

This information sheet was developed as part of the workshops held at the November 2014 *EPION Think Tank on Family Work*. It is intended for EPI programs in Ontario to use as a tool to promote discussion within their own organization and networks. There are 7 information sheets in total coming from the EPION Think Tank on Family Work. They are:

- Tips for EPI staff in working with families: What family members want you to know
- How to develop a family support network that is not dependent on EPI staff to convene
- Supporting families when their loved one comes in conflict with the law
- What other EPI team members need to know about family work: How everyone on the team can help support the family
- Choosing a family assessment tool
- Helping families at time of discharge: What do families need to know when their loved one is transitioning into the adult mental health system?
- Self care for family support workers

About this Topic

The goal is to acknowledge and honour YOU, the family worker, an invaluable part of the treatment team. The premise is *If you don't take care of yourself, what will happen?*

- Compassion fatigue
- Burnout
- Your own mental and physical health may be jeopardized

Put your own oxygen on first before helping others. This will enable you to continue to serve the families in your care.

This information sheet looks at:

- What you are already doing to take care of yourself at home and at work
- What your organization is already doing or potentially can do to ensure that you're taking care of yourself, eg. supervision, reinforcing collegiality, etc.
- What EPION can do to ensure that the family worker is taking care of themselves

Initial Tip, Know your own mental state. How Stressed Are You?

- **What are your early warning signs that you need to take care of yourself?**
 - Inability to cope at work or home
 - Sleep issues
 - Isolating self at work and home
 - Difficulty with focus and concentration
 - Depressed - no sense of humour
 - Loss of sense of humour

Be aware of your mental and physical wellness and know when you're triggered. Recognise when you need professional help for yourself. Remember: This is a highly individualistic process. It takes practice to take care of yourself. Sometimes it is difficult to keep all the balls in the air and balance competing needs of family, work, friends, healthy living strategies, recreational and spiritual needs, etc.

Resource: Stress awareness map from Promoting Recovery from First Episode Psychosis; A Family Guide by Sabrina Baker and Lisa Martens, published by CAMH.

Tips—Individual (What you can do)

- Be aware of your own state
- Practice yoga, meditation or other spiritual practices on a regular basis
- Schedule a regular time for this practice which enables you to be aware of the moment.
- Leave work at assigned time. Set boundaries and take breaks for yourself at home and at work. Tell yourself that you are important and that it is important to be able to “shut off work”
- Take time for self
- Take time for yourself and get some rest. Practice good sleep hygiene
- Take personal time (structured/carved out time) for self everyday
- Give yourself permission to follow your passion
- Listen to your body, honour your own needs
- Follow your passion and let it thrive, be it music, horses or whatever
- Pets and babies can be very nurturing
- Spirituality
- Nature can be nurturing
- Develop routine that supports health, ie eat well, exercise, sleep hygiene
- Be aware of your mental, physical, emotional wellness tools
- Some people enjoy spacing out by watching TV, movies or reading a book
- Some people enjoy a hot tub
- Good wine
- Build on strengths
- Take time for self on a regular basis
- Music, choir
- Make healthy eg - stop smoking
- Try to walk at work during lunch time
- Find wonderful beauty in one thing everyday, keep gratitude journal
- Remember that my positive thoughts validates others
- Gardening
- Ask for help when you need it

Tips – Organization (What your organization or program can do)

- Foster a sense of belonging/protection
- Build collegiality through a buddy system
- Supervision is vital and can be formal or informal. It is important to differentiate your supervisor from the person who evaluates your work
- Pot luck lunches or regular informal support is very nurturing
- Management/Administrative support- make it a priority in supporting the family worker.
- Immediate debrief when necessary

- Mindfulness built into staff meetings
- Employer supports mindfulness practice- provided at work
- Full-time clinical lead for support
- Flexible workplace and hours of work
- Weekly 'check in', not clinical
- Team building through building trust
- Ensure that your role is clearly defined and set the parameters re scope of practice
- Take lunch breaks or flex the time with permission from the powers that be
- Don't overwork and spend many unpaid hours at work
- Need for acknowledgement of family worker is vital.
- Daily walk with colleagues- part of mindfulness practice
- Built in program-mindfulness, yoga at work
- Keep the strength based approach in peer relationships
- Treat yourself with the same respect that you give to others
- Organization should develop clear and supportive policies for staff and a workplace that backs this up
- Strengthen overall morale and health of organization
- Bond over food
- Organization provides wide wellness sessions x/a month
- Book in a break for yourself on a daily basis
- Provide physical environments that are family friendly
- Staff meet without management to talk about how work impacts them in order to decompress and get support from colleagues
- Staff to take mental health days in lieu of sick days
- Retreats within organizations 'human side of our work'
- Train and provide regular education to family worker