



# NAVIGATING THE JOURNEY AS A CAREGIVER

Your loved one has a diagnosis of **Schizoaffective Disorder**.

## *What's next?*

### **Behaviors and Challenges You May Recognize**

Schizoaffective disorder is like an intersection between schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. It is a genetic disorder which has aspects of psychosis, mood swings, communication challenges, and cognitive disruptions. Your loved one is likely going through a lot.

They may be experiencing:

- Uncharacteristic decision-making while manic or depressive
- Disorganized speech and thinking
- Distorted perceptions of being followed, watched, and worked against
- Social withdrawal and difficulty engaging with others
- Hearing voices or seeing things others can't see
- Major depressive episodes: lethargy, hopelessness, despair
- Symptoms which worsen with stress, even while on medication
- Unusual reactions to alcohol, caffeine, and other psycho-actives
- Challenges with consistent routines such as hygiene, school or work

This journey of navigating your loved one's schizoaffective diagnosis may look daunting at first. Yet, it can help to shift that compass and look at this journey as an opportunity for GROWTH. On this journey, you can NURTURE your relationship with your loved one AND yourself.

### **Supporting Your Loved One**

You and your loved one are embarking on a growth journey and will navigate their diagnosis TOGETHER. Be PATIENT with your loved one AND yourself as you learn which coping strategies are most helpful.

The greatest gift we can give our loved ones is ACCEPTANCE of what they are going through in the moment. To help them you can also practice boundary-setting, utilize outside help, and take care of YOU! It will empower you BOTH on this journey for you to give yourself love and rest. YOU will be more able to give the care they need and THEY will witness your self-care example.

You can also provide your loved with resources. *See the next page for ways to help manage schizoaffective disorder.*

**If you are currently experiencing a crisis, please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or contact the Crisis Text Line by texting TALK to 741-741.**

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## Resources for You and Your Loved One

- The **National Alliance on Mental Health** on schizoaffective disorder <https://bit.ly/36GhIBl>
- Info on schizoaffective disorder from **Mental Health America** <https://bit.ly/36Gs3xh>
- A **Veterans Affairs** research center on schizoaffective disorder (PDF) <https://bit.ly/2UVoDAX>
- **BrightQuest** on parenting a child with schizoaffective <https://bit.ly/2VIcfYw>
- How to support voice-hearing loved ones by **Understanding Voices** <https://bit.ly/3vN53qA>
- Free, comprehensive meditation app called **Insight Timer** <http://bit.ly/calminsight>
- **Students with Psychosis**, a support organization for young people and college students <https://bit.ly/3qnsGET>
- A self-guide on coping with current feelings by **Mental Health is Health** <http://bit.ly/currentemotions>
- An overview of medication DNA testing from **Psychology Today** <https://bit.ly/2TWK5IB>
- Free program for managing sadness from **MoodTools** <http://bit.ly/moodtools>
- Online support by the **Schizophrenia and Psychosis Action Alliance** <https://bit.ly/3wUozCM>
- **Bearable**, the mood and symptom tracker app for reflecting on patterns <https://bit.ly/2UmAvPt>
- An overview of psychiatric medications by the **National Institute of Mental Health** <https://bit.ly/3ii6eJK>
- Free medication reminder app by **MediSafe** <https://bit.ly/3wEDrEv>
- Online community support for persons hearing voices by **Intervoice** <https://bit.ly/3j7L4Qy>
- **Psychology Today's** psychosis therapist search engine <https://bit.ly/3hM3Mw2>
- The Center for Technology and Behavioral Health reviews **FOCUS**, the schizophrenia management app <https://bit.ly/35Kc8xr>

## Preventing Caregiver Burnout

We give our BEST care when we are also taking care of ourselves! Make time to recharge, even with a short moment that's just for YOU. Connecting with other caregivers is another powerful form of self-care. Learn more about our One-to-One Caregiver Peer Support program on [our website](#).

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