

## Helping Your Child Cope with Mental Illness

### Helping Your Child Return to School

- o Talk with your child's teacher(s) first. They can assist in your child's transition back to the classroom. The school can talk with your child's therapist. The school counselor and you can create a good plan of action.
- o Some tools may be needed to help your child adjust. These may include seating with fewer distractions, planned and unplanned breaks, and shortened assignments.
- o Remind your child he/she is not bad but they have an illness. Also remember that your child did not cause this disease.
- o Your child may need help catching up with school work. They may need extra time to finish their work or make up tests.

Most teachers are experienced and will have their own ideas. They may be able to pick up on your child's cues.

### Some Questions Your Child May Be Asked:

- o Where have you been?  
I was in the hospital.
- o Why?  
I was sick, but I am better now.
- o Is it something I can catch?  
No, you cannot catch it. It is not a germ.
- o Will you get better?  
With the right medications and therapy, most people get better.
- o Are you crazy?  
No I'm not crazy. I just needed help dealing with some problems.

### When You Return to School - Teens

Sometimes kids at school can be mean. You need to choose carefully who you share this information with. Not everyone will understand. Some may be very uncomfortable. Some may not know how to treat you after they learn you have been in the hospital.

- o Explain to those who ask that you were sick but are taking medicine and are better.
- o If you are not sure about whether or not to tell, then don't!
- o If you want to prepare yourself for questions, it might be helpful for you to practice "what if" with someone you trust.
- o You may even just simply say you were sick. You don't have to give any more information.



## Examples of Difficult Situations that May Arise:

My child can't go out for the basketball team because of his court-ordered therapy sessions. These sessions would interfere with his practice. What should I do?

Many therapists would encourage your child's participation in after school activities. It is important to discuss this with your therapist when scheduling appointments. They should be able to work around your child's activities. If not, you may want to talk with the coach about alternative times for practice.



My friends have shut me out.  
How do I help them to understand my condition?

You can tell your friends that you are the same person you were before they knew about your illness. Some friends may shut you out because they don't know how to help. They might not know what to say. You can explain to them that they can best help you by continuing to do things together as you had in the past.

You can also talk to your therapist. They can advise on how to talk about your child's situation to your friends and family.