Clinical Toolkit

Clinical Tips: Supporting Family and Friends of a Young Person With Borderline Personality Disorder

Borderline Personality Disorder can have a profound effect on family and friends, and health practitioners can support them in a number of ways. These include:

- Referral to psychoeducation resources and support services (e.g. headspace, orygen, spectrum, project air strategy, and eheadspace)
- Supporting them to navigate the health system
- Supporting them to interact with their young person in a positive way when they are distressed (e.g. showing empathy, having a non-judgemental attitude, encouraging independence, validating their emotions)
- Providing information about responding to suicidal risk and self-harm. They should be involved in safety planning where possible
- Providing a referral to family counselling (eheadspace can also provide online support to family and friends)
- Supporting them to access available support services (eg respite services, carer support groups)

Family members and friends of young people can offer support and resources that are vital for young people living with mental health issues. With the young person's agreement, their family members or friends can be involved in the care of the young person. See engaging family and friends to read more about clinical tips and the benefits of involving family and friends in a young person's care.

Note that a young person may not want to involve their family or friends in their care. If this is the case, do not force the issue. Rather, explore their concerns about doing so and revisit family involvement later. Note that involving family in a young person's care is not always helpful or safe if abuse has or is occurring. Risk issues should be explored with the young person.

Practice tip

Not all young people will want to involved family and friends directly. Sometimes, family involvement is inappropriate. Sometimes, the young person will benefit from working individually for a period of time, and become open to family or supportive friends involvement at a later stage.