

Tips for Recovery Schizophrenia

Developed in Collaboration with Northeast Behavioral Health Partnership, Centennial Mental Health, North Range Behavioral Health, Larimer Center for Mental Health and the Member and Family Advisory Board

- 1. *Be involved in treatment. Ask questions.*** You are the expert on you. Advocate for yourself and be actively involved in developing your treatment plan. Ask your mental health provider and prescriber to explain your diagnosis, treatment choices and recommendations. Write down questions ahead of time to bring with you. If you don't understand something, ask again. Ask a friend or family member to come with you to a session to help you. Go to appointments regularly and practice skills you learn.
- 2. *Find your way to deal with stress.*** Know your triggers (people, places, things, movies, television) so you can handle stress when you know it is coming. Slow down and take one thing at a time. Work or a hobby can actually decrease stress and increase your sense of accomplishment. Do something you like and remember you don't have to deal with stress on your own. Talk to someone you trust.
- 3. *Care about your health.*** Let your mental health providers know that overall health is important to you. People with schizophrenia can be prone to conditions such as heart disease and diabetes. Eating a balanced diet, getting enough sleep at night with only brief naps during the day, regular physical activity, and participating in hobbies can improve your health and mood. Remember, nicotine, alcohol, illegal drugs, and caffeine can make symptoms worse. See "Tips for Promoting Wellness."
- 4. *See your Primary Care Provider (PCP)*** at least annually. If you don't have a medical provider, ask a mental health provider for help finding one. Taking care of your physical health improves mental health.
- 5. *Be patient when searching for a medication.*** Medication can decrease symptoms and help you do better in your daily life. However, every person is different and medications aren't perfect. It may take several tries before you find what works. Take medications regularly so they have a chance to work. Tell the prescriber about side effects and benefits; use a journal to track how you're feeling.
- 6. *Pay attention to early symptoms and know when to get help.*** Symptoms of schizophrenia can return, especially when you are under stress. Get treatment as soon as possible and ask your mental health provider about making a recovery or crisis plan. Share your plans with your family and friends.
- 7. *Treat suicidal thoughts seriously.*** Call your mental health provider if you have suicidal thoughts. If you believe you can't keep yourself safe, get help right away: Call 911, go to the nearest hospital emergency room or call emergency services at your mental health center: [MHC crisis line phone number]
- 8. *Stay in touch*** with family, friends, and peers. You may want to isolate at times but this can make your symptoms worse. Learn to accept support from family and friends and ask them to join you for therapy if they are willing. Ask your mental health provider or the Office of Member and Family Affairs (MHC OMFA phone #) for information about community peer support groups or drop-in centers.
- 9. *Try to be hopeful.*** You may feel discouraged. However people with schizophrenia can and do recover and live full and productive lives. You are not alone.
- 10. *Learn how people recover from mental illness.*** Ask for written materials from your mental health providers or obtain information at the library or internet. Check out resources listed below.

"Recovery...It's a way of living a satisfying, hopeful and contributing life even within the limitations caused by the illness."

William Anthony, Boston University

Resources for Clients and Families

- National Institute of Mental Health (1.800.421.4211 or www.nimh.nih.gov, or <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/schizophrenia/index.shtml>)
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (<http://www.nami.org> or <http://www.nami.org/Template.cfm?Section=schizophrenia9>)
- WebMD (<http://www.webmd.com/schizophrenia/default.htm>)
- <http://schizophrenia.com>
- <https://www.achievesolutions.net/achievesolutions/en/Home.do>
- Bernheim, K., Lewine, R. & Beal, C. (1982). *The Caring Family: Living with Mental Illness*. New York: Random House.
- Marsh, D. & Dickens, R. (1998). *How to Cope with Mental Illness in Your Family: A Self-Care Guide for Siblings, Offspring and Parents*. New York: Tarcher/Putnam.
- Mueser, K. & Gingerich, S. (2006). *The Complete Family Guide to Schizophrenia*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Torrey, E. F. (1995). *Surviving Schizophrenia: A Manual for Families, Consumers and Providers*. New York: Harper Perrenial.