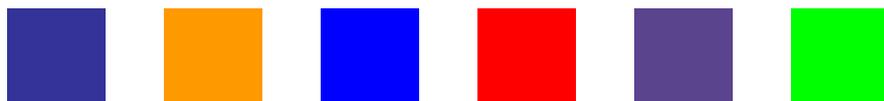




Guide Number 29a
Information for Children

Mental Health Services
January 2012



My name is: _____

I am _____ years old

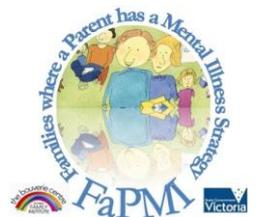
I am good at _____

If I need to talk to someone I can call:

Phone number: _____

You've been given this book because your Mum or Dad has a mental illness. This book tells you about mental illness. It also suggests who you can speak to if you need more information.

This publication may be particularly helpful for children aged 8-10 years.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These Guides are derived from the contributions of many health professionals, primarily the late Professor Ian Falloon. This guide is adapted from 'It's about you too', published by NSF (Scotland) 2004.



INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

The System To Aid Recovery (STAR) provided by Mental Health Services is made up of a series of Guides. These Guides are designed to strengthen your skills and knowledge and to support your treatment plan. They will be of most benefit when you participate as fully as you can in the process. The Guides are designed for you and your family and provide information about how to manage mental disorders and their impact.



Reflective Questions

Questions to help you think about the information and begin putting it into action.



Summary

A small review of what was covered in the Guide.



Worksheets

Activities designed to help with your recovery.



Education

Information on mental disorders and strategies for recovery.



Notes

These pages are designed for you to write down any questions and to write notes that you find interesting or helpful.



The Goal of this Guide

To assist children who have a parent or parents with Mental Disorders, by providing some information, answering questions and providing ideas of where to go for more information or help.

INTRODUCTION

If you are reading this book it is because your mum or dad has a mental disorder. This Guide covers information on Mental Illness for Children and how you can develop a back up plan for times when your parents may be unwell.



WHY DO PEOPLE GET MENTAL ILLNESS?

Anyone can become ill – like getting chickenpox or breaking an arm.



Mental illness is when the mind gets ill – like someone not knowing what they are doing or saying any more.

When someone has a mental illness, they don't feel good. Sometimes they feel confused.

Sometimes they feel tired and sad and can't

cope anymore. Sometimes they get angry for no reason.

Mental illness can be caused by too much or too little of a chemical in the brain. It can also be caused by people having too much stress or upset for so long that they feel they can't cope.

It's not always clear why some people get ill, but one thing is certain – it's not your fault. After all it's not your fault if your mum or dad gets a cold!

Just like with any illness, sometimes people get better faster in hospital than at home.

HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

Sometimes mental illness can be a one-off condition that gets better and never returns.

Sometimes it keeps happening, but people aren't SICK all the time and they cope with it either by themselves or with the help of others. Some people never fully get better and have to learn to live with their illness, usually with the help of medication.



Medication can help but sometimes it has unpleasant side effects. The person might feel tired or slow, or they might put on weight.

Can I catch it?

If a parent has a mental illness you might worry that you'll end up with the same thing. The fact is that most people do not develop the mental illness because their parents were unwell.

But it's also true that anyone can suffer from a mental illness.

WHAT HELPS?

When something is bothering you, it usually helps to talk about it. It can be hard, but you feel better when you do.

It can be hard living with a parent with a mental illness, so you also need the chance to talk about what's going on with your mum or dad and how you feel.

You can speak to the person who is treating your parent, your GP (family doctor), a teacher, a counselor or youth worker. Or you can contact yours or your parent's Clinical Therapist.



WHO TO TALK TO

It's best to talk to someone you like and who you can trust.

The people looking after your mum or dad should also be able to answer any questions.

Here are a few ideas of people you can talk to:

Mum or dad

Brother or sister

Teacher

Best friend

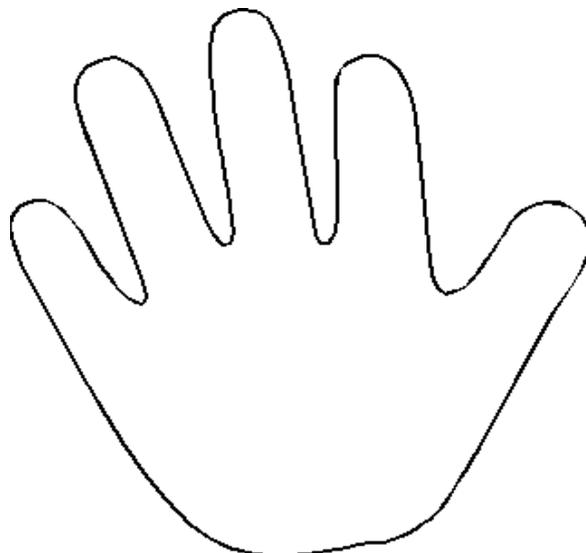
Neighbour

Friend's mother

Grandma or grandpa

Uncle or aunt

Can you think of anyone else? _____



Write the name of a trusted adult in the thumb and each finger of the hand. These are people you can call on if you need a 'helping hand'.

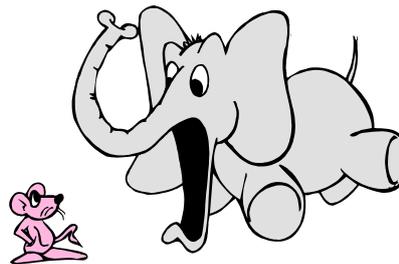
TYPES OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Depression: People suffering from depression feel very down and unhappy for a long period of time. They don't want to do the things they used to enjoy, such as spending time with you. They may also feel tired, find it difficult to sleep, or lose their appetite.



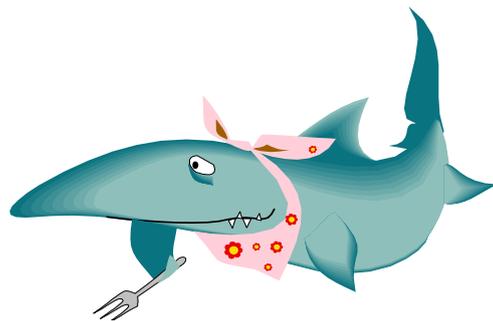
Bipolar Affective Disorder: People with Bipolar Affective Disorder can sometimes feel very happy and active, and at other times very depressed. They may often be irritable, and might become angry and aggressive for no reason. They may sleep very little and continually start new projects or have grand ideas that are often impossible to carry out.

Phobia: This is a very strong fear of everyday things like dogs or spiders or open spaces or small places. The fear can be so strong that people try to avoid whatever it is that frightens them, such as never going out of the house in case they see a dog or a spider. This means they don't do the things that they used to do such as going to work or going out with their children.



Psychosis: People who suffer from psychosis (or who are psychotic) can't think clearly. They may hear or see things that don't exist (hallucinations). They may have strange thoughts or beliefs (delusions). They may feel they are being watched, threatened or badly treated by everyone around them (paranoia).

Schizophrenia: Schizophrenia is a type of psychosis. People with schizophrenia may have different understanding of the world around them. They may have delusions and hallucinations. They can feel very confused and laugh at something sad or cry at something funny. They may hear voices in their head. Sometimes the person withdraws, and avoids contact with others and doesn't want to do any of the things they used to do. Many people do cope well with treatment which helps to control their problems.¹



If you need more information contact someone you can talk to. Write down your questions here and who you will talk to about them.



DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR WHEN MY MUM OR DAD ARE SICK

In this section you can think about the things you could do if your mum or dad become unwell and you need to stay with other adults for a time. You can discuss this with your parent(s) and the Clinical Therapist so that it can go into a plan.

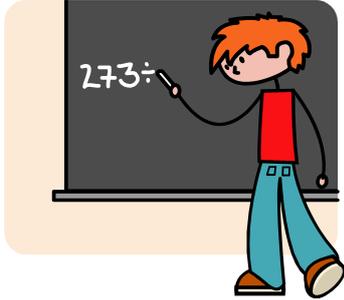
The people I would like to stay with are:





¹Need To Know: A Guide For Young People Who Have a Parent With A Mental Illness. Published by the National Schizophrenia Fellowship (NSF) in Scotland <http://www.nsfscot.org.uk/index.html>

The people at school who will be told about where I'm staying are:

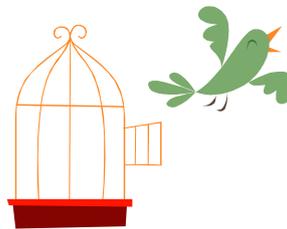


My pets will be looked after by:





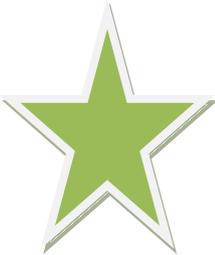
They eat:



Special items I want to bring with me are:



A FEW MORE MESSAGES FOR CHILDREN:



You did not cause your Parent's mental health problem



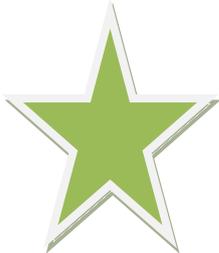
Find out about your Mum or Dad's illness

You cannot catch mental illness from another person

Make sure you have some fun!



You are not alone



Write out a list of the names and phone numbers of people who you can ring if you need to

This is a picture of my family:

Two things I like about my family:

1. _____

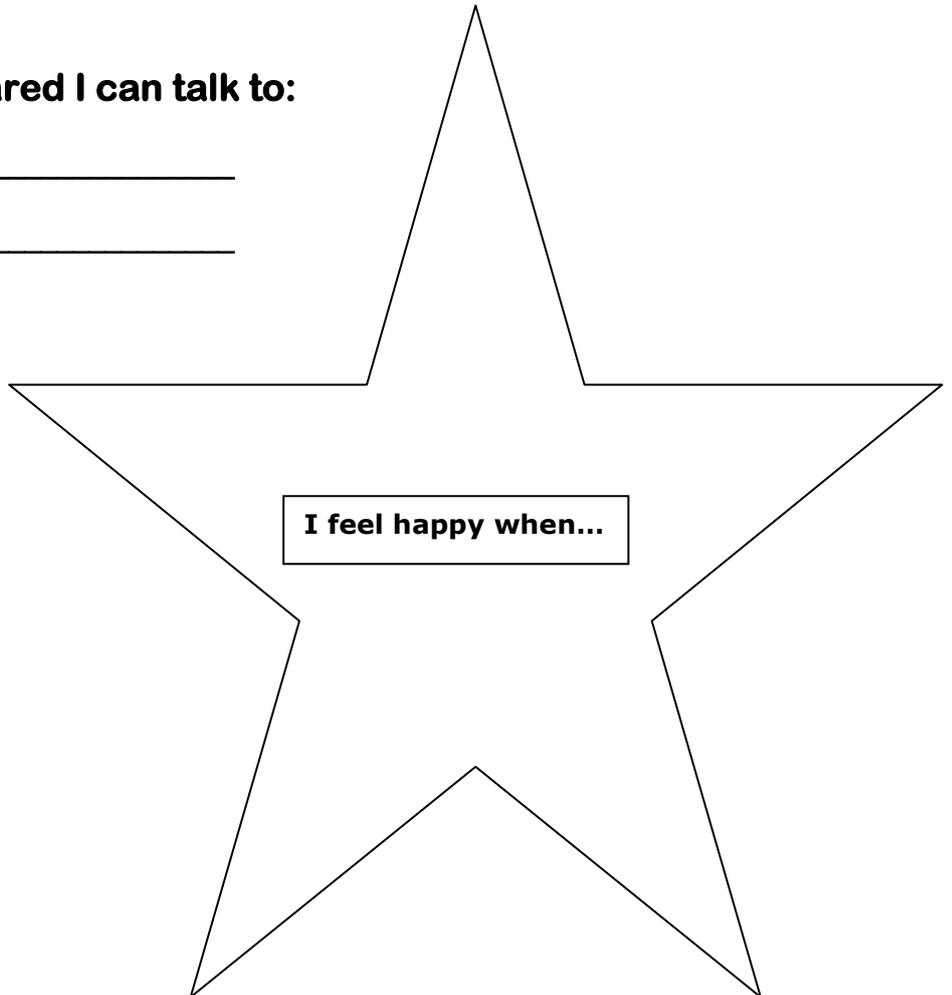
2. _____



Something I like doing with my family is:

If I feel worried or scared I can talk to:

I am really good at:



DO YOU HAVE SOME OF THESE QUESTIONS?



Did I do something wrong?

Your mum or dad's mental health problems are not your fault. Mental illness can be treated just like any other illness.

Can I help to make it better?

You are not responsible for your mum or dad feeling unwell. Even if you behave perfectly and get excellent grades at school your mum or dad may still get unwell. It's best to just be yourself.



When will mum or dad get better?

Over time your mum and dad may feel better, there may be times in the future when they feel unwell and need help again.



Q. What other questions do you have?

Make sure you pay attention to your self and your needs and feeling too. There are lots of ways to let your feeling out, you could try some of these ways:

- Talking about it
- Scribbling hard on paper
- Running
- Cuddling a pet
- Screwing up paper
- Having a hug
- Writing it down
- Drawing, painting
- Going for a walk
- Playing music
- Swinging really high
- Hitting a pillow
- Hitting drums
- Kicking a ball
- Dancing
- Playing sport
- Going to the beach or park
- Skating or bike riding

Information & resources for parents & carers:

www.copmi.net.au

www.raisingchildren.net.au

www.carersvic.org.au

www.lifeline.com.au

For children & young people:

www.champsworldwide.org

www.kidshelpline.com.au

www.reachout.com.au

www.headspace.org.au

www.itsallright.org/



We Value Your Feedback Date: ____/____/____

This evaluation is designed to provide feedback regarding the System to Aid Recovery (STAR). Please take a moment to fill in this form and return it to either your Clinical Therapist or to the reception desk. You may like to post it in by sending it to South West Healthcare Mental Health Services, Koroit Street, Warrnambool, Vic 3280.

If 1 is the worst it could possibly be and 5 is the best, rate the following statements about this STAR Guide and associated activities					
Was the Guide....	1	2	3	4	5
Easy to read					
Easy to understand					
Easy to follow					
Suited to your needs					
Were the activities in the Guide...	1	2	3	4	5
Useful					
Easy to follow					
Did they work					

- Did you complete most of the activities in this Guide with your Clinical Therapist or did you complete them in your own time?
 - Clinical Therapist Completed in own time
 - Did not complete most of the activities

- Were there any problems with this material?
 - Yes No Unsure

3. What were they?

4. What recommendations do you have for improvements?

Thank You – This form is private and confidential

