

# #GettingThrough family life during an inpatient stay

Created by and for families

## Acknowledge the situation

It can feel very strange to leave your child at an inpatient unit and come home. You may have been on red alert and full of stress or the admission could have come out of the blue. Either way you are likely to experience a wide range of emotions - relief, guilt, hope, fear, exhaustion or a mix of them all. This is completely normal.

*It's hard walking past her empty bedroom... I used to keep her door shut, it felt more natural, as when she was at home it was always shut*

## Getting through family life

The way you are as a family will probably feel different. Much of your daily routine may have revolved around your child who is now in hospital; it will take time for everyone to adjust. One person might want to talk about it, another might not. Relationships can feel under pressure which is normal. You may be dealing with a kind of grief: seeing the empty seat at the table or not hearing their music playing. This can be really difficult and there is no easy answer. But the intensity of these feelings will change – it's a rollercoaster.

*When I went out at first, I would keep my headphones on so I didn't have to talk to anyone. Once I worked out my "one liner" I felt better speaking about it as I knew I could keep it short*

## Getting through talking with other people

You may be wondering what to say to friends, wider family or at work/school. Your child's voice is important in this. If they are well enough, talk to them to see what they are comfortable sharing.

People's questions and reactions can catch you off guard at a time when you may be feeling vulnerable. It can be painful when others try to give you advice or say things that feel judgemental. Some people will be amazingly supportive, others may avoid talking and some might ask too much. Remember, you have control over what you choose to share.

*Don't allow the issues with the child in hospital to overtake everything with life (we made that mistake)*

## What you can do: Top tips

- Try to keep talking as a family. You might not all see things the same way but accept how everyone is feeling and allow yourselves time to adjust.
- Plan and agree as a family what you are comfortable sharing with other people and, if it helps, practise what you are going to say.
- Having a routine – such as making meals and going to work/school can help you manage. On the other hand, cutting down hours or taking time off might be what is needed.
- The most important thing is to have the courage to do what is right for you as a family, not what is right for everyone else. This might involve turning your phone/ social media off or saying no to a social commitment.

*We were embarrassed at first. We had no history of mental health issues in the family, so it took meeting others in the same boat to understand we didn't do anything wrong..*

- Make time for yourself. Reach out to others going through similar experiences - it may help you feel less alone. Talking things through with someone who is not as emotionally involved e.g., friends, G.P, school counsellor, support group, can be helpful.
- Don't feel you have to stop going out and doing things which you each enjoy.
- Every family is entitled to a Carers' Assessment. This will look at your family's wider needs and see what can be put in place e.g. financial support, young carers' services (for siblings) or information about support groups. If the unit hasn't offered, ask them how to access this.
- There is no one answer to #GettingThrough. Sometimes you will get it right, sometimes you will get it wrong. Just keep going.

*Remember not to beat yourself up if you laugh or enjoy yourself. The day after my daughter was Sectioned, I had concert tickets... I didn't think I should go. My husband and sister and other kids said yes.... I went and had a fantastic night. Life has to go on*



For further information and support visit  
[www.england.nhs.uk/getting-through/](http://www.england.nhs.uk/getting-through/)

