

How can I be more active in my recovery

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Actively engaging in your own treatment and recovery journey is crucial to achieving wellness

Keeping up to date health records is especially valuable when changing or adding health care providers, reviewing health care treatments plans and setting goals.

What is recovery?

No one has to battle mental illness alone

Mental illness can be challenging, however most people will experience recovery. There are many treatments available that can help reduce the symptoms of mental illness. Most people will lead a full and meaningful life even if some symptoms remain.

Each individual's journey is unique, and it may take time to work out what works best for you. It is important that you define recovery for yourself. Recovery is more than just the cessation or reduction of symptoms. It often includes re-engaging in life activities such as joining social or sports groups, participation in relationships, or returning to work or study.

Support is available. Talk to mental health care providers about treatment plans and goals. It is important for you to be active in your own recovery and seek support when needed. Positive actions today will help you build a bright future.

Take an active role in your mental health treatment

Informed involvement in treatment can mean better results, faster

- learn about your illness, symptoms and treatment options. Informed involvement helps you lead your recovery
- engage with your mental health care professionals and fully participate in your treatment. Ask lots of questions and be honest about your preferences
- try to keep an up-to-date mental health file to keep track of important information
- consider joining a support group. They're mostly free and they can change lives
- remember to set wellness and life goals and share them with your family, carer, and health care provider

Sharing information with your health care provider

Sharing information can mean you get better treatment. These things are important to share with your mental health and/or health care provider:

- any current medical, psychological, emotional or physical symptoms
- your past medical history
- any medications, vitamins or supplements that you are currently taking
- if you are having suicidal thoughts or have made any past attempts
- any self-harm or feelings of wanting to self-harm
- your alcohol intake, smoking or drug use
- recent changes in your sleep, diet, weight or sexual functioning
- significant changes in your ability to concentrate or function
- any experiences of confusion or loss of time
- if you have suffered or are currently suffering trauma or abuse
- if you are hearing voices, or are seeing or smelling anything that other people are not
- if you feel you are not always in control of your actions
- if you have recently experienced a major life change such as a death in the family, divorce, loss of job, birth of a child, etc.
- things that you are good at - your strengths
- your wellness and life goals
- if you have experienced this before, anything that helped you manage last time

Some good questions to ask your mental health care provider

- can you please explain my diagnosis to me in a way that I can understand
- What are the symptoms that suggest this is the condition or illness
- what are the possible causes of my condition
- Are there any test that should be undertaken
- what are my treatment options and can you explain what's good or not so good about each of them
- how can I help in my own treatment
- what would successful treatment look like for me? What can I look forward to in recovery or management of my condition or illness
- what's important for my family or carer to know about my condition
- am I entitled to a case manager

- am I entitled to a mental health plan
-

Medication

For information regarding medication talk to your doctor, ask your pharmacist for a Consumer Medication Information (CMI) sheet or go to www.sane.org.au to download a fact sheet about types of psychiatric medication.

Questions to ask your doctor regarding any medication

- what medications am I taking and what symptoms are they designed to treat
- how long do I have to take the medication before I start seeing results
- what are the likely side effects and how can I manage them
- can I safely take this medication with other medications or supplements that I may be taking
- what side effects that may occur, should I seek medical attention for
- how should I take this medication - how often, what time of the day, with or without food
- is there anything I should avoid eating, drinking, taking or doing while on this medication
- how often will my medication be reviewed or monitored
- how long will I need to take this medication
- what if I forget to take my medication
- what if I do not want to take the medication or if I want to stop taking the medication
- what other treatment options do I have

Develop a crisis Plan

What should be in a Crisis Plan/Wellness and Recovery plan?

- your individual preferences as to what to do in a crisis – this should be discussed with your medical health providers, support professionals, carer (family and friends). It is important that the people involved in the crisis plan have a copy of it
- diagnosis
- contact information for doctors, services, other support professionals
- what medication is being taken: how much and for what purpose
- contact information of family and carers
- what tools or strategies work for you
- if you are a parent what the plan is for the care of your children if you are not able
- completed advance statements
- past suicide attempts and episodes of self-harming
- trauma history (if there is any) inclusive of recent traumatisation
- specific things that may be triggers for you
- early warning signs that things are not going well
- any relevant physical medical health issues
- any allergies or adverse reactions to medications, foods or environmental agents
- any addictions, or recreational drug or alcohol use (current or past)
- a post crisis plan. This may help in times of transitions from hospital back into the home

Advance statements

Advance Statement writing is a process in which a person describes treatment preferences prior to becoming unwell.

An Advance Statement can form part of advanced care planning, and seeks to achieve one or both of the following:

- appoint a decision maker to act on a person's behalf should that person lose decision making capacity in the future
- document a person's treatment preferences for future treatment providers should that person lose their capacity to articulate those preferences in the future

Currently in Victoria, Advance Statements can be overridden in a number of circumstances and it is important to be aware that they are NOT legally binding. However, Advance Statement planning and Advance Statements remain very useful and proactive ways to engage with your treatment and treating team.

For further information go www.health.vic.gov.au

Advance Statement

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/mhact2014/recovery/advance-statements.htm>

<https://www.mindaustralia.org.au/resources/about-mental-ill-health/advance-statement.html>

<https://www.imha.vic.gov.au/search?query=Advance+statements>

Independent Mental Health Advocacy (to help support mental health consumers to understand and advocate for their rights) www.imha.vic.gov.au 1300 974 820

Mental health care plans

Mental health care plans are often referred to by other names such as treatment plans or care plans. A mental health care plan can be useful for people who are engaged with a number of professionals at once for treatment and/or support. A mental health care plan outlines your goals, your support networks, your strengths and what you can expect from each member of your treatment and/or support team. Mental health treatment, care and support should be tailored to meet the specific needs of the individual consumer.

Under the National Standards for Mental Health Services, consumers are to be involved in all decisions regarding their treatment and care.

- consumers have the right to have their nominated carer(s) involved in all aspects of their care
- the standards recognise the role played by carers, as well as their capacity, needs and requirements, as separate from those of consumers
- participation by consumers and carers is integral to the development, planning, delivery and evaluation of mental health services

Freedom of information

You can apply for access to your medical and mental health records under the Freedom of Information Act (1982). You can download an information request at: www.health.vic.gov.au

Taking control

Keep a mental health file

Creating a file of your recovery journey can be very useful.

Some things you may want to include:

- your strengths
- personal values which guide your decision making
- your social connections and their contact details
- personal and treatment goals
- your experience of the symptoms of your illness
- all of your health providers and their contact information
- your crisis plan
- copies of your mental health care plan
- details of your current treatment including medication dosages and any side effects
- history of medications you've taken and your experience of them
- brief notes from appointments and hospital admissions
- a brief account of any abuse and trauma
- a current Advanced Care Directive form, completed and signed
- a list of tools and strategies you use to help manage your symptoms
- a list of triggers you've noticed and ways to respond to them

Goals

Setting goals is the key to taking control of your recovery. Setting goals helps you to:

- clearly identify what is important to you and what you want to achieve
- identify services, people, or resources you might need to achieve your goals
- identify any barriers and put together plans to overcome them
- communicate with others about what you want and where you're going

Goal setting empowers you to make the changes that lead to a better life.

The future you

It can be difficult to set goals when we do not have a clear idea or vision of our future self. It is important to try and reflect with your family, caseworker, a peer support worker or your doctors about what wellness looks like for you.

Reflecting on the following questions may help.

- what do I want to change about my situation
- what current behaviours or habit do I need to change to improve my current situation, health

and life

- what are my strengths and skills and how can I use those to get to where I want to be in my life
- what future roles can I see myself in? What roles do others think I would be good at
- are there volunteer roles that I can do to help me build self-esteem, skills and provide a valued role in the community
- how can I get involved in the community
- are there new skills I would like to learn? Or educational programs I would like to be participating in
- would I like to return to work? Would I like to do something the same or similar or would I like to change the type of work I do
- are there relationships I would like to establish or current relationships I would like to work on
- are there things in life I would like to acquire, such as a home, a car etc.
- are there events I would like to be a part of? Example: sporting clubs, music festivals, art groups, a political group, and ecological group
- are there events I would like attend or places I would like to visit
- do I have specific financial goals
- do I want faith or religion to be a part, or more of a part of my life

The importance of connecting with people and the community

Relationships

- being connected with people is vital for most individuals to stay mentally and emotionally well
- developing and maintaining healthy relationships with friends and family is important
- it is also equally important to recognise those relationships that are not healthy, and make changes where possible
- making new friends can be challenging, but getting involved with community groups, supports groups or through special interest group is a good place to start
- remember that taking the time and energy to into building stronger existing relationship and building new ones can bring great rewards

Community

- being involved within your community can help you build connections to others as well as developing a greater sense of self
- connecting to community helps develop skills and facilitates new learning. Our brains enjoy learning new things and it helps to promote positive moods
- making the effort to improve the lives of others is sure to improve your life too
- there are several ways in which you can get involved in your community: Volunteering, special interest groups, cultural groups, sporting groups, classes at community centres, book groups, religious groups, community gardens, play groups for those with young children, even support groups
- taking time to enjoy and challenge yourself are great ways of helping to refresh your outlook on life, and reduce stress
- your local community centre is a great place to see what is happening in your community, enrol in fun classes, learn new skill and meet people

Helpful links

The better Health Channel (mental health care plans)

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/mental_health_ca...

Independent Mental Health Advocacy (to help support mental health consumers to understand and advocate for their rights) www.imha.vic.gov.au 1300 974 820

Medicines Line 1300 633 424 www.nps.org.au

Mental Health Complaints Commission www.mhcc.vic.gov.au

Mental Health Foundation of Australia www.mentalhealthvic.org.au

Mental Health Review Board of Victoria www.mhrb.vic.gov.au

Mental Health Tribunal of Victoria www.mht.vic.gov.au

Mind Australia 1300 550 265 www.mindaustralia.org.au

Mindhealthconnect www.mindhealthconnect.org.au

Mind Spot www.mindspot.org.au

MoodGYM www.modgym.anu.edu.au

My Virtual Medical Centre www.myvmc.com

Our Consumer Place www.ourconsumerplace.com.au

Sane Australia www.sane.org

Source URL: <https://mentalhealthcompass.com.au/mhis/how-can-i-be-more-active-my-recovery>