active Listening

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Mary's older brother John, who lives with severe anxiety, has an upcoming doctors appointment. Mary noticed John seemed very anxious and agitated, so Mary sat with John at the kitchen table and asked was everything all right. John started to speak very quickly saying why he didn't want to go to the doctor's appointment. Mary nodded her head while listening without interrupting and she noticed he began to slow his words down. When John stopped talking Mary checked she understood what John was saying by asking whether it was the thought of going to the doctors that was most difficult, or actually being in the doctors? John explained how it was the thought that made him anxious and this then effected how he felt going in there but felt ok when he was in there. Mary said back in her own words what she had heard. This allowed John to clarify that he understands he must go to the doctors but that it does not change how he feels before or during it. Mary nodded and said yes, to indicate she understood what John was saying. After John finished speaking, he put on the kettle for them to have a cup of tea. John's anxiety and agitation reduced significantly, as he felt validated by Mary's active listening and Mary did not become agitated or irritated.

## TIME TO REFLECT

## Active Listening



Use this worksheet to reflect on a time when you used active listening skills.

### ACTIVE LISTENING

<b>Day:</b>	
<b>Who were you listening to?</b>	
<b>How did you show you were giving them attention?</b>	
<b>What did you say to them?</b>	
<b>What encouragement/ prompts did you use?</b>	
<b>What questions did you ask?</b>	
<b>What did you understand?</b>	

### ACTIVE LISTENING

<b>Day:</b>	
<b>Who were you listening to?</b>	
<b>How did you show you were giving them attention?</b>	
<b>What did you say to them?</b>	
<b>What encouragement/ prompts did you use?</b>	
<b>What questions did you ask?</b>	
<b>What did you understand?</b>	

## ACTIVE LISTENING

<b>Day:</b>	
<b>Who were you listening to?</b>	
<b>How did you show you were giving them attention?</b>	
<b>What did you say to them?</b>	
<b>What encouragement/ prompts did you use?</b>	
<b>What questions did you ask?</b>	
<b>What did you understand?</b>	

## ACTIVE LISTENING

<b>Day:</b>	
<b>Who were you listening to?</b>	
<b>How did you show you were giving them attention?</b>	
<b>What did you say to them?</b>	
<b>What encouragement/ prompts did you use?</b>	
<b>What questions did you ask?</b>	
<b>What did you understand?</b>	

## HOW TO... ask for what you want

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Situations can arise when you would like to ask another person to do something, or to change their behaviour in some way. A request that is made in a demanding, nagging or threatening way does not encourage the person to do what you would like. If you ask in a positive way, there are no guarantees that people will do exactly what you request, but a friendly and respectful atmosphere is preserved. There are three steps to asking for what you want:

1. Gain the person's full attention; say their name, look at them, sit/stand with them.
2. Say exactly what you would like them to do. Use 'I' instead of 'you', phrase it positively, be specific.
3. Tell them how you would feel if they did it. It makes me feel...

### Example of asking for what you want:

Karen is a single parent of a very active preteen called Hayley. Hayley has a dual diagnosis. Karen finds that the only time she gets to relax is in the evening when Hayley's three younger siblings are in bed. Hayley finds it difficult to go to bed until mum comes up stairs. Hayley usually gets her own way by banging the sitting room door against the wall. Karen has tried everything to prevent this and feels irritated and upset that she cannot sit for some 'down time' before bed. Often things would escalate and she would find herself shouting "stop banging the sitting room door!

Karen used the asking for what you want tool by saying, "I would like you to move away from the door. I would like you to sit with me in the sitting room. This makes me feel more relaxed". While it took time, Karen found Hayley responded well to this way of communicating her needs. They now both sit for a short time before bed and it has helped them to become closer.

## TIME TO REFLECT

### Asking for what you want



**Use this worksheet to reflect on how you might ask for what you want.**

#### ASKING FOR WHAT YOU WANT

<b>Day:</b>	
<b>Person to whom request was made?</b>	
<b>What exactly did you ask?</b>	
<b>What was the outcome?</b>	

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<b>Person to whom request was made?</b>	
<b>What exactly did you ask?</b>	
<b>What was the outcome?</b>	

## HOW TO... *express difficult feelings*

© Meriden Family Programme

Feelings like anger, sadness, frustration, fear and disappointment are unpleasant to experience. They are uncomfortable and are often associated with difficult events in our lives. These feelings are not wrong, or damaging, but what we do or say when we are experiencing them can sometimes cause problems. For example, people may avoid talking about something that is making them angry for fear of causing others to be upset or offended or adding to their worries.

In families and households where there are mental health challenges, there can be fear of causing a relapse and so we might avoid expressing difficult emotions.

There are four steps to this skill:

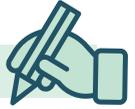
- **Gain the person's full attention.**
- **Say exactly what they did that you found upsetting.**
- **Tell them how you felt.**
- **Do something to try and resolve the issue that led you to having these feelings e.g. make a request, suggest having a problem solving discussion about the issue.**

It's not easy to think about difficult feelings and even harder to think about how expressing them might help a situation. However, there are a number of advantages to telling someone that you are upset or unhappy about something:

Being clear and direct about how you feel about a specific situation tends to reduce the chances of the situation becoming more difficult in the long run. It stops feelings building up inside and causing more stress. It helps identify difficult situations or problems and can increase the chances of them being resolved.

## TIME TO REFLECT

## Expressing Difficult Feelings



Use these worksheets to help you reflect on expressing difficult emotions.

### EXPRESSING DIFFICULT FEELINGS

<b>Day:</b>	
<b>Person involved:</b>	
<b>What exactly did they do?</b>	
<b>How did you feel?</b>	
<b>What did you ask them to do in future?</b>	

### EXPRESSING DIFFICULT FEELINGS

<b>Day:</b>	
<b>Person involved:</b>	
<b>What exactly did they do?</b>	
<b>How did you feel?</b>	
<b>What did you ask them to do in future?</b>	

## EXPRESSING DIFFICULT FEELINGS

<b>Day:</b>	
<b>Person involved:</b>	
<b>What exactly did they do?</b>	
<b>How did you feel?</b>	
<b>What did you ask them to do in future?</b>	

## EXPRESSING DIFFICULT FEELINGS

<b>Day:</b>	
<b>Person involved:</b>	
<b>What exactly did they do?</b>	
<b>How did you feel?</b>	
<b>What did you ask them to do in future?</b>	

# Chapter 4

## Boundaries

When looking at boundaries, we need to look at the relationship between the people involved. We have to consider boundaries are personal and are based on previous experiences and learning. For example, if a person was hurt in the past by a romantic partner, they may have stronger boundaries around letting a new romantic partner into their life. We must remind ourselves that every situation and person is unique, therefore their experience of boundaries is exclusive to them.



# Boundaries

There are many different types of boundaries but here we will focus on the following four:

- Intellectual
- Emotional
- Time
- Physical

## Intellectual Boundaries

These relate to your thoughts and ideas, and can be compromised when another person is flippant or makes fun of about your views and opinions, when they dismiss what you have said and, talk over you or don't listen to what you have said. A good way for each of us to maintain healthy intellectual boundaries is by following the steps outlined in the communication skills section.

**Scenario:** Harry, who has a hearing difficulty explains how his mother really upset him when he told her he was applying for a job in the local shop. She said, "Don't be ridiculous, you could never get a job in the local shop, sure you can't hear properly."

## Emotional Boundaries

These relate to your emotions. How you separate your feelings from other people's feelings.

**Scenario:** Rita is feeling very upset because her mother was crying a lot today. Rita worked with her therapist on creating her emotional boundaries. This meant she could still empathise with her mother, but recognise these were not her feelings and they could be left with the other person.

## Time Boundaries

Refer to an individual's use of their own time. It can be split into many categories. Socialisation with family and/or friends, alone time, work/course time, leisure time. Difficulties arise when a person requires too much of our time or when we feel compromised to give more time.

**Scenario:** Jimmy started a new job in a company and has always had good time boundaries, starting exactly at 9am in the morning and finishing at 5pm each evening. However, his colleagues seem to stay late every evening or work through their lunch break. Jimmy is now struggling to maintain his time boundaries because he feels pressurised to conform to the norm within this new work environment.

## Physical Boundaries

This boundary has been highlighted recently with the onset of the Covid19 pandemic. The fact that it is no longer safe to hug or shake someone's hand. When your physical boundary has been compromised, you usually get a sense of unease with what is happening. E.g. If someone barged into your room without knocking or opened your phone and started to read your messages without your permission.

**Scenario:** Carol had recently started living with her sister Anne again. Anne had up until recently been in residential care. Carol always feels nervous when Anne walks up to her and stands so close to her face that she smells Anne's breath. Anne speaks so passionately and quickly about the topic she wants to talk about. Carol feels tense, uncomfortable, and unsure how to respond. She steps back towards the wall, but Anne follows until Carol has no place to move to. Carol discusses this with her therapist. They explore Carol's need for space and Carol decides on an appropriate physical boundary, by marking out a circle on the ground with wool.

Carol asks Anne if she would have a chat with her at the kitchen table. She chooses a time when they both seemed calm. Carol explains to Anne, 'Anne, you came very close to my face while talking this morning. I stepped back towards the wall to gain some space, but you moved closer again. I felt very nervous, uncomfortable and unsure how to respond. I'm wondering if next time we could sit and talk at the table where there is space between us. I would feel more comfortable and able to listen then'.

Carol used the how to express difficult feelings tool from Chapter 3. She got Anne's full attention, said precisely what was upsetting her, how it made her feel, and made a suggestion on how they could move forward together.

### TIME TO REFLECT

### Boundaries

Take some time to reflect on your boundaries by answering the following questions. Get out your pencils and paper!

1. If you were to represent yourself in a shape, shade and colour on a piece of paper, how might this look?
2. If you were to create a boundaries space on the same piece of paper in any shape, shade or colour how might this look?
3. Take a few moments to close your eyes and picture this or draw it on a piece of paper.

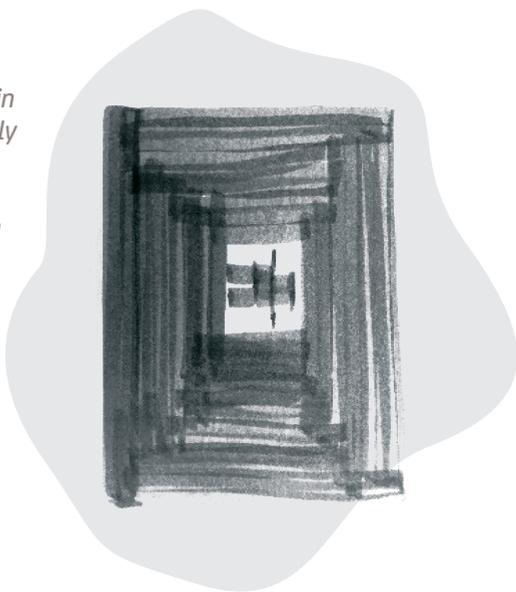
**Take a few moments before you turn the page to see some examples.**

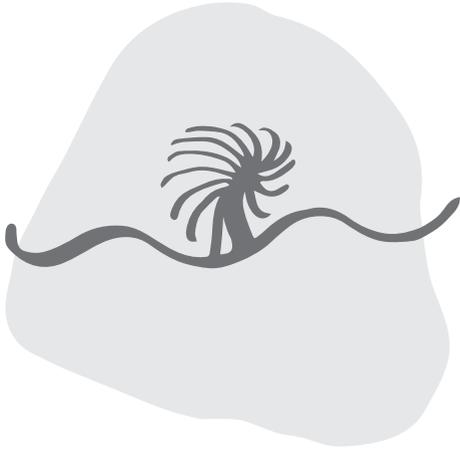




“ I drew a circle around and around us and didn't really think why, until you asked me to spend some time looking at it. I started thinking why I did this and knew it was to keep safe as when my husband (who has schizophrenia) has irrational thoughts and violent outbursts we all suffer, so during these times myself and our children move in with my parents. I have to keep the kids safe, so this is why I put our children in this closed space with me to protect them. I wish it was this easy, but it's good to know I have good safe boundaries.” Mary

“ I feel trapped when I look at this picture, in a prison, I'm a carer and there is absolutely no way out for me, I have some supports, so I get a break away from my child who has huge additional needs but even when I am away, the good is taken out of the 1-2 hour break because I know I have to return to the same routine that seems to be endless days and nights of caring 24/7 for him. I love my son so much and god I feel so guilty writing this but this wave of feeling comes out of the blue at times and hits me and I feel so low and then thankfully it passes again and I pick myself up, dust myself off and continue my journey...” Sharon





“ I didn't really understand what I was to draw. I'm always willing to help everyone all of the time and sometimes too much, I just can't say no. I feel guilty not helping others and worry what they will time of me. I put everyone first and wish someone could put me first. I am a carer for both my parents (my dad had a stroke a few years ago and my mum has dementia). My siblings let me do everything and I feel I have to do it all, as I'm the only one not married. When I look at my picture it looks like I don't know if I'm coming or going and that I'm always running around like a headless chicken for other people.” Anne

“ This shows me peeking out from behind the safety of my high wall, I like the wall high as I feel safe, I find it hard to trust people as I was bullied all through school and also when I worked, I had to give it up as I became so anxious. I find it difficult to understand people at times so feel safe in my own space where I know what is happening and when.” Jean



To help you set and keep healthy boundaries for yourself, it is important to first identify what your boundaries are, and if they are being compromised. Exploring what your boundaries look like helps with this process. If you find that your boundaries are being compromised, then you can take the steps outlined in this section to begin to set healthier boundaries for yourself. It is important to remember everyone has unique boundaries. Whilst it is healthy to be able to compromise with others, it is also important to be aware when you feel uncomfortable and to take the time to reassess your boundaries.

# Chapter 5

## Services & Supports

### Navigating the Mental Health Services

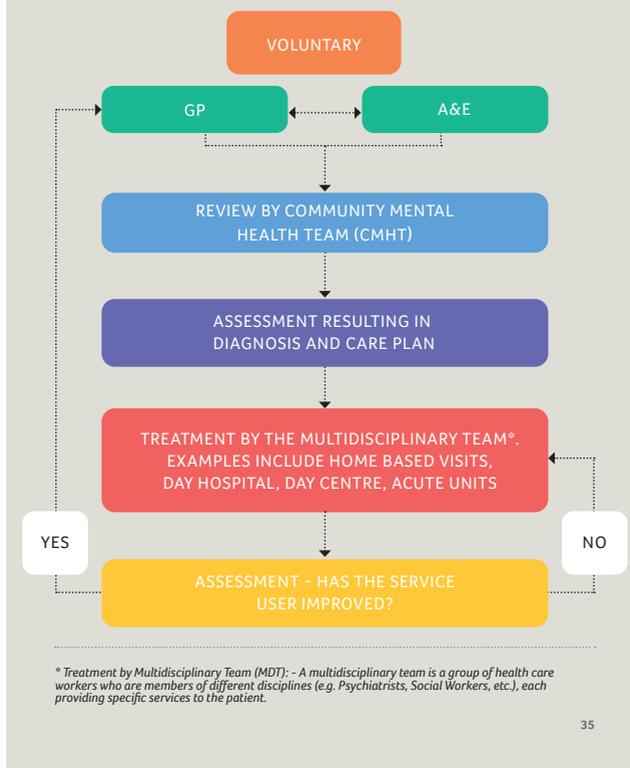


The Office of Mental Health Engagement & Recovery, along with people who use Mental Health Services, their Family Members, Carers and Supporters co-produced a booklet called '*Mental Health Services - Family, Carer and Supporter Guide*'. This guide covers topics including;

- Recovery and Wellbeing
- Supports available to me as a carer or supporter
- Language and Terms used
- Confidentiality
- Pathway through the Mental Health Service
- Questions you might want to ask
- Medication
- Compliments
- Comments, Complaints, Getting involved.



## Pathway Through the Mental Health System



The infographic above on the 'Pathway Through the Mental Health System' comes from *The Family, Carer & Supporter Guide, Office of Mental Health Engagement & Recovery, 2018*, and is just one of a number of accessible and informative tools in the guide.

The Family, Carer and Supporter Guide is available free to download here:

 [www.mentalhealthireland.ie/wearefamily/#Resources](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/wearefamily/#Resources).

Or just Google 'Family, Carer and Supporter Guide'. You can also call or email the Office for Mental Health Engagement & Recovery to request a hard copy or to request that they email you a link to the digital version.

 (0)1 620 7339  [mhengage@hse.ie](mailto:mhengage@hse.ie)

## Videos on Mental Health & Recovery

Mental Health Ireland have a suite of videos on Recovery, Navigating the Mental Health Services, Self-Care and much more on:

 [www.youtube.com/c/mentalhealthireland](https://www.youtube.com/c/mentalhealthireland)

## Recovery Education

Many of the Recovery Education Services/Colleges in Ireland offer courses on topics like understanding diagnoses, navigating the mental health services, exploring stigma, and many more. You can find out more about the Recovery Education Services/Colleges here:

 [www.mentalhealthireland.ie/recovery-education](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/recovery-education).

## Family Peer Support Workers

Seek out a Family Peer Support Worker. This is a family member or carer with lived experience of supporting an individual who has had mental health difficulties. They can give you emotional support, information, and practical tips on navigating services. Contact the Office of Mental Health Engagement & Recovery on 01 620 7303 for more information.

## Support Organisations

### Family Carers Ireland

Family Carers Ireland is the national charity dedicated to supporting Ireland's 335,000+ family carers, and to ensuring they are properly recognised, supported and empowered. Whether you are looking after a young child or adult with an intellectual or physical disability, a spouse with palliative care needs, an ageing parent, or a loved one with a mental health challenge, Family Carers Ireland is here to help you develop and maintain a sustainable caring routine and to ensure that we inform policy and public debate surrounding family caring. We understand that as rewarding a role family caring can be, it can also sometimes be a struggle and when you need our help, we are standing by to support you. We believe no one should have to care alone.

We offer a range of supports and services such as individual well-being reviews, free counselling, support groups, advocacy, emergency care scheme, education and training, and in-home respite. For more information on any of our supports, please visit our website at [www.familycarers.ie](http://www.familycarers.ie) or contact our Freephone Careline on 1800 24 07 24.

## Mental Health Ireland

Mental Health Ireland is a national voluntary organisation whose aim is to promote positive mental health and wellbeing and to support recovery to all individuals and communities in Ireland. Mental Health Ireland's vision is for an Ireland where mental health is valued as being an essential part of personal wellbeing and the health of the nation. Mental Health Ireland will lead the way in informing Irish society's understanding of mental health and fostering a culture where people who are experiencing mental health challenges are respected and supported.

Across the country Mental Health Ireland work with a network of Mental Health Associations. The membership of the local volunteer led Mental Health Associations reflect volunteers who have a particular interest in mental health including people from the local community, people with lived experience of mental health challenges, family members /carers and professionals working in the mental health area. Having this representation in the MHA allows the development and implementation of a range of projects and initiatives that are reflective of their local community.

Activities include supporting and promoting mental health awareness in communities to working alongside their local Development Officer in the delivery of MHI Workshops on Mental Health & Wellbeing; involvement in Recovery initiatives such as peer-led day services, Recovery Colleges, Recovery Fairs; fundraising and accessing grants to support new initiatives.

For tips, tools, information and to take part in our campaigns visit:

 [www.mentalhealthireland.ie](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie)  [www.yourmentalhealth.ie](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie)

This is a webpage to learn about mental health in Ireland and how to support yourself and the people you love.

## The YourMentalHealth information line

The HSE YourMentalHealth information line is a phone service you can call any time for signposting and information. The YourMentalHealth information line is not a counselling service. A member of their team can tell you about:

- the mental health supports and services available to you
- how to access different services provided by the HSE and our funded partners
- opening hours

 **Freephone: 1800 111 888**

## National Counselling Service

The HSE National Counselling Service (NCS) is a free professional, confidential counselling and psychotherapy service available free of charge in all HSE regions. Its clients are adults who have experienced trauma and abuse in childhood with priority given to adult survivors of institutional abuse in Ireland. Full details of the location of services are available on the website.

 **1800 47 74 77**   **Wednesday to Sunday 6.00pm to 10.00pm**

## Counselling in Primary Care

This service is for people experiencing mild to moderate psychological distress. It is a short-term counselling service that provides up to 8 counselling sessions with a professionally qualified and accredited Counsellor/Therapist. It is a service for medical card holders, who are 18 years of age or over, and who want help with psychological problems that are appropriate for time limited counselling in primary care. This can be a useful service for family members, supporters, and carers. They support people experiencing difficulties like depression, anxiety, panic reactions, relationship problems, loss issues, and stress. Chat to your GP and they can make a referral for you to the service.

## IACP

An organisation who are a link between those who are looking for Counselling/Psychotherapy and those who provide Counselling/Psychotherapy. They provide a comprehensive online directory of all accredited IACP Counsellors/Psychotherapists in every country in Ireland is available on [www.iacp.ie](http://www.iacp.ie). A Telephone Referral Service providing information on all areas relating to Counselling & Psychotherapy:

**01-2303536, 9 am –5 pm, Monday to Friday.**

## Pieta House

Pieta House, the centre for the prevention of self-harm or suicide, provides support for those who are feeling suicidal or engaging in self-harm in various locations throughout Ireland.

 [www.pieta.ie](http://www.pieta.ie)    [mary@pieta.i](mailto:mary@pieta.i)    **(01) 628 2111 27**

## Shine

Shine (formerly Schizophrenia Ireland) provides support, advocacy services and counselling services for people affected by mental health difficulties. This includes family and friends. The information line provides general information, a listening ear and specific information about Shine services.

 [www.shine.ie](http://www.shine.ie)    **email support: [phil@shine.ie](mailto:phil@shine.ie)**

## Samaritans

Samaritans provide a listening ear 24 hours a day every day of the year. This is confidential, non-judgmental, emotional support by phone, email, letter and online. The Samaritans also provide face-to-face support at their local branches.



[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)



Free Phone: 24 hours: 116123

## Barnardos

Barnardo's' mission is to deliver services and work with families, communities, and our partners to transform the lives of vulnerable children who are affected by adverse childhood experiences. Barnardos Family Support Projects are based at the heart of their local communities. Some family support projects have a particular focus, for example, families impacted by parental drugs misuse, teenagers and special needs however most offer a wide range of services.



[www.barnardos.ie](http://www.barnardos.ie)



(01) 453 0355



Callsave: 1850 222 300

## Family Resource Centres

The vision for Family Resource Centres is that all children, families and communities will actively participate and be included in a society that is free from prejudice, inequality, discrimination and exclusion, and which will contribute to their greatest possible well-being. A central feature of the FRC programme is the involvement of local people in identifying needs and developing needs-led responses. FRCs are participative and empowering organisations that support families while building the capacity and leadership of local communities. FRCs provide a range of universal and targeted services and development opportunities that address the needs of families.



[info@familyresource.ie](mailto:info@familyresource.ie)



[www.familyresource.ie/](http://www.familyresource.ie/)

## Need Help Now?

A starting point can be a phone call or visit to your family GP or contacting the 'Your Mental Health' information line on 1800 111 888. If you need emotional support Samaritans are available on 116123 and in an emergency, you should dial 999 or 112.



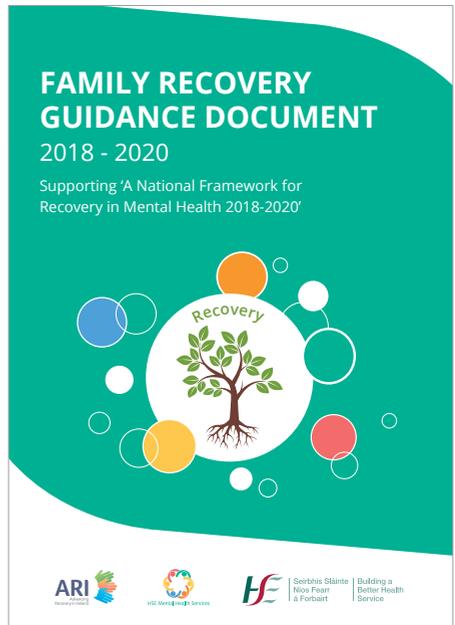
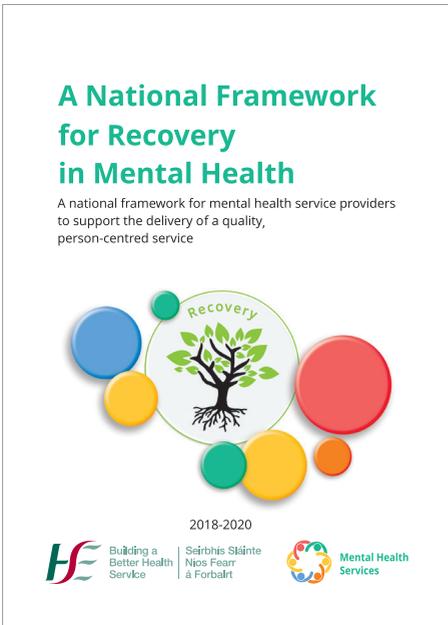
# Useful Resources

## Framework for Recovery in Mental Health

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/advancingrecoveryireland/national-framework-for-recovery-in-mental-health>

## Family Recovery Guidance Document

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/advancingrecoveryireland/national-framework-for-recovery-in-mental-health/family-recovery-guidance-document-2018-to-2020.pdf>



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**Mental Health  
Ireland**

## **MENTAL HEALTH IRELAND**

Promoting Positive Mental Health  
and Wellbeing

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[www.mentalhealthireland.ie](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie)

-  @mentalhealthirl
-  Mental.Health.Ireland
-  @mentalhealthireland



**Family  
Carers  
Ireland**

No one should have to care alone

## **FAMILY CARERS IRELAND**

We are the national charity supporting  
Ireland's 355,000+ family carers who  
provide care to a family member, loved one  
or friend with an illness or disability.

[www.familycarers.ie](http://www.familycarers.ie)

National Freephone Careline  
18 00 24 07 24

-  @CarersIreland
-  FamilyCarers
-  @familycarersireland