

After Hospital Discharge

On to Recovery for People with Mental Illness

When you are in hospital there is an eagerness to get out, but you may also feel anxiety around this decision. You may feel a sense of uneasiness about going home. This may come from feelings of uncertainty and worry. The following will assist you in taking an active role in planning your recovery.

Will I get better?

- There is more than just hope for success, there is abundant evidence of persons with mental illnesses returning to fulfilling lives.
- Today mental illness can be managed very successfully and people experience a full and meaningful life.
- It is important to realize that it takes time to make the right diagnosis and find the best treatment.
- You, your family doctor and/or Psychiatrist and your mental health worker can be a team in managing your recovery.

What happens after I am discharged from hospital?

- You become the person most responsible for managing your recovery.
- There are many resources you can seek out for advice and support in your task.

Will recovery be difficult?

- Yes, it can be. Using your supports and inner strength leads to success.
- Continuing recovery requires: knowledge and learning about your illness; managing your medication; and receiving counselling (if available).
- At the same time, you will need to deal with the everyday issues of life - shelter, food, money...
- You may experience some setbacks along the way. These are learning experiences, not failures.

Medication

- You will likely be on medication upon discharge. You might experience side effects from it.
- Learn as much as you can from your Pharmacist and others on your mental health team about what the medication is intended to do, as well as its side effects.
- The process of finding the right balance of medication for you may take time but it is part of your recovery.
- Tell your doctor what you are experiencing while taking the medication – what is working well, as well as side effects you experience.
- Conditions such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder require you to take medication daily, possibly for the rest of your life just as a person with diabetes takes insulin.
- It is important to take your medication as prescribed by your doctor. By taking the medication properly, and for the right duration, you can prevent a relapse.
- If you experience a relapse due to improper medication use, the illness may come back worse than before.

- Taking other substances (alcohol, street drugs and other medications – prescription, over the counter and “natural”) may affect your medication. Talk to your doctor about the effects of these substances on your medication and wellness.

Your Feelings

- It is most likely you will go through a grieving period in coming to grips with your disorder. This is part of the process.
- You may grieve:
 - the loss of friendships, relationships.
 - the loss of a job, education.
 - lack of understanding by others.
 - the change in your overall health.
- You may become confused on who to trust.
- Mental illness is one part of your life; you can still have other interests and participate in many activities.

Support

- When you leave the hospital, it helps to have someone who will simply listen to you – feelings and all.
- People from whom you may find support and advice in managing your recovery may include: your family, your friends, your doctor, your psychiatrist and a mental health worker.
- You might consider getting in touch with a support group of people who have had some of the same experiences and may have helpful ideas on how to cope with your illness.
- You, your mental health worker and your psychiatrist together will develop a plan to follow during your continuing treatment and recovery.
- Remember, your family and friends are experiencing your illness with you, only from a different perspective. It’s an adjustment for them too.

Having a Plan

- You may find yourself overwhelmed with issues to deal with once you are discharged.
- DON'T TRY TO TAKE ON TOO MUCH AT ONCE.
- Having a plan can be helpful in dealing with issues you can control.
- Being in control may reduce the stress you can feel when you have to deal with too many things at once.
- Having a plan helps you prioritize on what is urgent and what can be done later.

Nutrition

- Nutritious foods and liquids provide the energy your body needs to help you in your journey to recovery.

Stress Management & Exercise

- Some things you can control, others you can't... Focus on what you can control.
- Don't let things beyond your control cause you undue stress and anxiety.
- Relaxation and exercise activities reduce stress and increase your physical well-being.