

How to Avoid Relapses

1. Provide a structured, **supportive, tolerant, low stress environment**. Set clear expectations of behavior and review them carefully. Give your relative clearly defined tasks, but keep expectations moderate. Learn to expect and tolerate some degree of deviant behavior. Have a set routine in the household with regular hours for meals, tasks, and other activities.

2. **Keep home atmosphere as calm as possible**. Each family member should speak for themselves and be allowed to finish what they are saying. Don't "mind-read" what another family member is thinking or feeling. Allow each family member to handle their own communication with another family member. Don't ask a brother to tell a sister. Do it yourself. Remind each other of that.

3. **Do not get emotionally over involved with your relative**. Give them psychological and physical space (ex. let them go to their room or take a walk). Keep criticism and over enthusiastic praise to a minimum. Don't be overly intrusive of your ill relative's thoughts or feelings, like saying, "you wouldn't like that kind of work" or "you really don't like so and so". Expect that they may rest or pace a lot, and indulge in unusual but harmless behavior. Allow this. Adopt an attitude of "Benign indifference" and a decreased focus on the details of the ill person's behavior.

4. **Put limits on hostile or bizarre behavior**. Often deviant behavior or delusional verbalizations will decrease if he is told, in a non-emotional way, that it is not appropriate. If your relative has paranoid ideas (like they feel people are out to hurt them) don't argue them out of it. Just sympathize, saying it must be upsetting to feel like that. Be very clear but calm about the consequences of continuing with disruptive, hostile, or aggressive behavior.

5. Help in providing stimulation and treatment. **Recognize changes in the person that signal they are ready for more independence, or need more help if doing less well**. Inform doctors, therapists, etc. of changes in person's condition. Provide stimulation without stress. Visits, outings, etc. are good only if the ill person is interested and can function acceptably. Discovering this is a trial and error procedure. Families can help explore available community programs. Become a knowledgeable aggressive advocate and your relative will get better care and do better.

6. **Take care of yourself**. Families must take care of themselves. Share your frustrations with others. Join AMI/FAMI Support Groups. Enjoy outside interests, too. Increase your outside social contacts. Make sure all family members have their needs met, not just the sick person.

7. Remember: The future is unpredictable and **stay with the present**. Reduce expectations for a rapid recovery. Reduce pressure on the patient for performance. Modify overall expectations and strike a reasonable balance between realism and hope.