

RESOURCES:

Most children/youth need periodic offerings of information and a trusted adult to listen, answer questions and just "be there" for them.

Child Care Plan: www.howstat.com/comic/ChildCarePlan.asp Can be adapted for siblings and other youth as needed.

Children of Parents w/ Mental Illness: www.copmi.net.au/

Young Carers: www.youngcarers.net.au

COMIC: www.howstat.com/.comic

Sibshops: www.siblingsupport.org/sibshops/find-a-sibshop

Sibling support/book list: siblingsupport.org/

Various community-based, brief, *trauma-focused* approaches may be appropriate for children who have experienced trauma.

E.M.P.S.-Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services-assessment for children/youth (including witnessing trauma) Dial "211".

Children have feelings & opinions too!

Don't judge a book by its cover!

Ask me, don't assume!



Developed through grassroots, stakeholder input by:

East of the River Community Collaborative

Meets: 2nd Monday of each month
From 9:30-11AM
South United Methodist Church
123 Hartford Rd., Manchester, CT 06040

Serving Manchester, South Windsor, Vernon, Bolton, Tolland, & Ellington

<http://wrapct.org/Collaboratives.aspx>

A message to children/youth: You are NOT alone! Millions of kids just like you experience having a parent, sibling, or other family member with mental illness/emotional distress. Remember to:

- Take time out to do fun things!
- Reach out to trusted adults who will listen when you need information, help or someone to talk to.
- Know that you can go on to have a happy, successful life no matter what your childhood experiences are.



"The first step toward change is Awareness.

The second step is Acceptance."

- Nathaniel Branden

... A portion of the information kindly contributed by...
COMIC's "What about me?" brochure:
<http://www.howstat.com/.comic>

& THANK YOU to Fall 2014 Manchester Sibshops & I-DASLE FB group members for your input!

Don't forget to talk to children & youth about mental health!



U.S. Daughters & Sons Initiative
CT contact: **Cheri Bragg-Acker**
(860) 841-6968

You are not alone!



Van Gogh, Vincent. *The Starry Night*. 1889. *The Museum of Modern Art*, New York.



Kids pay a high price for their invisibility!

Children & youth who have a parent, sibling or other close family member struggling with their mental health are “invisible” within the traditional mental health care system, often falling between the gap of the Child Welfare/Mental Health System and the Adult Mental Health System. Family crises lead to the same “invisibility” within the family unit: the person in crisis necessarily needs support, but children & youth are often left out of decisions which can increase feelings of isolation, confusion, fear, loss or misunderstanding. Children and youth often lack voice and choice.

These issues are often compounded by very real family fears of high custody loss rates or child welfare involvement. Other people are afraid to talk to children about mental health, but kids are affected too when a family member is in emotional distress!

“The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.”
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

COMMON STRENGTHS OF DAUGHTERS/SONS:

- Creative Orientation
- Tolerance of Difference
- Willingness to Change the Status Quo
- Emotional Expressiveness
- A Sense of Humor

*Five Redemptive Characteristics identified through Qualitative Analysis/Interviews by Heather Burack, MSW, while completing her Master of Social Work at Hunter College-CUNY.

COMMON STRENGTHS OF SIBLINGS taking “Sibshops”:

- Self Concept
- Maturity Level
- Gain Perspective/Insight
- Empathy/Compassion
- Loyalty
- Flexibility/Problem-solving

*Information adapted from “Sibshops” (Meyer & Vadasy, 2008)

COMMON CONCERNS:

Include: Lack of trust, relationship difficulties, struggle with formation of identity, feelings of fear/guilt/shame/anger/confusion/grief/embarrassment/worry, etc. and high stress as caregivers (called “young carers” in Australia), the responsibilities of which can continue well into late adulthood or even be lifelong!

Article 12 of the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990) states that “...parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child...”

COMMON MYTHS:

- **Talking to children about their family members’ mental health struggle will scare them:** Children often know something is going on and may be coming to their own conclusions; listening to children/youth lets them know that their experiences matter and that their feelings are valid and important.
- **Children/youth who struggle with a family members’ mental health will develop mental illness themselves:** Children & youth must be supported like anyone else in the family, but it doesn’t necessarily mean they will have clinical needs. *Offer information & support early and often!*
- **Parents with mental health struggles cannot or should not be parents:** Many parents with mental health struggles are excellent parents; some people need varied supports & services; some are temporarily or permanently unable to parent just as in the general population. Bonds must be nurtured whenever possible.



Bill of Rights : ***(adopted from the San Francisco Partnership for Incarcerated Parents-2003)***

1. *I have the right to be kept safe and informed during times of crisis.*
2. *I have the right to be heard when decisions are made about me and my family.*
3. *I have the right to speak with, see and touch my parent/sibling/family member.*
4. *I have the right not to be judged, blamed or labeled due to disability in the family.*
5. *I have the right to support if I struggle.*