



Understanding Psychosocial Disability: A Guide for Families

What It Means, How It Affects Daily Life, and How Support Can Help

Prepared by Your Story Community Supports

If someone you love has a psychosocial disability, you might feel confused, worried, or unsure how to help. You're not alone — and understanding what's happening is the first step toward better support.

This guide explains psychosocial disability in plain language, so you can feel more confident navigating the journey alongside your family member.

What Is Psychosocial Disability?

A psychosocial disability is a disability that arises from a mental health condition. It's not the mental health condition itself — it's the impact that condition has on a person's ability to participate in everyday life.

For example:

- A person with schizophrenia may experience psychosocial disability if their condition makes it hard to maintain relationships, hold a job, or manage daily routines
- A person with severe depression may experience psychosocial disability if they struggle to leave the house, care for themselves, or engage with their community

The disability is about the *functional impact* — how the condition affects what someone can do day to day.

Common Mental Health Conditions That Can Cause Psychosocial Disability

- Schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder
- Bipolar disorder
- Severe depression and anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Borderline personality disorder
- Psychosis

Important: Not everyone with a mental health condition has a psychosocial disability. It depends on how significantly the condition affects their daily functioning, and whether that impact is likely to be permanent.



How Does Psychosocial Disability Affect Daily Life?

Every person's experience is different, but common challenges include:

Daily living

- Difficulty maintaining personal hygiene or household routines
- Trouble with cooking, cleaning, or managing money
- Disrupted sleep patterns

Social and community

- Withdrawal from friends and family
- Difficulty maintaining relationships
- Feeling isolated or disconnected
- Anxiety about leaving the house or being in public

Work and education

- Difficulty concentrating or completing tasks
- Inconsistent attendance due to fluctuating symptoms
- Challenges with workplace relationships

Health

- Side effects from medication
- Co-occurring physical health conditions
- Difficulty attending appointments or following treatment plans

Emotional wellbeing

- Emotional dysregulation (intense emotions that are hard to manage)
- Low motivation or energy
- Feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness

What Families Often Experience

Supporting someone with a psychosocial disability can be emotionally exhausting. You might feel:

- **Frustrated** — when progress seems slow or symptoms return
- **Guilty** — wondering if you could have done something differently
- **Scared** — especially during crises or episodes
- **Grief** — for the life you imagined for your family member



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- **Exhausted** — from the constant emotional and practical demands

These feelings are normal and valid. You are not failing. Caring for someone with a psychosocial disability is one of the hardest things a family can do.

How Does Support Help?

The right support can make a significant difference — not by “fixing” the person, but by helping them build a life that works for them.

Trauma-Informed Care

Many people with psychosocial disabilities have experienced trauma. Trauma-informed care means:

- Understanding that behaviour often has a reason behind it
- Creating safe, predictable environments
- Avoiding re-traumatisation
- Building trust through consistency and respect

At Your Story, all our staff are trained in trauma-informed approaches.

Psychological Recovery Coaching

This is a specialised support delivered by qualified nurses and highly trained staff. It focuses on:

- Building coping strategies
- Developing emotional regulation skills
- Setting and working toward meaningful goals
- Rebuilding confidence and self-worth

Daily Living Support

Practical help with routines, meals, medication, and household tasks — reducing overwhelm and building independence gradually.

Community Participation

Supported access to social activities, groups, and outings — reducing isolation and rebuilding connection.

Crisis Support

Clear protocols for when things escalate, including 24/7 on-call support for SIL participants, trained de-escalation, and coordination with emergency services when needed.



What Can Families Do?

Be patient

Recovery from psychosocial disability is not linear. There will be good days and hard days. Progress might look different from what you expected.

Learn about the condition

Understanding what your family member is experiencing helps you respond with empathy rather than frustration.

Set boundaries

You can love someone and still protect your own wellbeing. It's okay to say "I need a break" or "I can't do this alone."

Stay connected

Even when your family member withdraws, gentle, consistent contact matters. A text, a visit, a shared meal — it all counts.

Accept professional help

You don't have to do this alone. Support workers, psychologists, and support coordinators are there to share the load.

Look after yourself

Carer burnout is real. Access Carer Gateway services, talk to a counsellor, or take respite when you need it.

NDIS and Psychosocial Disability

People with psychosocial disability can access the NDIS if their condition is permanent and significantly affects their daily functioning. NDIS funding can cover:

- Support workers for daily living
- Psychological recovery coaching
- Community participation
- Supported Independent Living (SIL)
- Therapy and allied health services

If your family member doesn't have an NDIS plan yet, talk to their GP or mental health team about starting an Access Request.



Helpful Contacts

Service	Contact
NDIS	1800 800 110
Lifeline	13 11 14 (24/7)
Beyond Blue	1300 22 4636 (24/7)
SANE Australia	1800 187 263
Carer Gateway	1800 422 737
Your Story Community Supports	www.yourstorycommunitysupports.com

A Note from Our Team

Psychosocial disability is often invisible — but the impact on participants and families is very real. At Your Story, we see the person behind the diagnosis. We build support around their strengths, their goals, and their story.

If your family member is living with a psychosocial disability and you want to explore support options, we're here to talk. No pressure, no jargon — just a conversation.