

KEEPING A LIFE OF YOUR OWN

Sometimes it seems impossible, in the midst of the day-by-day trauma of dealing with a relative with a serious mental illness, to keep your own hopes, ambitions, and a sense of accomplishment alive. However, the more difficult such an undertaking may seem, the more important it is to strive to do just that. Here are ten ways you can deal with the despair and depression brought on you by your relative's illness, limitations and pain.

1. Participate in activities that are yours alone – for example, working, going to the theatre, talking with friends, going on vacation.
2. Remember that having a life of your own will increase your relative's respect for you.
3. Remember that your inner resources are greater than you generally imagine.
4. Accept the limits of what you can do for and give to your relative.
5. Accept the reality of your relative's illness and limitations without blaming yourself or others.
6. Learn to expect the unpredictable and unexpected.
7. Continue to educate yourself and others and get support.
8. Strive for good physical health by means of a good diet and sufficient exercise. Do things to reduce your stress level.
9. Make efforts to maintain social contacts.
10. Give support, time, and energy to others in similar situations to your own.