So your mum or dad has a mental illness...





It can be very scary to hear that your mum or dad has a mental illness. What does it mean?

What is mental illness?

You know that people can have all kind of illnesses.

They might be sick because they have the 'flu, or a tummy upset.

They might be sick because they've had an accident or hurt their back.

It's easy to tell when somebody is sick like that - mental illness is also a way of being sick - but it is much harder to see.

A mental illness can change the way a person acts, thinks or feels.

Your mum or dad might seem really sad a lot of the time.

Or they might get angry more easily.

Or they may shut themselves away in a room.

Or they might drink a lot of alcohol or take drugs that don't come from the doctor.

Or they may get very worried about small things.

Or they may see or hear things that aren't real.



What causes mental illness?

No-one can be really sure but it is probably a mix of things:

- Something going wrong with the way the brain works
- Being worried and stressed out
- Something bad happening
- Taking drugs that don't come from the doctor



What will happen to my mum or dad?

Most people with a mental illness get better or learn to cope with their feelings, emotions and mental health.

- Your mum or dad might see a special doctor who can give them medicines that will help.
- They can talk to someone and that can help them sort things out.
- Sometimes they might have to go to hospital for a rest and see people who can help every day until they are feeling better and can go back home again.



What can I do?

It's really important for you to understand what's happening to your mum and dad. They are not sick because of you, or anything you did, it's not your fault.

Try to talk to someone you trust about what is happening... that might be

- Your mum or dad
- Your brother or sister
- Someone else in your family
- A teacher
- A youth worker
- The people who are looking after your mum or dad



ChildLine 0800 1111

You can ring ChildLine anytime you feel like talking to someone 08001111

Lifeline 0808 808 8000

Or you can contact LifeLine to talk about what is happening 0808 808 8000

To find out about local organisations that can support you check out this website:

http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/

CYPSP Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership

Participation Network Supporting the Public Sector to engage children & young people



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