



TIPS FOR FAMILIES, FROM **YOUNG PEOPLE**

WITH LIVED/LIVING EXPERIENCE OF COMPLEX
MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS



Breaking Barriers



Making Connections



Building Confidence

... about understanding young people's internal experiences and what these mean for their interactions and behaviour.

Young people with lived/living experience of complex mental health conditions emphasised that having some understanding of their internal experiences is crucial as without it, some parents, carers, families and kin might internalise young people's challenges as being due to 'bad parenting' or their 'fault', which reduces understanding and connection between young people and their parents, carers, families and kin.

- "I think I just sort of wish they knew that it wasn't on them like it wasn't their fault or it wasn't like me thinking they were like bad parents and that's why it was sort of happening because I think that would have made sort of the understanding for both of us a lot smoother."
- "I wish my parents knew I was [autistic] much earlier. [The diagnosis] helped them understand me a lot because when I was younger, I always had you know problems, and...parenting professionals [told my parents I was struggling because their] parenting isn't good enough... [so] it's helped us as a family a lot to know that I'm on the spectrum".
- "With complex mental health, lashing out and irritability doesn't always mean that it's towards them or something that they've done. It's more [a response to] a situation... so I think more education around diagnosis and symptoms would have been better for my family."
- "There were a lot of fights with my parents... when they didn't really understand what was going on. It wasn't that I was angry at them, [and] them thinking that just made it worse and continued the cycle of them feeling like they weren't doing enough as parents and all of that when it was genuinely just my anger was just a symptom of me dealing with all of that stuff."



... about the need for information and support for parents, carers, families and kin.

- When doing a group therapy program with other young people, “our parents also had to do bi-weekly group therapy, and I think that was really important to have a space with other parents who have kids going through the same things and being also taught about us at the same time.”
- My family “learned some of the skills that we learn[t as young people] on how to manage our emotions. It was good just having that alongside support for us as well, because I think it just really helped everyone”.

... about navigating services and supports for young people in relation to their mental health and education.

Young people see the significant impacts when families don't have information and support about navigating services and systems for themselves, and also for their families.

- "I wish my family knew there was a lot more resources that were there to help them... because I had siblings too, and my parents are a bit burnt out on my complex mental health."
- "Knowing [more about our] rights as well as resources would have been good as well, especially being on Mental Health Act or being on treatment orders. More awareness of rights would have been good."
- "Having resources for myself and my parents on how to step down from a long admission, because after admission even after like three weeks they just say 'oh yeah, you're free to go. Here you go.' They give you a number and they give you an outpatient referral but like there's no real follow-up care."
- "I wish that my family knew like with outpatient [support], the doctors and people you see change every couple months... there's no continuity of care. It just feels like you're starting over with a whole new team every couple of months and it's just like you're picking up with someone else. There's no follow through."
- "When I was in a bad spot, [I couldn't get the help I needed], so I made the decision to do something pretty drastic, and it worked, I got the help I needed, but putting myself in that position just [to get] help really hurt me. It's what I had to do at the time to get help because no one was able to help me."

...about maintaining trust between families and young people and supporting young people's autonomy.

Autonomy is important to young people. Feeling trusted by their families and support teams has a positive impact on young people while loss of autonomy causes significant challenges and harms.

- “In my experience, it made it worse not having that trust, like not being able to be alone or all of that when I would be saying [it was what I needed]. It's obviously a tricky thing to navigate because it's like, yeah, how do you trust your kid with [their own safety or self harm], but I think there definitely needs to be some sort of I guess information about how it can be damaging in a way to impose all of these rules and stuff.”
- “I think it's so important to have [families] in some of the conversations with your psychiatrist or psychologist and have them knowing the information because then I think it also helps establish more of a trust thing and then creates less worry [from parents]”
- There should be resources for families about “how do you balance the worry with knowing that there are situations where your kid can make their own decisions and is in a safe place to do so, how do you balance the worry and care you have as a parent and wanting to step in, but also knowing that sometimes the stepping in makes it worse.”
- My family having information about autonomy “would have made it so much better and I would have more like I could talk to my parents. The first time I went to therapy, it was not voluntarily, because [my family] didn't know what to do”.

WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?



This information and suggestions came from a focus group of young people with complex mental health experiences held in April 2025. In the focus group, young people shared their perspectives on what could help parents, carers, families, and kin better support them as young people experiencing complex distress and their families as well.

Are you a young person who has experienced complex mental health challenges with valuable information or advice for parents, carers, families, and kin?

Would you like to join the project's Young Person's Advisory Group or have your advice added to the Resilience in Reach resources for parents, carers, families, and kin ?

You can let us know your suggestions by sending them to us via email: info@raisingminds.org.au or via website [here](#)