



RECOVERY

TOOLS FOR

Blueprint for Success - Coping with Symptoms

Symptoms from a psychiatric illness don't have to disable you. While symptoms can be annoying, or even frightening at times, they don't have to keep you from holding a job, having friends or living a normal life. Many people who suffer from symptoms have learned ways to cope. Several of our members share ways that they handle their symptoms.

Stay on your medication - If you are on medication, and it works to ease the symptoms, stay on it. Sometimes people stop taking their medication when they start to feel better. When they stop taking it, the symptoms reappear. The right combination of medication, therapy and self help can help you get your life back on track.

Listen to your body - Know when your medication feels "right." When you are physically ill or under stress, your medication might not work as well. If your medication feels "wrong," see your doctor right

away and work together to adjust your medication. Also, make sure to eat right, get enough sleep and avoid alcohol and drugs not prescribed by your doctor.

Learn to Deal with Voices - If you hear voices, there are things you can do to mask them. Many people find it helpful to wear a walkman and play music that drowns out the voices. Others have had a friend make a tape that says positive things to them. You may find that "white noise" (constant noise like the humming of a refrigerator or air conditioner) increases voices. If you can, avoid white noise or drown it out with music.

Use Your Support Systems - Use family and friends to help you through the rough times. Let them know about your illness and the warning signs of when you are becoming depressed. Make a contract with them so they can help you when you start to become ill. When you begin to act a certain way, they can give you support.

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Learn Re-focusing Techniques

Use re-focusing techniques when you get feelings of “unreality.” When under stress, a person may feel that others are talking about them. Instead of becoming afraid, put all of your focus on your breathing. This can help take your mind off of the feelings of “unreality” until the feelings go away.

Visualization can help you ride out a panic attack -

Use visualization to help deal with a panic attack. If you have a special memory that always makes you feel good when you think about it, close your eyes and try to visualize all of the details of that special time—the smells, the sounds and how you felt.

There are a number of other methods that people have used to successfully help them deal with their symptoms. For more information on where you can find resources to help you deal with distressing symptoms, call your community mental health center or the Access to Care Line:

1-800-804-5008

Community Mental Health Centers

Pikes Peak MHC
719-573-9514

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. Other tip sheets in the series *Coping with Symptoms* include *Handling Anxiety*, *Handling Depression* and *Dealing with Voices*. These tip sheets are available through your mental health center or by calling the Access to Care Line at:

1-800-804-5008

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