

## HELP SHEET: CAREGIVERS AND THE RIGHT TO HELP



### AS A CAREGIVER FOR SOMEONE WITH BIPOLAR DISORDER

Caregivers can play an important role in helping their loved one manage bipolar disorder, but sometimes there's confusion around the role they can have in the treatment process.

So here's some basic information that can help as you sit down with your loved one and the Treatment Team, including the doctor, to find the process that works best for all of you.

Download Help Sheet: [\*Working with the Treatment Team\*](#) from [psychu.org](http://psychu.org) for more on who to talk to.



### THE RIGHT TO SHARE

As a caregiver, with your loved one's permission, you may offer important information to the Treatment Team — especially when it has to do with symptoms and side effects.



### THE RIGHT TO ASK

Healthcare professionals can only discuss a patient's condition with caregivers if they have their patient's permission to do so. Ask the Treatment Team what's required for permission. Sometimes it's enough for a patient to give consent verbally or by letter.

If you don't have permission from your loved one yet, **10 Good Reasons to Involve Caregivers** can help start the conversation and explain how valuable caregiver involvement can be.



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**10 GOOD REASONS TO INVOLVE CAREGIVERS**

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### 10 GOOD REASONS TO INVOLVE CAREGIVERS

Every one of us has the right to privacy, and it's important to acknowledge that. But there are some very good reasons for caregivers to be able to participate in their loved one's treatment. They can

1. Provide a general medical history and help describe the history of the illness
2. Help track whether symptoms are getting better or worse
3. Watch out for any potential side effects of medication
4. Provide a stable, structured environment
5. Urge their loved one to put off plans to start big projects or spend a lot of money during a manic episode
6. Help their loved one navigate the very complex healthcare system
7. Encourage their loved one to follow the treatment plan
8. Spend time with their loved one on activities unconnected to bipolar disorder such as eating dinner out
9. Help their loved one recognize early signs of a manic or depressive episode
10. Prepare a crisis plan in case of an emergency



### HOW PERMISSION CAN BE GIVEN

Permission to discuss a patient's condition can be given by the patient verbally or by a letter. Also, some healthcare facilities will have their own consent form. Meet with your loved one and the Treatment Team to talk about how you can be involved and how to get formal consent.



### VALUABLE RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS

Many other questions about the rights of caregivers and loved ones can come up when you live with bipolar disorder. Reach out to the following organizations for more information and resources:

- The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the largest grassroots mental health organization and a good resource for information and support. Visit [nami.org](http://nami.org)
- The Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) is a peer-directed national organization that provides hope, help, support, and education to improve the lives of patients with depression and bipolar disorder. Visit [dbsalliance.org](http://dbsalliance.org)
- Mental Health America (MHA) is a community-based nonprofit dedicated to helping address the needs of those living with mental illness. Visit [nmha.org](http://nmha.org)

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