



*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."*

MARGARET MEAD

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## Psycho educational programs help families cope with mental illness

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Psycho educational programs may bring about several beneficial effects. Hospitalization rates may be decreased, community resources may be better utilized, and there may be increased demand for other consumer resources.

For children and adolescents with behavioral and emotional disorders and their families, education about their disorders and the treatments is an essential component of a comprehensive approach to their care. Education can encourage active participation in treatment, enhance adherence to treatment regimens, and provide patients and families with important coping skills.

Several therapeutic outcomes and goals may be defined for psychoeducational groups, for example:

- Allowing the family members to provide their perspective on the consumer's illness
- Provide information
- Facilitate the expression of feelings
- Identify coping patterns of the family in dealing with the illness
- Help families find a balance between helping the consumer and fulfilling their own needs

When consumers and their families are given the opportunity to voice their concerns and talk about their difficulties, there is a sense of being heard and that their problems are being addressed. Thus an effective program involves a 2-way flow of information, from provider to consumer and family and vice versa. By this means, the sense of isolation and alienation that the family and consumer often feel may be diminished.

Previous studies have shown that family participation in well-designed psychoeducational programs can reduce patient relapse rates and improve adherence to treatment programs. But they also benefit caregivers; knowing how to effectively cope with a patient's behaviors reduces reports of psychosomatic symptoms and burnout.

The data reported by Dr. Michelle Sherman of the Veterans administration, also show significant positive correlations between workshops attended and both understanding of mental illness and awareness of resources. In addition, program attendees felt they were better able to take care of themselves — which Sherman says benefits overall family functioning. "The satisfaction rate of the participants is very high," Sherman says. "But there's more to it than the program. Through contacts made in the sessions, they're able to develop friendships that add ongoing support."

Despite the potential benefits of psychoeducational programs, due to lack of availability only 10% of consumers and families participate in these groups.

## **References**

1. Landwehr KA, Baker, LS. *Simultaneous Consumer-Family-Provider Psychiatric Education: The Pebbles in The Pond Experience*. Program and abstracts of the American Psychiatric Association 53rd Institute on Psychiatric Services; October 10-14, 2001; Orlando, Florida. Innovative Program 11.
2. Michelle Sherman, PhD Professional Psychology: Research and Practice (Vol. 34, No. 1).

## **Demystifying Brain Disorders for Families**

**FACES** is proud to be offering its psychoeducational program (Demystifying Brain Disorders for Families) The program consists of six 2 hour sessions, facilitated by members who have chosen to share their experience in dealing with brain disorders and are trained to teach the most up to date information available.

The **FACES** classes include:

- Class I — Introduction
  - Definition of brain disorders, diagnostic criteria
  - Depression, Schizophrenia, schizoaffective, bipolar, mood disorders
  - Family role and input in diagnosis
  - Stigma
  - Impact on families
- Class II — The History of Treatment in the U. S.
  - Sharing our stories
  - Crisis Tool Kit
  - Suicide Prevention
- Class III — Medications
  - Why People stop taking medications
- Class IV — Empathy workshop
  - Problem solving
- Class V — Communication
  - How to talk to someone in crisis and at other times
- Class VI — Self help
  - Recovery — definition and example
  - Stress and recovery

The **FACES** psycho educational program is available psycho educational programs and FREE for family members and mentors, but space in each class is limited. Sign up now for the fall sessions and reap the rewards for your family and for your loved ones. Call the **FACES** office at (804) 378-0035 to register now.