

### **Does Mum/Dad still love me?**

Yes. Your mum/dad might be acting strange/scary/remote because they are sick, not because they don't love you anymore.

### **You are not alone.**

Did you know that 1 in every 5 people will have a mental health problem at some time in their life? It is not just your family.

### **Feeling Safe.**

You have a right to feel safe. If you have felt scared or unsafe in the past, make a plan for what you could do if you felt like that again. Some children like to talk through and write their plan out with their parents or some other adult they can trust.

### **Talk to someone**

It often helps to talk to someone you trust about how you are feeling - maybe a family member, your family doctor, your best friend at school, a teacher or a social worker.

**Make sure you  
have some fun with your brothers/sisters  
or friends.!!!**

## **Advice for Parents who self harm.**

**Mercy University Hospital**

**Medical  
Social Work  
Department**

You can ask the ward nursing or medical staff to refer you to the hospital social work department.  
Phone 4271971 extension 5647 or 5290. Messages left on voicemail will be returned promptly.

This leaflet is for parents who are concerned about their children's reaction to an episode of self harm by one parent and who want to talk to the children about it.

You might not feel able to do this at the moment and it is important that you look after your own needs first. You should eat well rest and seek comfort from family members and friends. It may be that your partner or another adult friend or relative will help with the children while you recover yourself.

Children, even in the same family have differing styles of coping with difficulty, depending on their personality and age. One child might be caught up in their own life and friends and hardly register that a parent has been very upset. Another might be much more touched and worried.

Some children feel guilty or responsible for a parents upset or self harm. They may believe that their angry words or thoughts or behaviour have caused the parents upset or action.

**You should reassure them that this is not true .**

Some children will cling to the well parent or seek constant reassurance.

Some display anger towards a parent by behaving in a way which is unusual for them. This might be by being aggressive, bullying or irritable.

**These are normal reactions which you should talk out with them in a calm way, reassuring them of your love and support.**

***You could give this part to older children if you think it would help.***

## **Questions often asked by children.**

### **Why is my mum/dad acting this way?**

Your mum/dad may be under a lot of pressure at the moment or may have a disorder or illness which affects how we control our feelings, thoughts and behaviour. Sometimes this can make people say things or do things that they would not normally do if they were feeling well.

### **Is this my fault?**

It is not your fault. You didn't cause your mum's/dad's illness or problems and you are not responsible for making it go away.

### **Can I 'catch it' or become sick like them?**

Problems coping are not like a cold. You can't 'catch' them. Just because your mum/dad is upset does not mean you or I will be.

### **Will things stay like this?**

Most people who have similar problems are helped by taking medicine, going into the hospital, or talking to people who are trained to help them. Your Mum or Dad will be offered help by the hospital or your family doctor.