



Multimedia Resources

Find books, videos, podcasts, and films to support your learning about severe mental illness, systemic barriers to good care, and more. Guidance books provide immediate and practical tips, while films and memoirs elicit solidarity among families and inspiration for advocates.

What resources are available to learn more?

Here are some resources about diagnoses and navigating relationships when someone you love has a severe mental illness (SMI), as well as additional resources for inspiration, advocacy, connection, and more.

Books for Guidance

- [“I Am Not Sick I Don’t Need Help!”](#) and [“Becoming Fluent in LEAP,”](#) by Xavier Amador, Ph.D.

These books are invaluable for families whose loved ones have anosognosia, a symptom of SMI that blocks the brain’s ability to see an impairment or understand why treatment would be helpful. Dr. Amador shares a communication strategy he calls LEAP®: Listen, Empathize, Agree, Partner. He provides specific guidance about how to use LEAP® to build a stronger relationship and communicate in positive ways to help your loved one want to engage in treatment. The second book provides further detail about how to partner. The Amador Center, linked above, includes an option to purchase a Spanish version of the first book.

- [“Surviving Schizophrenia, 7th Edition: A Family Manual,”](#) and [“Surviving Manic Depression: A Manual on Bipolar Disorder for Patients, Families, and Providers,”](#) by E. Fuller Torrey, M.D.

These are good books to read when a family member is diagnosed with a SMI, whether they have a schizophrenia spectrum disorder, severe bipolar disorder, or another brain-based condition that includes psychosis or other debilitating symptoms. Dr. Torrey provides a roadmap for navigating the journey ahead.

- [“Against All Odds: A Practical Guide to Successfully Navigate Psychosis and Behavioral Health Systems,”](#) by Dr. Gary Tsai, M.D.
This book offers a framework for better understanding severe psychiatric conditions and successfully navigating healthcare. As a psychiatrist who grew up with a mother with schizophrenia, Dr. Tsai offers an insider’s perspective. Topics include how to approach a loved one who is ill and resistant to help; understanding how policies, laws, practitioners, and payment systems impact access to care; how to find a good clinician or care team; how to effectively advocate; and more.
- [“Take Charge of Bipolar Disorder: A 4-Step Plan for You and Your Loved Ones to Manage the Illness and Create Lasting Stability,”](#) by Julie A. Fast and Dr. John Preston, PsyD
As a person with bipolar disorder, Fast is an advocate and coach who helps others learn to cope. The authors outline four steps people can take to help a loved one with bipolar disorder. People with sufficient insight into their bipolar disorder also might benefit from the book’s guidance. The authors previously partnered to write, “Loving Someone with Bipolar Disorder.”
- [“Malady of the Mind: Schizophrenia and the Path to Prevention,”](#) by Jeffrey A. Lieberman, M.D.
The author of “The Untold Story of Psychiatry” provides additional context about severe mental illness as part of a strange and circuitous history of mental healthcare. This book includes guidance about early treatment and how to prevent relapse and worsening of illness symptoms. He hints at science being on the brink of discovering methods for preventing schizophrenia.
- [“You Are Not Alone,”](#) by Ken Duckworth, M.D.
This book from the chief medical officer of the National Alliance on Mental Illness offers guidance from professionals and from more than 125 individuals and family members interviewed for the book. People impacted by a wide range of mental health conditions share their personal stories and offer recommendations for others on similar journeys. Book sales support NAMI’s work.
- [“Stop Walking on Eggshells”](#) and [“Stop Walking on Eggshells for Parents,”](#) by Randi Kreger
Guidance for anyone navigating a relationship with someone who has a borderline or narcissistic personality disorder. These guidebooks can also be helpful for someone in relationship with a person who has SMI that co-occurs with one of these personality disorders. The author’s website provides information, resources, and options for fee-based coaching.

Memoirs, Advocacy, and History

- [“Insane Consequences: How the Mental Health Industry Fails the Mentally](#)

[III.](#)” by DJ Jaffe

This is the ultimate book that describes how and why systems must change to improve treatment access for individuals with severe mental illness. Before his death in 2020, Jaffe started Mental Illness Policy Org., which maintains his mission to fix the system. In his book, Jaffe outlined the issues facing families and society and offers practical solutions. This is a must read for people who want to advocate for change, and an excellent book to offer lawmakers and policymakers.

- [“Crazy: A Father’s Search Through America’s Mental Health Madness,”](#) by Pete Earley

A former reporter, Earley used his lived experience as the father of a young man with schizophrenia and his vast experience writing about crime and incarceration to shine light on a broken mental-healthcare system that prioritizes punishment over treatment. With unrestricted access inside the Miami-Dade County Jail, Earley documents true stories of people behind bars with severe mental illness while describing how his own son’s illness was criminalized.

- [Madness: Race and Insanity in a Jim Crow Asylum](#) by Antonia Hylton. Journalist, Antonia Hylton, explores the 93-year history of Crownsville Hospital, which was one the last segregated asylums in the United States. She tells the story of twelve Black men who were forced in 1911 to work at the state's Jim Crow asylum. The book is a mix of individuals' stories with factual research and documents to explore the mental health struggles of Black families- both past and present.

- [“Fix What You Can: Schizophrenia and a Lawmaker’s Fight for her Son,”](#) by Mindy Greiling

A former Minnesota state legislator, Greiling provides a frank recounting of her family’s struggle to care for and find appropriate services for Jim, the author’s son who experienced delusions that demanded he kill his mother. Written with Jim’s cooperation, the book provides personal reflections about how untreated SMI can lead to violence and chronicles Greiling’s efforts to address obstacles to good care, information-sharing with family, and funding for research.

- [“He Came in with It: A Portrait of Motherhood and Madness,”](#) by Miriam Feldman

This is the story of how mental illness unspools an entire family. Feldman, a professional artist, exposes how the shocking shortfalls of our mental health system impacted her family personally. She addresses the destructive impact of stigma, shame, and isolation, and shines light on the false notion of a perfect family.

- [“Ben Behind His Voices: One Family's Journey from the Chaos of Schizophrenia to Hope,”](#) by Randy Kaye

Kaye shines light on the myriad ways that her son's schizophrenia impacted an entire family and how she learned to persevere through years of confusion, isolation, heartache, and bureaucracy to bring her son back to health. Along the way, she shares her fundamental belief in love, humor, and hope.

- [“Homelessness in America: The History and Tragedy of an Intractable Social Problem,”](#) by Stephen Eide
A senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute, Eide researches social policy questions. His book journeys along the intersection of homelessness and SMI and looks at the failure of American cities to solve the worsening crisis. After explaining why homelessness persists, the book offers concrete recommendations.
- [“We Hardly Knew Them: How Homeless, Mentally Ill People Became Collateral Damage,”](#) by Pat Morgan
A 2022 winner of an Independent Press Award, this book shines light on the plight of homeless, mentally ill people and chronicles the causes, including decades of discriminatory legislation that resulted in many thousands of people with untreated severe mental illness to become criminalized and suffer without care.
- [“The Best Minds: A Story of Friendship, Madness, and the Tragedy of Good Intentions,”](#) by Jonathan Rosen
Rosen shares the story of how his closest childhood friend, Michael Laudor, fell ill with schizophrenia and went from being a brilliant scholar in a life filled with possibility to being institutionalized for murdering his beloved girlfriend during a psychotic episode. The book explores ways that society does and doesn't understand mental illness and provides a cautionary tale to those who want to believe that psychosis gives someone special power, advantage, or insight.
- [“Healing: Our Path from Mental Illness to Mental Health,”](#) by Thomas Insel, M.D.
As director of the National Institute of Mental Health, Dr. Insel was giving a presentation when the father of a boy with schizophrenia yelled from the back of the room, “Our house is on fire and you're telling me about the chemistry of the paint! What are you doing to put out the fire?” Dr. Insel left his position to investigate and write about what he saw as broken within the mental healthcare system—and what a better path to mental health might look like.
- [“No One Cares About Crazy People: The Chaos and Heartbreak of Mental Health in America,”](#) by Ron Powers
A New York Times bestselling author, Powers offers a richly researched narrative of the social history of mental illness in America paired with the deeply personal story of his son Kevin, who suffered from schizophrenia and

took his life in 2005, and his son Dean who also suffers from the disease. A blend of history, biography, memoir, and current affairs, the book concludes with thoughts about where we might go from here.

- [“Breakdown: A Clinician’s Experience in a Broken System of Emergency Psychiatry,”](#) by Lynn Nanos, LICSW
Nanos describes the daily struggles of an emergency clinician seeking to balance care and public safety with civil liberties. She writes with a provider’s insight about bed shortages and the revolving door of inpatient admissions as hospital stays get shorter. She’s honest about inherent and structural obstacles to good care and builds a strong argument for increasing access to assisted outpatient treatment.
- [“Insane: America’s Criminal Treatment of Mental Illness,”](#) by Alisa Roth
A former NPR staff reporter and a Soros Justice Fellow, Roth takes readers deep inside the criminal legal system to show how America’s tough-on-crime policies has led to the warehousing of people with mental illness in jails and prisons. From the overwhelmed mental health units of the Los Angeles County Jail to the women’s prisons of Oklahoma, she introduces readers to ordinary people whose untreated severe mental illnesses drive them into the criminal legal system, where they are penalized instead of treated.
- [“A Common Struggle: A Personal Journal through the Past and Future of Mental Illness and Addiction,”](#) by Patrick J. Kennedy and Stephen Fried
Patrick J. Kennedy, the former congressman and youngest child of Senator Ted Kennedy, details his personal and political battle with mental illness and addiction, exploring mental health care’s history in the country alongside his and every family’s private struggles. The book provides insight about how personal stories and politics merge in the mental illness space and how advocacy is needed at every level.
- [“Tomorrow Was Yesterday: Explosive First-Person Indictments of the US Mental Health System—Mothers Across the Nation Tell it Like it Is,”](#) by Dede Ranahan
Ranahan, who wrote about her son who died with severe mental illness in her first book, “Sooner Than Tomorrow,” collected essays from 64 co-authors for this book that won a 2020 Nautilus Book Award for social change/social justice. The author’s website provides families opportunities to learn more about the books, connect with one another, seek pen pals for loved ones incarcerated with mental illness, memorialize loved ones who died as a result of mental illness, and more.
- [“When Screams Become Whispers: One Man’s Inspiring Victory Over Bipolar Disorder,”](#) By Bob Krulish with Alea Anderson
This memoir provides a unique insider’s perspective about how a person with no insight into his severe mental illness with psychosis and anosognosia was motivated to engage in treatment and recover. The book includes a forward

by Dr. Xavier Amador, who designed the LEAP® method to engage with someone too sick to see that they are sick. Krulish is certified as a LEAP® coach and provides trainings for family caregivers and professionals.

- [“Keep My Son: A Mother’s Unprecedented Battle and Victory over her Son’s Mental Illness,”](#) by Diane Borders

This mom of a son with paranoid schizophrenia used her background in microbiology, chemistry, and unrelenting willpower to seek alternative ways to help her son survive and thrive despite his severe mental illness. Her journey takes readers through the labyrinthine system, cracks in crisis care, and how to advocate for someone who experiences psychosis.

Podcasts

- [“Make Them Hear You,”](#) by Sabah Muhammad

This podcast series from TAC uplifts the voices of some of our most vulnerable members of society — individuals of color with a diagnosis of SMI.

- [“Schizophrenia: Three Moms in the Trenches,”](#) by Randye Kaye with Miriam Feldman and Mindy Greiling

Family experiences are a focus in these podcasts led by three parents who also have written books about their experiences trying to advocate for loved ones with schizophrenia.

- [“Lost Patients,”](#) by KUOW and The Seattle Times

This six-part podcast series reported by Will James and distributed by the National Public Radio (NPR) Network describes our complicated system for treating people with severe mental illness — a system that loses patients with psychosis to the “churn” through streets, jail, clinics, courts and way too few hospital beds. Testimonials from patients, families, and professionals on the front lines provide clarity about how we got stuck here...and what we might do to break free.

- [“Heart Forward Conversations from the Heart,”](#) by Kerry Morrison

This podcast explores the American mental healthcare system in contrast to an alternative approach in Trieste, Italy. Host Kerry Morrison is founder and project director of Heart Forward LA and collaborates with Peer Mental Health as a technical partner on this podcast.

- [“Ask a Psychiatrist,”](#) by Erik Messamore, M.D., Ph.D.

A board-certified psychiatric physician and PhD-level pharmacologist, Dr. Messamore is joined by journalist and advocate Melissa Xenophonos to discuss health, illness, recovery, and well-being. Their goal is to help individuals and family caregivers become better negotiators for getting the right kinds of care.

- [“CIT Today,”](#) by the Anne Arundel County (Maryland) Police Department’s Crisis Intervention Team

Discussions explore how a CIT-trained law enforcement team can respond in a crisis in order to connect individuals and families to mental health support and resources.

Videos

- [Anosognosia](#), by TAC
Anosognosia, also called "lack of insight," is a symptom of SMI that impairs a person's ability to understand and perceive their illness and often is the reason a person refuses treatment, no matter how clear the need for treatment might be to others. This short video can help you understand and is easily shared.
- [Treatment Advocacy Center](#) YouTube Channel
Videos on various SMI-related topics provide information, training, and advocacy inspiration.
- [The LEAP Institute](#) YouTube Channel
Videos of the institute's founder, Dr. Xavier Amador, provide guidance about how to talk with a loved one experiencing psychosis and how to understand when your loved one is unable to understand their illness or why treatment is necessary.
- [Healing Minds NOLA webcasts](#), by Janet Hays
This video collection features advocacy leaders talking about what's wrong with the status quo and their ideas for fixing the system. Janet Hays, an outspoken advocate in New Orleans, Louisiana, moderates the webcasts.
- [CBT Informed Caring for Schizophrenia](#), by Douglas Turkington, M.D.
Through role-played fictional examples, family members can learn ways to apply principles from cognitive behavioral therapy to communicate with a loved one with a severe mental illness at home. The video was produced by Digital Media Services of Newcastle University with the Insight CBT Partnership and the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario.
- [Schizophrenia](#), by Robert Sapolsky, Stanford professor of biology, neurology, and neurosurgery
From Stanford University's Lecture Collection on Human Behavioral Biology, this academic lecture provides detailed information about features of schizophrenia and explains aspects of psychosis. The portion of the video focused on schizophrenia begins at about 23 minutes. *Content warning: graphic descriptions of disturbing behaviors, including self-mutilation.*

Documentaries

- ["The Definition of Insanity,"](#) directed and produced by Gabriel London, produced and written by Charlie Sadoff
The Miami-Dade (Florida) Criminal Mental Health Project is the subject of this documentary about a team-based approach initiated by Judge Steve Leifman.

PBS streams the movie for free.

- [“Bedlam: An Intimate Journey Into America's Mental Health Crisis,”](#) by Kenneth Paul Rosenberg, M.D., documentary film by Willow Pond Productions
Dr. Rosenberg gives readers an inside look at the historical, political, and economic forces that have resulted in the greatest social crisis of the twenty-first century. The culmination of a seven-year inquiry, *Bedlam* is not only a rallying cry for change, but also a guidebook for how we move forward with care and compassion, with resources that have never before been compiled, including legal advice, practical solutions for parents and loved ones, help finding community support, and information on therapeutic options.
- [“Still Here,”](#) produced by Awareness Ties and presented by National Shattering Silence Coalition in partnership with Accelerating Social Good
This short film features stories by individuals and loved ones who have struggled with mental health in a care system filled with cracks.
- [“Voices,”](#) by Gary Tsai, M.D.
This PBS documentary tells personal stories about individuals who have experienced psychosis. A trailer streams online for free.
- [“How We’re Failing the Mentally Ill,”](#) by Kite & Key Media
This short film describes how deinstitutionalization shifted abuse and neglect from asylums to streets and prisons and why assisted outpatient treatment is a best-practice strategy for correcting past errors that have left people with SMI uncared for.
- [“That Way Madness Lies,”](#) by Sandra Luckow
An award-winning filmmaker, Luckow unflinchingly turns her camera on her own family as they attempt to navigate the broken mental health system in an effort to save their brother, whose iPhone video diary ultimately becomes an unfiltered look at the mind of a man with untreated schizophrenia as well as an indictment of how the system failed.

Workbooks

- [“Your Mental Health Recovery Workbook: A Workbook to Share Hope.”](#) by Katherine Ponte
Designed and written by a person who lives with a mental illness condition, this workbook provides tools to help someone manage their own recovery, self-assess, access help, and overcome barriers.

Do you know of a great book, video, or documentary on SMI that you believe we should share? Contact our family resource team to make your recommendation.