



# RECOVERY

# TOOLS FOR

## Finding support and Friendship Tools for Building Positive Relationships

Having a close circle of friends and supporters is important to recovery. We all need friends who respect us, who care about how we feel, who will give us good advice, and who will help us during a crisis. We also need friends we can relax and have fun with.

But many of us don't have a close circle of friends. We may isolate ourselves. We might be afraid to make friends or it may be hard for us to talk to other people.

Making friends is a skill that consumers can learn or re-learn, just like any other skill. Here are some suggestions:

**Don't depend on only one person.** For example, your therapist might be important in your life, but don't rely completely on your therapist. Your therapist is in a professional relationship with you. There are certain boundaries he or she needs to respect. Also, your therapist can't be there for you all the time.

**Be a good listener.** Friendship is a two-way street. It is important to be able to give support as well as to get support. Make sure your friend

has time to talk and get support, too.

**Take good care of yourself** – Pay attention to your personal hygiene. Make sure you bathe daily. Keep your hair combed and your clothes clean and neat. Eat a balanced diet and get enough sleep so you're not grouchy and out of sorts.

**Re-Learn social skills** – Many people have not had a chance to develop good social skills. If this is the case, work with your therapist or talk to your support group about how to be a better friend.

**Avoid criticizing & complaining** – Try to be positive around others. People like to be around those who make them feel good. You can do this by finding something that is good about the other person and giving them a compliment. You can also talk about something good that is happening to you.

**Learn to make small talk.** If you are shy, it may be hard to come out of your shell. Making "small talk" is one way to make it easier. Comment about the weather, about your favorite sports team or about a current news event. Small talk is a safe way to talk to others.

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**Avoid turning your relationships into a therapy session.** If we have spent a lot of time in therapy, it's easy to talk about our problems and deepest secrets. It's okay to talk about these things in a therapy session. In social situations, it can make people uncomfortable.

**Be yourself.** – It's hard to play-act all the time, so you want friends who like you and accept you for who you are. If someone wants you to change who you are, they may not be worth your time.

**Give people their space.** Don't be pushy or overly dependent. Try to make a circle of friends. That way, you don't have to depend on just one person to meet all of your needs.

**Be fun to be around.** Work on your recovery each day. Learn to have fun. If your support group or mental health center offers activities, get involved. Take part in church or community activities.

If you are still having problems making and keeping friends, talk to someone who cares about you. Ask for their help. Work on the suggestions they give you.

Once you have met someone you like, try to spend time with them. Go to the movies, or out to have coffee. Be a good friend. If you are fun to be around and are honest and supportive with others, you will make lots of friends.

### Community Mental Health Centers

Pikes Peak MHC  
719-572-6330

Spanish Peaks MHC  
719-545-2746

San Luis Valley MHC  
719-589-3671

Southeast Mental Health  
Services  
719-384-5446

West Central MHC  
719-275-2351

Southwest Colorado MHC  
970-259-2162

Midwestern MHC  
970-249-9694

Colorado West MHC  
970-945-2241

Colorado Health Networks believes that people can and do recover from mental illness. That is why we created *Tools for Recovery*. *Tools for Recovery* is a series of tip sheets that are written by and for consumers about issues, opportunities and obstacles people face in their recovery from mental illness. These tip sheets are available through your mental health center or by calling the Access to Care Line at:

**1-800-804-5008**

Visit us on the web at:

**[www.yourchn.com](http://www.yourchn.com)**

