

Lesson Number 5

It's normal to have a wide range of feelings about your family.

Some days you may worry about your mom or dad. The next day you may feel hopeful because your parent is having a good day and seems back to his/her old self. Other days you may feel really mad at your parent. It's normal to experience all of these feelings. You may also feel several emotions all at once. Sorting through your mixed feelings can be tricky.

Let's take a look at some common feelings that teenagers experience. We will discuss how to handle these emotions in the next two chapters.

Confusion

Given how complicated being a teenager is—and how so many people don't really understand (or even talk about!) mental illness—it would make sense if you have a lot of questions. To tell you the truth, by working through this book, you will know more about mental illness than most adults. Teenagers living in this family situation may wonder why their parent developed a mental illness. Kids may feel confused about why so much of the family attention goes to their parent's day-to-day living, and wonder why the family doesn't pay more attention to the teen's activities and needs. Sometimes teenagers don't know who to talk to—or even what questions to ask.

Complete the following sentences:

- I feel really confused when my parent...

- I wish someone would explain...

- Sometimes I wonder if my parent will ever...

- I really don't understand why...

Lots of stuff still doesn't make sense!

- Questions I'd like to ask MY PARENT who has the illness:



- Questions I'd like to ask ANOTHER FAMILY MEMBER:

- Questions I'd like to ask A DOCTOR:

- Questions I'd like to ask A TRUSTED TEACHER, ADULT FRIEND, OR MINISTER:

Anger

Living with someone with a mental illness can be unpredictable. Your parent may not be able to be there when you'd like. Your mom or dad may do things that cause you to feel mad or frustrated. Your parents may fight a lot, which can be hard to be around.

Although our society teaches us that it's not OK to be angry, we totally disagree. Anger is a basic human emotion that can give you important information. It's how you choose to act on that anger, not the feeling itself, that can be tricky. Poor choices can have negative consequences, which is why anger sometimes gets a bad reputation. In any case, it's normal to feel angry at your parent and family situation. Accepting your parent and feeling compassion for his/her struggles may take time.

Think about a time when you felt really mad. Describe it.