

USING YOUR SKILLS

You can't simply avoid all difficult situations—they are just another part of life. A big part of recovery is learning how to use skills to reduce the impact problems have on your life. Common skills include:

- Building healthy activities like getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, and eating well—things that help you feel well
- Relaxation skills to help you feel calmer
- Problem-solving skills to help you identify and solve problems in your life
- Stress management skills to help you cope with stress or frustrations
- Healthy thinking skills to help you identify and challenge unhelpful thinking patterns or assumptions

Many of these skills are also part of some psychotherapy or counselling treatments. If you'd like to learn more, talk to your mental health care team. You can also look for online resources, books, or community courses.

REACH OUT FOR EXTRA SUPPORT

There will be times in your recovery journey when you need extra help or support—and that's okay. Reach out to your doctor or another mental health professional if you feel like your plan isn't working. It might be a sign that something in your treatment plan isn't working as well as it could, or it might be a sign that your current treatment plan is missing something.

RECOVERY IS A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION.

Recovery is rarely a clear and straightforward path. Setbacks happen. Some days you might feel like you're walking in circles, and some days you might feel like you're walking backwards. A return of symptoms does not mean recovery is lost. Everything you've learned on your recovery journey so far can help you prevent and recognize problems early on and take action quickly next time. Even tiny steps are still movement, and it might be all the movement you need at that moment. Recovery can take time and perseverance, but it's in everyone's reach.

DO YOU NEED MORE HELP?

Contact a community organization like the Canadian Mental Health Association to learn more about support and resources in your area.

Founded in 1918, the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is the most established, most extensive community mental health organization in Canada. Through a presence in hundreds of neighbourhoods across every province, CMHA provides advocacy and resources that help to prevent mental health problems and illnesses, support recovery and resilience, and enable all Canadians to flourish and thrive.

Visit the CMHA website at www.cmha.ca.

**TOWARD
RECOVERY**
WORKING WITH YOUR
TREATMENT PROVIDER



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Mental health for all

Development of this brochure
generously supported by



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Mental health for all

© 2017 56351-05/17

www.cmha.ca

Recovery from a mental illness is expected. And it's not necessarily an end point—it can be a process that you work on no matter where you are in (or out of) treatment. For some people, recovery may mean living without any symptoms of a mental illness at all. For others, recovery is about living well and working, volunteering, going to school, or maintaining social connections despite symptoms that are still there or recur. In both cases, people in recovery have gained a sense of control and returned to meaningful activities and relationships in their daily life.

Everyone has their own goals in recovery. For example, recovery could mean:

- Feeling hopeful about your future
- Feeling confident that you can handle most things that come up
- Reconnecting with your friends
- Returning to work or school

For many people, recovery is bigger than treatment services. Hope, social connections, purpose, and stability are also key. Peer support, support groups, employment programs, housing supports, and income supports are some of the services that can help you achieve your goals during or after treatment.

There are a lot of different things to think about when it comes to treatment, so we'll look at common questions and considerations below.

TREATMENT CHOICES ARE PART OF RECOVERY

Your treatment should help you work towards and achieve your recovery goals. If your treatment plan and recovery priorities don't match, you might not feel very satisfied with the results. The best approach is to work with your doctor or mental health care team so you can explore solutions together and work through any concerns. As you do that, here are some questions to consider:

- Which areas in your life are most affected?
- What are your goals?
- What are your treatment options and how does each option fit your goals?
- Do you understand the risks, benefits, and evidence around each option?
- What are the risks of not choosing any treatment at this time?
- Do you feel comfortable following the treatment plan? If not, what's standing in the way?



RECOVERY INCLUDES PLANNING AHEAD

Once you've decided on a treatment and recovery plan, it's your job to follow the plan as best as you can. Difficult situations, conflicts, and other problems are a part of life, but they can have a big impact on your mental health, especially when you're working on treatment and recovery. Planning ahead can be a powerful tool because it helps you identify and address problems before they become bigger or harder to manage. Below are a few strategies you can apply to your own situation.

I feel bad when...

We all have situations that take a toll on our well-being. It could be a disagreement with a loved one, work stress, a change in routine, or simply not sticking to a treatment plan. For example:

I feel bad when...

- I stay up late several nights a week
- I work a lot of overtime and don't have time to unwind at night
- There are arguments or conflict at home

I know I'm feeling unwell when...

Early warning signs tell you that you aren't feeling as well as usual. It might sound obvious, but they can be easy to miss or ignore until they become much more serious. However, catching early warning signs means that you can take action right away and feel better sooner. For example:

I know I'm feeling unwell when...

- It takes forever to fall asleep
- I feel tired and unmotivated
- I'm getting angrier than usual over minor problems

For many people, recovery is bigger than treatment services. Hope, social connections, purpose, and stability are also key.

MAKE A SUPPORT PLAN

Once you've identified problem situations and early warning signs, it's time to figure out what you can do when those situations or signs come up. Think about healthy actions that have worked for you in the past. These supports can be anything that helps you feel better: time alone to take care of yourself, practical help, emotional support, or a check-in with a care provider. You might find that you need a mix of support tools.

Things I can do when I'm not feeling well:

- Go for a walk
- Call my sister and get her perspective
- Take a day off work

This may also be a good time to talk to family members or close friends and make a crisis plan in case you ever experience a mental health crisis. If you're in a situation where you can't communicate your needs or wishes, your crisis plan will let others know who to contact, what you want, and what needs to be done.