



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

The Family Connections Programme

A photograph of a person standing on the crest of a large sand dune in a desert, looking out over a vast landscape under a bright, hazy sunset sky. The person is wearing a backpack and using a walking stick.

Support
when you know someone
with
Borderline Personality Disorder

Information Leaflet

HSE South
Cork Adult Mental Health Services
Family Connections Programme

April 2014



The Endeavour Project

What is The Family Connections Programme?

Family Connections (FC) is a group treatment programme for family members/ significant others of people with a diagnosis of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). You have been invited to participate on this programme as your loved one is has nominated you as a key person in their life whom they would like to avail of this support.

FC was developed in the United States by two psychologists, Perry Hoffman and Alan Fruzzetti, with the help of multiple family members and individuals with BPD. FC is based on two well-known theoretical models. The first of these is the stress-coping-and-adaptation (SCA) model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) and the second is the treatment model of Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT)¹. DBT is an evidence based treatment that has shown to be effective in treating BPD and related problems such as emotional instability, suicidal thoughts, self-harming and self-destructive behaviours. This is the premise of our already running DBT 'Endeavour programme' for individuals with BPD. You will learn more about these on the programme itself.

FC was designed to bring family members/ significant others together with two main goals:

-  Supporting them in their efforts to be emotionally involved with their relative in more effective ways
-  Increasing their own wellbeing which may in turn have a positive effect on the wellbeing of their loved one

Families living with Borderline Personality Disorder?

Families/ significant others are often the first line of care for their relatives and have assumed multiple roles such as advocate, caregiver, coach, and guardian. Research indicates that stress associated with having a relative with mental illness can result in increased sense of responsibility (often termed burden in literature), depression, grief, and isolation.

The challenges facing family members/ significant others of individuals with BPD are often of such magnitude that they can, over time, deplete the family members'/ significant others' capacity to cope effectively, compromising their health and life agenda. FC aims to help people reduce their stress, distress and pressure to assume responsibility, while increasing education and effectiveness in self-care. This has benefits for the individual themselves and their relative with BPD. ²

What does the Family Connections Programme involve?

FC is a 12-week multiple family members/ significant others programme (i.e. you and other family members/ significant others of individuals with BPD) and will take place every Wednesday evening in Inniscarraig House. Each session will include specific practice exercises and homework.

The programme was designed to meet 3 needs of family members/ significant others:

- 1) Education about BPD and interpersonal functioning
- 2) Individual and interpersonal skills, to help with managing their own negative reactions, and building better and more satisfying relationships
- 3) Social support from other group members who have lived through similar experiences and are living with similar situations. ²

In order for us to ensure that the programme is meeting your needs, you will be asked to complete a number of assessment measures at various time points before, after, and following the programme.

In addition, this data can also contribute to the growing body of knowledge about how carers cope when their relative has a BPD diagnosis. If you consent to the data being used in the research, you will be asked to sign a consent form to participate in research that is taking place in the Department at the start of the programme. Participation in the research is voluntary and non consent will not affect your participation in the programme in any way.

If you have any questions about the programme and whether it is right for you or if you have any concerns about participating in the research please contact:

The Family Connections Programme Team
Inniscarraig House,
Western Road,
Cork

Tel: 076 10 84176

References:

1. Hoffman, P.D., Fruzzetti, A.E. & Buteau, E. (2007). Understanding and engaging families: An education, skills and support program for relatives impacted by Borderline Personality Disorder. *Journal of Mental Health*, 16, 69-82.
2. Hoffman, P.D. & Fruzzetti, A.E. (2007). Advances in interventions for families with a relative with a Personality Disorder Diagnosis. *Current Psychiatry Reports*, 9, 68-73.