

HOW YOU CAN HELP A FRIEND WHO IS MANIC

There are many ways in which you may be able to help a friend who is going through a manic phase of mental illness even though you may have had no such formal training.

Manic people need a great deal of love and caring. They are very demanding. They need to know they are accepted and not rejected. Often they fear above all else being thought manic. When in a crisis they can be extremely twisted up and their own inner defence mechanism wants to unwind by talking to anyone who will listen. If they are not listened to, the knot becomes even tighter, the anger more intense.

You can therefore do far more for them than you might imagine, by simply being there and listening to their outpourings, however long this may last. The further you can go towards entering into their world and accepting them for what they are, the more you are relieving their suffering.

To do this it is crucial that you retain their TRUST. Not only must you do nothing that even begins to suggest that you reject them or think them ill or in need of treatment (leave that to the doctors); in addition you must say nothing to them which is not completely true. So you will have to choose your words carefully. Remember that while they are in this highly sensitised state anything even mildly cryptic that you may say could well be completely misinterpreted. This risk can be minimised if you speak thoughtfully, gently and clearly.

When the crunch comes and they are asked to go for treatment, your friendship and trust will be worth a gold mine. When they are recovering, the topics they have covered with you will be sensitive, fearful areas; you can assist their recovery by helping them steer around these.

By offering friendship to someone in such a place of need you will do masses to alleviate their suffering and will probably win a friend for life.

Martin Mosse, 10.10.92.

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