Sample definitions of Family Psychoeducation Family Guidelines

**Believe in your power to affect the outcome: you can!**

Validating beliefs can build self-confidence (“I can do this!”), and support focus on the here-and-now moment so that you can take next steps in the recovery/healing process.

**One step at a time**

Stresses and demands are taken seriously and steps toward healing/recovery are paced to keep stress below the threshold for symptom exacerbation, reduce risks for relapse and promote success across life domains/goals/aspirations.

**Consider using medications to protect your future, if the doctor recommends it**

Low dose medications, a standard practice of care in early psychosis treatment programs, have been found in research studies to be very helpful in reducing symptoms in individuals with schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders. Medication has been found to be an effective form of treatment for reducing symptoms in individuals with bipolar disorder.

**Reduce stress and responsibility for a while**

This helps individuals and family members slow down which can reduce stress in order to focus on the healing process and build strength for next steps in healing/recovery. Remember this is often temporary and will not be a pace that you follow forever!

**Use the symptoms as indicators**

Learn individual’s unique early warning signs and take agreed upon action steps to have the best chance at reducing the likelihood early signs and symptoms will get worse.

Referring to and following the Relapse Prevention Plan lets the individual’s preferences and understanding of what does and does not help direct family members and support people’s involvement in preventing a relapse. Having a plan in place can greatly reduce stressful situations from becoming more stressful!

**Anticipate life stresses**

Developing skills to identify upcoming stressful life situations allows young people and their supporters/family members make plans on how to manage the stress so that it is unlikely to lead to a relapse of symptoms.

**Keep it calm**

Supports environmental accommodations by family and support people to avoid too much sensory stimulation and promote calm atmosphere

(Examples: reduce background noise, light levels in rooms, avoid multiple conversations at once.)

Helps negative symptoms stabilize over time.

**Give each other space**

Allows for time-outs and a time and place for family members and young people to withdraw from others without criticism.

Okay to continue to invite to activities and allows for people to decline offer while staying connected.

**Set a few simple limits**

Allows for everyone to know what the expectations are in home, daily routine, substance use, etc. Clear expectations can lower stress.

**Ignore what you can’t change**

Identify and avoid stressful topics. Encourages family members to adapt and accommodate for symptoms that are beyond their control, like stopping someone else’s delusional thought; and stay in conversation.   
(Examples: change the subject, move away from getting stuck on ideas that reflect a person’s delusional thoughts)

DO NOT IGNORE violence

DO NOT IGNORE hints or threats of suicide

**Keep it simple**

To help with information processing difficulties, conversations can be: *shorter, less complex, and sensitized to stressful topics unique to the individual.*   
This approach will help protect and buffer complexities that the individual negotiates in their everyday life and the world.

Avoid guessing what other people are thinking and support each person to speak on their own behalf, in the least stressful way possible.

**Carry on business as usual**

Supports family members to continue or reestablish family routines. This can increase predictability in typical daily life activities, allow for family member participation in household responsibilities, and reduce stress that comes from disruption of typical routines.

**Solve problems step-by-step**

Reduce stress from tackling too many problems at once.

Supports your ability to prioritize steps you and your supporters need to take in order to succeed at problem-solving.

Accommodates cognitive differences and encourages everyone’s voice and perceptive get included in problem-solving.

**Keep a balanced *life* and balance *perspective***

**Limit alcohol and avoid street drugs**

Alcohol and street drugs can make symptoms worse and get in the way of the effectiveness of prescribed medications.

It helps to make decisions about alcohol and street drug use that fit personal and family lifestyle choices, values, as well as an individual’s risks for symptom relapse.

***Explain your circumstances to your closest friends and relatives, and ask them for help and to stand by you***

***Don’t move abruptly or far away until stability returns***

***Attend the multi-family (or single family) problem-solving meetings***

***Follow the recovery plan***

***Keep HOPE alive!***

References:

EASA Center for Excellence Family Guidelines

W.R. McFarlane 2010 PIER Training Institute PowerPoint