

# Psychosis:

## How Friends and Family Can Offer Support

Recovery from psychosis is possible and treatment can be very effective, but it can be a long road. Support and understanding of friends and loved ones is important.

### What can you do to help?

- ▶ Learn about psychosis. A good website for background information is [cedarclinic.org](http://cedarclinic.org);
- ▶ Provide warmth, structure, and space when speaking with your friend;
- ▶ Keep communication simple, and avoid asking questions that might seem critical or intrusive;
- ▶ Help the person lower stress/expectations, at least temporarily, by adjusting deadlines, reducing work load, even adjusting social expectations to allow a person to function optimally;
- ▶ Encourage your friend/loved one to seek professional help;
- ▶ Contact a local counseling center or your doctor for information and professional help.

### How to take care of yourself when supporting a friend:

- ▶ Keep healthy boundaries; do not take on your friend's problems as your own;
- ▶ Do not tolerate aggression or threatening behaviors;
- ▶ Seek out counseling for yourself if you feel overwhelmed;
- ▶ Be sure to get sleep, exercise and eat well;
- ▶ Stay socially connected to others.



### Treatment: Remember...

**A person experiencing psychosis needs medical and psychological treatment.** Psychosis is the experience of losing touch with reality; it often involves seeing, hearing and believing things that aren't real. Psychosis is not itself a mental illness. It is a symptom that may signal mental or physical illness, substance use, or response to extreme stress, such as trauma. While friends and loved ones can offer invaluable support, a medical and/or psychiatric assessment is key. Therapy and medical treatment may be necessary for recovery and optimal functioning.