
Historical Chronology: Interviewer Notes

INCLUDE + INTERVIEW + ACKNOWLEDGE + REFER = RESOURCE AND SUPPORT

When the professional includes, interviews, acknowledges and refers family members, family members become a resource and support to both the client and the professional.

The following questions will elicit memories of the events that the family identifies as leading to the onset of the illness. In our experience as a family compiling this information, each member's views told an important part of the story. It is essential to include all family members in the information gathering process. They can respond in writing by letter or email or verbally in an interview. Confidentiality Laws do not prohibit families from offering information. It is normal, in my experience, for the story tellers to be emotional in the re-telling of these events. Family members may not have shared this information with anyone. Families need to be acknowledged for their own courage under these circumstances and referred to community support. Information regarding NAMI support groups or the Family to Family Education Program can be obtained at www.nami.org.

1. Prior to the onset of the disease, try to identify examples of "episode warnings" that your relative was having trouble.
2. Describe each example:
 - A. How did each episode affect the individual?
 - B. Did the episode affect you? If so, how?
 - C. Were any family members (or anyone else) affected?

The experience of having a mental health professional say "Tell me about the mental illness" allows the family to articulate what they know about the disease and to feel validated about their own experiences. In our situation, we were interviewed briefly by a family psychologist. The psychologist asked for a description of the current problem (or set of problems) facing us and then simply asked if anyone of us in the group felt that we had been affected adversely by our relative's illness. The process identified individual(s) in the family who needed additional support and also broke the silence about the illness in the family. Appropriate referrals were offered. The psychologist acknowledged us as a family for coming forward to seek proper care and treatment for our relative. He answered a few questions and ended with a reading reference, "Surviving Schizophrenia, a Family Manual" by E. Fuller Torrey M.D. I followed up with a letter asking family members to give me information about their experiences regarding the illness (see "Letter of Appeal for History" in manual). This compilation of information by the family became the "Historical Chronology".

When the family shares their experiences, many good things occur:

1. Reliable information is exchanged about the brain disorder.
2. The family feels acknowledged and validated regarding their own experiences.
3. The family gains knowledge about the brain disorder
4. The client receives support for their illness.
5. The mental health professional learns what has and what has not worked.
6. The family and ill member are empowered to support each other.



ADVOCACY WORKS

CONFIDENTIAL

Do you give permission to the professional to share this information with the ill person?

Yes ___ No ___ Signed _____ Dated _____

Historical Chronology for: _____

Presenter: _____

Relationship: _____

Episode # _____ Date: _____ Location _____

Description: _____

How did this episode affect this person?

Did this episode affect you? If so, how?

Was anyone else affected by the episode? Please explain.



ADVOCACY WORKS