

# Treatment Options for Recovery



**T**here are many effective treatments available today that can help you manage a

mental illness. Medications, therapy, psychosocial services and self care are the most common forms of treatment. Often, people use a combination of them to meet their specific needs.

With the right help, you can experience relief from your symptoms and, in some cases, be completely free of them. This fact sheet describes the various forms of treatment that exist and how they can help you recover.

## Medication

If you have received a diagnosis, your doctor may have prescribed a medication for you.

### How can medication help me?

A medication should help reduce the symptoms associated with your illness. For example, if you have bipolar disorder, a particular medication can help you even out your moods. This improvement should allow you to get the most out of other therapies and opportunities in your life.

### What should I ask about medications that are prescribed for me?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends that you ask the following questions:

- What is the name of the medication and what is it supposed to do?

- How and when do I take it, and when do I stop taking it?
- What foods, drinks or other medications should I avoid while taking this medication?
- Should it be taken with food or on an empty stomach?
- Is it safe to drink alcohol while on this medication?
- What are the side effects, and what should I do if they occur?
- Is a Patient Package Insert for the medication available?

### How can I tell if my medication is working?

Some people get relief from their symptoms immediately, others after a few days or weeks; for others, it may take even longer. After a short time on the medication, it's important to share with your doctor or therapist how you are doing with the treatment. Together, you may need to find the right amount of medicine or combination of medicines.

It's especially important to tell your doctor about any side-effects you're having from the medication. You may be able to make some changes in dosage or the time of day you take the medication to lessen or get rid of the side-effects. There are also newer medications that have fewer side-effects than older drugs, making it easier for people to stay on them. If after an extended period of time on a medication you are still not experiencing progress, you may need to talk with your doctor about trying another medication. Consult your doctor before making any changes in your medication.

How long you take medication really depends on your particular needs. Some people are able to discontinue medication when their symptoms have fully subsided and they have reached their treatment goals. Others may choose to remain on medication for longer periods of time as part of a long-term recovery plan.

## Psychotherapy and Counseling

Therapy involves talking about thoughts, feelings and actions with a mental health professional. It can be done in a few different ways: one-on-one; as a couple or family; or in groups. The mental health professionals who provide counseling or therapy include psychiatrists, psychologists, clinical social workers, licensed professional counselors, certified alcohol and drug abuse counselors, nurse-psychotherapists, marital and family therapists and pastoral counselors.

### How can psychotherapy help me?

Talking with a therapist can help you better understand why you feel or behave certain ways. You can also learn how to deal with a specific problem or cope with intense emotions, such as stress, grief, anger, frustration and fear.

### What should I expect?

Talking about and facing personal issues may feel painful at times, but eventually can help you overcome them. After awhile, you should begin to feel better about yourself and have more skills to deal with issues in your life. You should also notice more comfort in your relationships with family, friends and co-workers.

If you feel you are not getting results, it may be because the type of therapy or therapist's style are not best suited to your specific needs. If you feel there are problems, discuss them with your therapist. A competent therapist should be willing to discuss your reactions to therapy and respond to your feelings about the process. If you are still dissatisfied, seek a second opinion.

## Psychosocial Rehabilitation

Psychosocial rehabilitation is the name for a combination of services that are designed to help you live independently. These services may involve housing, employment or social supports.

### How can psychosocial rehabilitation services help me?

This form of treatment can help you acquire or regain the practical skills you need to live your life while coping with the symptoms of your illness. You can learn social and work skills that help you relate to other people and boost your confidence. If needed, you can also develop living skills, such as proper nutrition, personal hygiene, cooking, shopping, budgeting, housekeeping, and using public transportation. In the best cases, you decide what services are important to you and work with a case manager or mental health professional to arrange them.

For more information about psychosocial services, check out the companion fact sheet, "Support Services for Recovery."

## Self Care/Holistic Approaches

In addition to medication, therapy and psychosocial services, there are other ways to care for your mental health and overall well-being. This holistic approach to recovery can help you focus on yourself as a whole person — body, mind and spirit — and not as a set of symptoms.

### How can self care help me?

Self care includes proper diet and nutrition, adequate sleep, exercise, and alternative therapies, like yoga, massage and meditation. These are ways to develop a healthy attitude and lifestyle that aid your recovery. They can also give you peace of mind and bring enjoyment into your life.

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For more information, contact your local Mental Health Association (MHA) or the National Mental Health Association at 800-969-NMHA (6642) or [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org).



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