



DWP

# Dealing with Psychosis

*A toolkit for moving forward with your life*

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# About This Toolkit

Psychosis can be a disruptive, confusing, and frightening experience. Hearing voices or thinking unusual or disturbing thoughts is common in psychosis. Having psychosis makes it difficult to figure out what is really happening and what may be a trick of the mind. Psychosis often prevents people from doing the things they used to do—such as going to work or school and enjoying time with friends and family.

*The good news is that psychosis is a treatable condition.*

Treatment for psychosis is provided by health professionals and involves a number of different approaches, including medication. This toolkit is not meant to be a substitute for the treatments provided by your health professionals. Instead, the toolkit is to be used *along with* treatment by professionals.

**This toolkit is meant to help you learn skills you can use to:**

- 1. Manage symptoms of psychosis**
- 2. Move forward and enjoy your life**

Learning new skills is not easy. It's important that you have somebody who can support you in the learning process. This is your **Support Person**.

**Think of who might best be able to help support you in learning these skills.**



*Support  
Person*

Your Support Person might be a:

- Health professional
- Family member
- Close friend

Pick someone you feel comfortable with and can trust. You may choose to have a few different people support you. Some of the skills in this toolkit will be easier to learn and practice if you have more than one Support Person.





*Understanding*

If you don't have a Support Person, you can still use this toolkit and learn new skills. Some people who have used the toolkit alone said that they found it useful but felt it would be even better having a Support Person available.

A later section of this guide is specifically for the Support Person. Feel free to look through the *For the Support Person* section on page 85 if you are curious.

## Using This Toolkit

*There are many ways to use this toolkit.  
You can start in any section and work  
through the toolkit in any order.*

The Table of Contents shows what the toolkit covers.  
Some of the topics may be more useful to you than others.  
Pick and choose what parts you want to work on.

There are many activities in this toolkit.  
Some of the activities are challenging.  
Give yourself time and be patient.  
Learning new skills takes time.

**Plan on reading and using this toolkit a little bit at a time.**



# Monitoring Your Progress

At first glance, this *Dealing with Psychosis* toolkit can look pretty long and complex. It may even be intimidating. Here are some suggestions for how to track your progress and pay attention to the effects of doing the exercises as you work through the different sections.

One simple approach is to make use of a “day planner” or calendar where hours, days, or weeks are blocked off to represent time spent working on various toolkit sections. For example, it could be your plan to work on the *Setting Goals and Moving Forward* section for two weeks—perhaps two times a week for 30 minutes each time. Many people find it gratifying to look in their day planner and be able to cross off items on their list of goals as they are completed.

This toolkit has quite a few worksheets and forms to complete. You may want to fill out some of the worksheets more than once. This could occur, for example, when a new problem arises, and you want to do the problem-solving worksheet again to work on the new problem. Or, it might happen when you change or add to your list of goals.

Other times, a worksheet can be used to track strategies from the toolkit as you try them out. For example, in the *Understanding Cognition* section, a number of different strategies are listed in the *What Can I Do?* sub-sections. Writing down which strategies you try can help keep track of your choices.

Finally, it is important to know how well a strategy is working and whether a problem area is getting any better. One thing that can help is to create a *Progress Form* like the sample on the next page. The guideline for rating your problems uses a scale of 0 to 10. A score of 0 means “no problem,” and a 10 means “this is a huge problem every day that has negative effects on my functioning.”



Rating

In the first example below, the “Rating Before” for item one, *Memory – missing appointments*, is a 7. The strategy of using a day planner every day seems to be effective, because after two weeks the same problem has gone down from a 7 to a 6. After four weeks the rating has dropped another point down to a 5.

PROGRESS FORM				
AREA TO RATE	RATING BEFORE	STRATEGY USED	RATING AFTER 2 WEEKS	RATING AFTER 4 WEEKS
Memory – missing appointments	7	Used day planner every day	6	5
Social connections				
Relaxing	9	Deep breathing every day for 15 minutes	7	8 – Stopped doing the exercises after 2 weeks

**Rating scale:**      1 = No problem      5 = Definitely an issue      10 = Huge problem



# What Is Psychosis?

**Psychosis is a condition that affects a person's ability to know what is real versus what is not real.** The experiences of hearing voices and having unusual thoughts often occur in psychosis.

**Psychosis is more common than people think.** About 3% of all people experience psychosis at some point in their lives. Many health disorders can include psychosis: schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, severe depression, a bad reaction to surgery, and others. You don't need to know all about these medical diagnoses to learn how to deal more effectively with psychosis.

## *Psychosis is not...*

Just because a person has an unusual thought from time to time does not mean that the person is experiencing psychosis. Having unusual thoughts is not psychosis when these thoughts occur but can be put out of one's mind easily.

## *Psychosis is...*

**Psychosis = sometimes having trouble figuring out what is real**

Suppose your unusual thoughts won't go away, and you get confused about what is or isn't real. You may also start to have other strange experiences, such as hearing or seeing things that aren't there.

You may feel confused and frightened. It may become difficult to do things that you were able to do just a while ago. A number of distressing changes can happen in psychosis.

### **Common symptoms of psychosis include:**

1. Strange and unrealistic thoughts that won't go away even when other people believe the thoughts can't be true.
2. Hearing things or seeing things that aren't there.



Your Turn!

## Your Turn!

Write down any symptoms or problems you might have that could indicate psychosis.

Strange or unrealistic thoughts that won't go away

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Hearing or seeing things that aren't there

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Write Symptoms or Problems

People experiencing psychosis often develop other types of problems, such as:

- Wanting to be alone all the time
- Feeling sad or anxious
- Feeling “high” or excited
- Difficulty sleeping
- Finding it hard to get out and do things
- Using alcohol or drugs



Your Turn!

## Your Turn!

Please check any of the boxes that apply to you.

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wanting to be alone all the time | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty sleeping                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling sad or anxious           | <input type="checkbox"/> Finding it hard to get out and do things |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling “high” or excited        | <input type="checkbox"/> Using alcohol or drugs                   |

### More about psychosis...

There are many different reasons why a person may develop psychosis. In fact, *nobody* is immune from psychosis. Psychosis occurs in all sorts of people across all cultures. Almost everyone would develop psychosis by going without sleep for a long period of time or overusing certain drugs, such as amphetamines, for an extended period.

Developing psychosis has nothing at all to do with being *mentally weak*. You cannot simply “will” yourself to not develop psychosis.

Research shows that a number of things can influence an onset of psychosis. These things can be grouped together into **six factors: situation, physical state, thoughts, perceptions, emotions, and actions**. These factors interact with each other. For example, a stressful *situation* affects your *physical state*. When your *physical state* changes, your *thoughts* may also change.

## A Closer Look at the Six Factors

### Situation

Psychosis often begins with a situation that is stressful.

Many different types of situations can cause stress, such as:

- Death of a loved one
- Moving to a new country or a new city
- Changing schools
- Taking on a new job
- Breaking up with someone
- Not having enough money to pay the bills
- People being critical or hostile toward you



Understanding



## Understanding



The risk of developing psychosis increases when a person is faced with a stressful situation.

This doesn't mean that people only develop psychosis when things are not going well. Some people develop psychosis when everything seems fine for them. The psychosis seems to come out of nowhere. However, learning skills to manage stress can help anybody with psychosis to recover and stay well.

### *Physical State*

Many different types of physical states can increase a person's risk of developing psychosis.



### Understanding

## Genes

Some evidence indicates that certain **genes** may increase the likelihood of psychosis.

If one of your relatives has experienced psychosis, then your risk of psychosis is somewhat increased because you share many of the same genes with your relative. However, just because a person has a family history of psychosis does not mean that the person will automatically develop psychosis. Other factors need to be present for psychosis to develop.

## Brain

The **brain** is very important in psychosis. It appears that changes to certain brain systems can increase the risk of psychosis. Many **drugs** cause changes in the brain, so drug use can also increase your risk of psychosis.

## Sleep

Finally, poor **sleep** is a problem that often occurs in psychosis. A person with psychosis sometimes can't sleep or sleeps too much. Problems with sleeping can increase your risk of psychosis and make it harder to recover.

## Thoughts

If you're suffering from psychosis, you may also find it difficult to think in a realistic way about your situation. Your **thinking may be distorted**.

This distorted thinking can take four forms:

1. You just can't make sense of your situation. Things may seem confused or meaningless.
2. Your situation seems dangerous. You may think that other people are plotting against you or planning to harm you.
3. You believe that you have extra special powers or abilities, that you have an exceptionally special role in the world far beyond almost anyone.
4. You may think that ordinary events have more personal meaning to you than to other people. For example, you listen to the news on television and think that the announcer is speaking directly to you.

Any of these kinds of distortions put you out of touch with reality, with the result that you can't accurately understand what's going on around you. This, in turn, makes it harder to deal with the situation appropriately.





## Understanding

### *Perceptions*

People with psychosis often develop problems with how they perceive reality. The world may seem *different*.

It may be more **difficult to “tune out” things** such as street noise or people in a crowd. A person may become more sensitive to noise or light. Determining what is and isn't important may become difficult. The experience may feel overwhelming.

People suffering from psychosis may hear, smell, taste, feel, or see things that other people do not also experience. If this happens to you, then you are experiencing what is called a **hallucination**. A common type of hallucination in psychosis is to hear voices that no one else can hear.

### *Emotions*

If you are suffering from psychosis, you may find that you have emotional responses that you wouldn't normally have—your **emotions may be distorted**.

Emotional distortion can take three different forms:

1. It is no longer easy for you to show or feel emotion. For example, you may smile less, or you may cry less. Your emotions seem to be flat.
2. You develop intense feelings of fear that don't seem to fit with the real situation.
3. You feel extremely good or “high,” which doesn't seem to fit with the real situation.

The type of emotion you experience will be influenced by other factors, such as your thoughts. Being frightened makes sense when you are thinking that other people plan to harm you in some way—but in psychosis these thoughts and the related emotions don't actually fit with the real situation.



### Understanding

## Actions

### DISCONNECTING FROM OTHER PEOPLE

It is common in psychosis to disconnect from other people. During psychosis, you may find it difficult to communicate with others. You may not be sure what other people are thinking or feeling when you have a discussion with them. You may feel distant from other people and prefer to be left alone.

Psychosis involves problems understanding what is and isn't real. This lack of understanding makes it difficult to know what is happening. It may feel uncomfortable being around other people when you don't know what is going on.

However, disconnecting from people is actually an unhealthy action. Having support from other people will help you *get* better and *stay* better.

### LACK OF MOTIVATION

Another change you might have noticed is that psychosis can make it very difficult to do simple things that used to be easy.

For example, just getting out of your house, taking a shower, or cleaning your bedroom may seem difficult. Or, you may not care whether you participate in interesting activities that you used to enjoy, such as going to the movies or engaging in your hobbies. Your motivation to do things just seems to be lacking.

Having a **lack of motivation** does not mean you are lazy. It is a symptom of psychosis that needs treatment and requires effort to overcome.

Don't be discouraged. **Remember that these problems are treatable.** The next section shares some strategies you can use to help control psychosis.



# What Can You Do About Psychosis?

Health professionals will work with you to treat the psychosis. You may have just one health professional, or you may have a whole team of professionals working with you. The *number* of professionals you have working with you doesn't matter. What does matter is that you are getting good treatment.

**Good treatment = medication + support + skills**

When you have all three parts of this treatment formula then your chances of getting better and staying healthy improve greatly.

## *Medication*

There are many different kinds of medication available to treat psychosis. These medications are called **antipsychotic medication**. It's not important that you know about all of them. **It is important that you know what specific medication(s) you are taking.**

Antipsychotic medication is essential in the treatment of psychosis. The medication does two important things:

1. Gets rid of many of the symptoms of psychosis.
2. Helps to prevent psychosis from occurring again.

In addition to antipsychotic medication, people who have experienced psychosis may sometimes be prescribed other medications. This depends on the symptoms they have experienced. For example, *antidepressant* or *mood stabilizing* medication might be used for problems with mood. Whenever you are prescribed a medication, be sure to find out:

- How much you need to take.
- What symptoms the medication is meant to help.
- What side effects the medication might cause.



Your Turn!

## Your Turn!

Write down information about the medication you are taking.

- It's best to complete this activity with the health professional who is prescribing your medication.
- Update this table whenever there is any change to the type or dose of your medications.



Write Down

### MY MEDICATIONS

NAME OF MEDICATION	PROBLEMS THIS MEDICATION WILL HELP WITH	DOSE AND TIMES TO TAKE THIS MEDICATION
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### Understanding

## Medication side effects

Medication can cause *side effects*. Side effects are unwanted effects of the medication.

### Some common side effects of antipsychotic medication include:

- Feeling tired
- Weight gain
- Unwanted movements

The side effects are different for each different medication. The side effects also vary from person to person. One person may gain weight from a medication while another person taking the same medication may not.

It's important that you know the possible side effects for the medications you are taking.



### Your Turn!

## Your Turn!

### Write down information about the side effects of the medication you are taking.

- It's best to complete this activity with the health professional who is prescribing your medication.
- Ask your health professional what are the mild and more common side effects for each medication. Also, find out if there are any other, more serious side effects that you should watch out for. **Always discuss any side effects from a medication with your health professional.** You should report any side effects, even if your health professional has not mentioned them.



Write Down

### MY MEDICATIONS – POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS

NAME OF MEDICATION	POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS	MY SIDE EFFECTS
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Understanding

### *More About Medication*

Although antipsychotic medications are helpful in treating psychosis, too often people stop taking them.

There are four common reasons why people stop taking medication:

1. Side effects
2. Feeling better
3. Forgetting
4. Stigma



## Understanding

### 1. Side Effects

Sometimes people stop taking their medication due to side effects. There are ways to decrease the side effects while continuing to take your medication.

Sometimes this involves **medication changes** such as: lowering the dose, changing the time of day the medication is taken, or switching to another medication.

Other times this may involve **changes to your behaviour**. For example, if you have a dry mouth you could drink more water or chew gum. If you gain weight, you could modify your diet and exercise more.

It is important to discuss any side effects with your health professional. He or she can help you find ways of dealing with your side effects.

### 2. Feeling Better

People might also consider stopping their medication because they feel better. While it's great that you are feeling so much better, you should not stop taking your medication without consulting your health professional.

**Remember that antipsychotic medication helps prevent the psychosis from coming back.** It is recommended that you continue taking antipsychotic medication even after most of the symptoms of psychosis are gone. This may mean for another few months, or sometimes for many years.

### 3. Forgetting

Sometimes people simply forget to take their medication. Always keeping your medication in the **same place next to something you use every day** might help. For example, keeping your medication right next to your toothbrush, or using a pillbox divided by the days of the week can be effective reminders.

### 4. Stigma

Taking the medication is a reminder that you have experienced psychosis. Many people feel depressed or ashamed that they have had psychosis. They may stop taking the medication as a way to convince themselves that everything is normal again. If you want to decrease or go off your medications, discuss it with your doctor.



Your Turn!

## Your Turn!

In the first column write down the ways your medication has helped you.

In the second column write down the things that you don't like about your medication.

HOW TAKING MEDICATION  
HAS HELPED ME

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THINGS I DON'T LIKE  
ABOUT MY MEDICATION

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Write Down

After you've completed the activity, talk to your health professional, especially about anything you don't like about your medication(s). He or she may be able to help with your concerns.





## Understanding

### Skills

Learning new skills to lower your level of stress and help you cope with symptoms can help you manage psychosis.

In the following sections you will learn about these important skills:

- Taking Care of Your Health (page 21)
- Managing Stress (page 27)
- Solving Problems (page 31)
- Setting Goals and Moving Forward (page 41)
- Understanding Cognition (page 49)
- Connecting With Other People (page 59)
- Preventing Relapse (page 65)
- Dealing With Symptoms (page 74)

Work on these skills one at a time. You might not complete an entire section in one session, or even in one day.

Remember that you don't have to learn all these skills on your own. Your Support Person, whether a health professional, family member or close friend, is there to help you.

### Support

An important part of your treatment is feeling that you are being supported in your recovery.

**People who can support you may include your:**

- Health professional
- Family
- Friends

Involving your family in appointments with your health professional can help increase the support you feel from them. It also helps your family understand what you are going through.

Some people with psychosis find that they have become isolated, feel lonely and don't have enough connections with people. They are unable to get the support they need. If this has happened to you, then you should check out the section on *Connecting With Other People* in this toolkit.



# Taking Care of Your Health

**Taking good care of your health helps keep you in good shape both physically and mentally.**

In addition to getting regular physical and dental check-ups there are a number of other things you can do to take care of your health.

- **Sleep well**
- **Eat well and exercise regularly**
- **Reduce your use of drugs and alcohol**

The following tips do not cover all of the possible information about each of these topics. Please talk with your health professional if you are having significant problems in any of these areas.

## *Sleep Well*

Sleeping well every night will help you feel better during the day and make it easier to deal with stress.

**Here are some tips on how to improve your sleep.**

- **Set a schedule.** Follow a regular time to go to bed and wake up seven days a week.
- **Avoid caffeine after dinner.** This includes coffee, cola, and tea.
- **Avoid alcohol and nicotine before bedtime.** These substances can cause restless sleep.
- **Do something to unwind before going to bed.** You could do a relaxation exercise, read a book, or take a hot bath. Do not play computer games or view over-stimulating videos on the Internet.
- **Associate the bed with sleep.** Avoid using the bed as a place for reading, watching TV, eating, or working.



### Understanding

- **Don't stay in bed when wide awake.** If sleep does not occur after thirty minutes, get out of bed and engage in a quiet activity such as reading until you are sleepy. Do not watch TV or play computer games.
- **Avoid taking naps during the day.** Some people can take short naps in the middle of the day without a problem. However, for most people naps during the day interfere with sleep at night.
- **Pay attention to the comfort of your bedroom.** Keep your bedroom dark, quiet, and at a comfortable temperature. Make sure your mattress and pillows are comfortable.
- **Avoid heavy exercise after dinner.** Gentle exercise after dinner, such as a leisurely stroll, may help with sleep. Avoid heavy exercise after dinner, as this may delay sleep. Vigorous exercise, when performed earlier in the day, *can* help with sleep at night.
- **Do not use sleeping pills on a regular basis.** Sleeping pills are only helpful for short-term treatment of sleep problems. Longer-term use can lead to problems with dependence and further sleep problems when the medication is stopped.

### *Eat Well and Exercise Regularly*

People with psychosis may gain weight because they decrease their activity level. Weight gain is also a side effect of some antipsychotic medication. **Eating well and getting regular exercise will help you stay in good physical shape and maintain a healthy weight.** It will also give you more energy and allow you to deal with stress more effectively.

#### **Here are some hints on how to eat well.**

- **Don't go on a strict diet to lose weight.** Almost all people who follow strict diets gain the weight back (and sometimes gain even more weight after dieting). It's best to watch what you eat and make sure you're making good food choices on an ongoing basis.
- **Eat a balanced diet.** Diets that emphasize eating a lot of just one type of food are not healthy. You need to have a mix of grains, vegetables, fruits, dairy, and protein every day.
- **Keep your home stocked with healthy foods.** Shop for healthy food choices that are easy to prepare.
- **Choose snacks wisely.** If you need a snack, then reach for a piece of fruit or some cut-up veggies instead of a bag of potato chips or a chocolate bar.



### Understanding

Here are some hints on how to get regular exercise.

- **Choose activities you enjoy for exercise.** Choosing an enjoyable activity helps ensure that you will keep doing it. You may enjoy playing sports, going to the gym, or taking up a new activity such as swimming, cycling, or hiking.
- **Exercise with a friend.** This makes exercise more fun and can help motivate you on those days you don't feel like exercising.
- **Be more active during the day.** Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk the long way to the store.
- **Listen to music.** Music can make you feel like moving. If you listen to music while you exercise, you may exercise for a longer time and enjoy it more.
- **Start slowly.** You won't become a marathon runner overnight. Start with just five minutes a day and increase the duration slowly over time.

There is a lot of inaccurate and even harmful information about eating and exercise on the Internet and in many magazines. It is best to get any further information on these topics from your health professional.

**Use the *Setting Goals and Moving Forward* section on page 41 to help you reach your goals to eat well and exercise regularly.**

## *Reduce Your Use of Drugs and Alcohol*

The use of recreational drugs and the excessive use of alcohol are risky for a person with psychosis. These substances slow recovery and increase the risk of psychosis coming back.

People who use drugs and alcohol usually do so because they experience pleasure or other positive effects. Some of the positive effects people report from using drugs and alcohol are:

- Feeling “high”
- Feelings of relaxation
- Avoiding boredom
- Experiencing a “thrill”
- Escaping from negative feelings such as stress or depression
- Feeling less shy or awkward around others.



Understanding

**But most people also experience negative effects, such as:**

- Unpredictable effects that can lead to panic, paranoia or depression
- Risks to physical and mental health
- Arguing with family and other loved ones
- Dependency or addiction
- Problems concentrating
- Problems at work or school

The decision to reduce or quit using drugs and alcohol is yours. Nobody can force you to quit. It is best if your decision to quit or continue is an informed decision.

## Your Turn!

List the positive and negative effects of your own drug or alcohol use.



Your Turn!

### POSITIVE EFFECTS

### NEGATIVE EFFECTS

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Write Down

Take a look at your list. Do you see any advantages to reducing your drug and alcohol use?



Understanding

## Reducing Drug or Alcohol Use

If you decide that there are advantages to reducing your use, then you are going to need skills to be able to accomplish your goal. **Reducing drug use requires good goal-setting and problem-solving skills.** These skills are covered in the *Solving Problems* and *Setting Goals* and *Moving Forward* sections in this toolkit.

A **trigger** is a situation or event that can be a factor that contributes to misusing drugs or alcohol. You can find out more about triggers beginning on page 67 in the *1. Controlling Triggers For Psychosis* section.

**As you start to reduce your use, you should be prepared to deal with triggers that may come up.**

Here is a sample list of triggers and ideas on how to handle them.

TRIGGER	HOW I'LL HANDLE IT
I'm with friends or at a party. Everyone is drinking alcohol or taking drugs.	Rehearse this situation beforehand. Practice saying "no thanks" in a confident voice.
I feel bored.	Have other activities I can engage in when I recognize that I am bored.
I feel stressed.	Try some relaxation techniques.





Your Turn!

## Your Turn!

- Anticipate what triggers make you want to increase your drug or alcohol use.
- How will you handle the situation when you notice the triggers?

TRIGGER	WAYS I'LL HANDLE IT
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Write Down

After you have successfully quit or reduced your use, you may “slip” and start to increase your use again. These types of slips are common. The important thing is to not give up and go back to using regularly. Review what happened and plan ways to manage similar situations in the future.

**If you are ready to reduce your use of drugs or alcohol, the *Setting Goals and Moving Forward* section on page 41 will help you reach your goals.**





# Managing Stress

Managing stress can make you feel better and help you control psychosis. It's useful to know several ways to manage stress. If one method doesn't work, then another may.

The *Challenge Unrealistic Thinking* technique (page 78) may be a useful way to reduce your feelings of stress.

*Solving Problems* (page 31) is another way to reduce stress.

Here are two other techniques for managing stress.

1. Relaxation: learning how to relax your mind and body.
2. Preparation: anticipating possible stressful situations and getting ready to deal with them.

You can start with either one of these techniques.

Don't be disappointed if one method doesn't work. That strategy may not be the best one for that situation. Stick with it for a while, though, to give it a chance. If it still doesn't work, try another.

**With time and effort the chances are good that you will find a way of managing stress that works well for you.**

## 1. Relaxation

*Relaxation* can help you calm your body and mind. Some benefits to feeling relaxed and calm are that you:

- Experience less stress
- Get more enjoyment from various activities
- Think more clearly
- Make better decisions

Plus, you may be less bothered by the symptoms of psychosis.





### Understanding

There are lots of different ways to relax. Some examples of calming activities that you may enjoy include:

- Reading a good book
- Taking a warm bath
- Practicing yoga or gentle stretching exercises
- Going for a stroll in the park

Some methods for **deep relaxation** include:

- Imagine that you are in a different place that is relaxing (such as sunbathing on a beach)
- Tense and then relax different muscles in your body
- Focus on your breathing
- An 18-minute audio on relaxation techniques can easily be found on the internet

**Relaxation should feel good. If you start to feel uncomfortable, then stop.**

Your health professional or Support Person can help you learn these methods of deep relaxation. There are also CDs of relaxation methods that you can borrow from the library or purchase at bookstores.

**Practice relaxation techniques regularly. At first it may be difficult to relax when you are stressed. Relaxing gets easier with practice.**



Your Turn!

## Your Turn!

List three things you can do to relax.

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Understanding

## 2. Preparation

You don't have to wait until you feel stress to use stress-management skills. *Preparation* involves anticipating stress and getting ready for it. Knowing you have these skills will make it easier to deal with stress in the future. In fact, simply preparing for a stressful situation can lower your perception of how much stress you encounter.

There may be upcoming situations that you know will cause you stress. Certain times of the year (such as Christmas or a birthday) or certain events (such as a family get-together or a job interview) create stress for many people. You may be able to change or even avoid some situations that you know act as triggers. For example, being alone at a hockey game may be a problem, but being with someone at a hockey game is fine. You can avoid the trigger by always going to a game with a friend. On the other hand, if every hockey game—whether you go alone or with someone, or whether the stadium is empty or crowded—is a problem, then you may want to avoid hockey games for a while.



Understanding

While you can't avoid all the situations that cause stress, you can prepare yourself for these stressful events so you are able to manage the pressure more effectively. Strategies such as problem solving can help you deal with any current stress, as well as prepare you for upcoming stressful situations.

*Rehearsal* is a useful strategy to lower your anxiety about upcoming stressful events. Examples of possible stressful events might be a job interview or a social situation where you don't know anybody. Go over the event in your mind, practice what you will say, and how you will act. You can also try rehearsing situations with your Support Person. For example, if you have an upcoming job interview you can ask your Support Person to pretend to be the interviewer. Think about what types of questions you might be asked during the interview and practice answering them.

## Your Turn!

**Think of what is happening over the next couple of months.** Is there anything coming up that makes you feel worried or anxious? Write down anything that comes to mind. Consider using problem-solving techniques or rehearsal with your Support Person to help you prepare.



Your Turn!

Stressful situation coming soon...	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	



Write Down

Things I can do to prepare for this...	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	



# Solving Problems

*Everyone has problems from time to time.  
Facing and solving problems is a part of life.*

It is easy to feel stress when you have a problem. This stress can make psychosis worse.

You can't avoid all problems, but you can reduce stress by using good problem-solving skills.

**Here are six steps to help you solve problems:**

- 1. Choose the problem**
- 2. Understand the problem**
- 3. Come up with different solutions**
- 4. Compare your solutions**
- 5. Pick the best solution**
- 6. Put your solution into action**

Work through these six steps **in order**. Try not to skip any of the steps.

Don't get frustrated if this seems difficult at first. With patience and practice, you will get better at solving problems. Ask your Support Person for help if you get stuck.

On the following page is an example of how to work through the six steps.



*Support  
Person*



Problem Solving

Anita dislikes her parents nagging her to wake up early and not just sit around the house all day. Here's how she used the six steps to solve her problem.

### SAMPLE PROBLEM-SOLVING WORKSHEET

**1 Choose the problem**

My parents nag me. They keep waking me up all the time and want me to be more productive and responsible.

**2 Understand the problem**

It bothers me that my parents think I am lazy. I am just really tired.

**3 Come up with different solutions**

- a. Explain to my parents that it upsets me that they think I am lazy.
- b. Bring my parents to talk with my doctor or clinician to see if being tired is related to my medication, and if there are things I can do to feel less tired.
- c. Make a contract with my parents that I will take care of my tasks when I have the most energy.
- d. Move out of the house so my parents don't hassle me.

**4 Compare your solutions**

- a. It is a good idea to talk to my parents, but I worry that it might result in us arguing again.
- b. It sometimes takes a few weeks to get to see my doctor, so this won't help me in the short-term. Changing medications may only help a little and may take a long time. I can usually see my clinician more quickly. He may be able to help my parents and me come up with a solution.
- c. If I could sleep as late as I want and still get my work done without my parents bothering me, then everybody wins.
- d. This is a drastic solution that can create a lot more problems.

**5 Pick the best solution**

A combination of b and c. Have my clinician talk with my parents and me to better understand my condition and agree on a schedule that works for all of us.

**6 Put your solution into action**

Find a time when my parents and I can meet with my clinician.



Thinking of and Comparing Solutions



Problem Solving

## Step One: Choose the Problem

*You need a specific problem to practise problem solving.*

Think about your problems. What causes you to become stressed or upset? Paying attention when you feel stressed or upset can help you identify your problems. For example, what was happening just before you began to feel stressed or worried? What were you thinking?

Here are some examples of problems people experience. Some of these may be familiar to you.

School or work problems	I don't want to go to school. The teachers always give me deadlines that stress me out.
Not getting along with others	Arguing. I am scared to tell my friends about having had psychosis.
Money problems	Not having enough to pay for things I need or want.
Personal health problems	Not getting enough sleep. Gaining Weight.



Support Person

**Choose a small problem.** Working on small problems helps you practice problem solving. After you have successfully solved a few small problems, you can begin to tackle the bigger ones.

**Once you have chosen a problem, spend a few minutes describing your problem to your Support Person. Be as specific as you can.**

Anita chose the problem of her parents nagging her to do more and not sleep so much. For the problem-solving method to work best, Anita needs to clearly define her problem. Anita thinks her parents nag her because:

- They don't understand how tired she is
- She goes to bed later and wakes up later than everybody else
- They want her to do things that she is not ready to do

## Your Turn!

Describe the problem you chose in the space below. Be as specific as you can.

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Your Turn!



Describe



Your Turn!

## Step Two: Understand the Problem

*Asking specific questions about your problem will help you understand it better and can lead to effective solutions.*

### Your Turn!

Write your answers to the following questions in the spaces below.

#### QUESTIONS ABOUT MY PROBLEM

Who might help me solve this problem (friends, family, teachers, health professionals, etc.)?

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Have I had this problem before? How did I handle it? Were the results worth trying again?

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Do I need to find out more about this problem? Is there any information I don't have?

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---

Do I have any other ideas about this problem?

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Write Down





Think of Solutions

## Step Three: Come Up With Different Solutions

*Once you understand your problem better, you can start to think of different solutions.*

### **Your Turn!**

**Write down four ways that you might be able to solve the problem.**

For now, don't try to decide which of the four ways is best. Just think of four different things you could do to help solve this problem. If you have difficulties, ask your Support Person for some suggestions.



Your Turn!

#### THINGS I COULD DO TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Write Down



Compare  
Solutions

## Step Four: Compare Your Solutions

*In this step, you compare the good and bad things about each potential solution.*

Anita filled out her worksheet like this:

POSSIBLE SOLUTION	WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT THIS?	WHAT'S BAD ABOUT THIS?
1 Explain to my parents that it upsets me that they think I am lazy.	My parents may understand that I'm really tired and am not being lazy. They may stop nagging me.	My parents may not understand me and still continue to nag.
2 Bring my parents to talk with my doctor or clinician to see if being tired is a problem with my medication.	Maybe the doctor can change the dose so I'm less tired and have more energy to do the things I'm supposed to. The clinician can explain to my parents that my tiredness is a medical condition and does not mean that I am lazy. He may also help us come up with a solution that works for both my parents and me.	It may take a long time to see the doctor and get the dose adjusted. Even after all that time I may still feel tired.
3 Make a contract with my parents that I will take care of my tasks when I have the most energy.	I will get to sleep in later. My parents won't have to nag me to do my work.	It limits my excuses. I still have to do the work.
4 Move out of the house so my parents don't hassle me.	My parents can't nag me anymore.	I have no money to pay rent. I'm better off living with my parents.



Your Turn!

## Your Turn!

Write down the **good and bad** things about each of your four solutions. Discuss what is good and bad about your potential solutions with your Support Person.

POSSIBLE SOLUTION	WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT THIS?	WHAT'S BAD ABOUT THIS?
1 _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____
2 _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____
3 _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____
4 _____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____



Write Down



Pick the Best Solution

## Step Five: Pick the Best Solution

Use the following questions to help decide which solution is the best.

### Your Turn!

Write your answers to the following questions in the spaces below.

#### QUESTIONS ABOUT MY PROBLEM

Which solution seems most positive?

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Which solution seems most negative?

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How much time will the solution take? You may want to choose a solution that you can achieve more quickly.

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What do you need to carry out the solution? (For example, if the solution is to wake up earlier than you are used to, a good resource would be an alarm clock.)

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---

How does this solution make you feel? Are you comfortable with the solution?

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Your Turn!



*Put Your  
Chosen Solution  
Into Action*

## Step Six: Put Your Solution Into Action

*Once you choose a solution, it's time for action.*

Use the *Setting Goals and Moving Forward* section (on page 41) to create a workable plan.

Don't be discouraged if your plan doesn't work. Try another possible solution from your list. Or, you may come up with a new solution to try.



# Setting Goals and Moving Forward

*Psychosis can stop people in their tracks.*

Many people with psychosis just stop doing things they used to do, such as work, school, taking care of themselves, seeing friends, and having fun.

It's not that you have lost all your goals. But starting to do these things again may seem almost impossible. You may feel that it would require just too much effort and you can't even get motivated to start.

In this section we will look at how you can gradually start to set goals and move forward. **The key is to start slowly and set goals that you can achieve.** Don't use a lack of motivation as an excuse not to start. Start by setting and achieving small goals. Success with small goals will increase your feelings of confidence and competence and motivate you to set larger goals.

**Four steps you need to take to start setting goals and moving forward:**

- 1. Select your goal**
- 2. Define your goal**
- 3. Move towards your goal**
- 4. Review your goal**

You will need to work through each of these four steps in order.

Start with smaller goals that you are likely to achieve. This will help you learn good goal-setting skills. You can try your skills with larger goals after you achieve success with a few smaller goals.



Understanding

## Using Special Goal-Setting Worksheets

### *Take a Look at this Example.*

Before his psychosis, Sam used to keep his days very busy. He had a job at a local restaurant where he got along well with his co-workers. He was on a soccer team that played twice a week. A couple of nights a week he would go to the movie theatre with friends. Since his psychosis, Sam's days have been empty except for weekends when he spends time with his friends Ray and Joey. From Monday to Friday he spends most of his time alone in his room feeling bored.

Sam has many large goals. He wants to be able to work, play soccer, and have money to go out to movies with his friends. Sam knows that it will take time before he can accomplish all these goals. He knows that goal-setting skills will help him. To start practicing goal setting Sam picks a smaller goal. He decides to set a goal of getting out of the house more often to alleviate his boredom.

Sam knows that goals are best when they are specific, scheduled, supported, and realistic. He records his goal in the goal-setting worksheet.

GOAL-SETTING WORKSHEET			
GOAL	HOW OFTEN?	WHEN EXACTLY?	WHO WILL SUPPORT ME?
Go to the community centre to practice soccer.	Twice each week for half an hour.	Tuesday and Thursday at 2pm when the community centre is available for drop-in.	My mother has agreed to remind me if I forget.
If anybody else is practicing, ask if I can join them. Otherwise, practice alone.			She has agreed to remind me only once. If I decide not to go, it is my decision.



### Understanding

## 1. Select Your Goal

Your first goal should be something that is small but important to you. Start with a goal that you can achieve in a short period of time, something you can do within the next week. It's also a good idea if your goal is something that you enjoy.

If you have problems coming up with a goal, think about whether there is anything in your life that you would like to change. Perhaps you would like to socialize more with other people. Perhaps you would like to get into better physical shape. The process of thinking how your life could be better will help you identify a larger goal.

If you have a large goal that is really important to you, then set a smaller goal that takes you one step towards your larger goal. This smaller goal should be something you can accomplish within the next week. Let's say you want to lose fifteen pounds. This is a large goal that will take some time to accomplish. A smaller goal that takes you one step in this direction would be to go for a 15-minute walk, four days a week.

Your Support Person can help you select a goal, but the goal that you decide on should be your own. **It should be something that you really want.**

After thinking about your goals for a while you may find that you have a lot of different goals. It's great to have lots of goals. Don't try to achieve them all at once, though. **It's best to focus on just one goal for now.**

### Goal setting can be useful for:

- Carrying out a plan for a solution to a problem (via the problem-solving method)
- Connecting with people or practicing your social skills
- Taking care of your health, such as losing weight, exercising regularly, or quitting smoking
- Pursuing dreams, such as goals for school, work, travel, and family
- Fun activities, such as hobbies, sports, and recreation





Your Turn!

## Your Turn!

Pick a goal that you want to start working on and write it down here.

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---

---



Understanding

## 2. Define Your Goal

Now that you've selected your goal, spend some time refining it. The best goals are *specific, scheduled, supported, and realistic*.

### SPECIFIC

Be as specific as you can when you define your goal. Vague or unclear goals have less chance of success. A goal such as “*get more exercise*” is vague. It doesn't tell you exactly how this goal will be accomplished. A more specific way to express this goal would be to state “*go for a 30-minute bike ride at the park on Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday.*”

### SCHEDULED

Use the following questions to help set a schedule for your goals:

- Exactly when will I do this? What days and at what time?
- For how long will I do this? 10 minutes, 30 minutes, or one hour each time?
- Where will I do this? In my house, at the park, or at the community centre?

### SUPPORTED

Will having support in place help you achieve your goal? Think about who can best support you and how they will do this. You may choose to have somebody remind you of your goal. Agree in advance how they will give you this reminder.

Other types of support can involve help with finding out about information, transportation, or the resources (financial or otherwise) you need to get started.





Understanding

**REALISTIC**

Don't make your goal too difficult. Set a goal that is slightly out of reach but achievable with a bit of effort.

Determining how difficult your goal should be can be challenging. Check with your Support Person to see if he or she thinks your goal is set at the right level. It's best to make your goal easy the first time you do this. You can always make the next goal a bit more ambitious.

**Your Turn!**

Define the goal that you have set for yourself in the worksheet below.

GOAL-SETTING WORKSHEET			
GOAL	HOW OFTEN?	WHEN EXACTLY?	WHO WILL SUPPORT ME?
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>



Your Turn!



## Understanding

### 3. Move Towards Your Goal

Once you have defined your goal, the next thing is to track your progress. Are you doing what you set out to do?

**The best way to track your progress is by using a calendar or day planner.**

Write down your schedule for the goal and check it off each time you've accomplished a positive step toward that goal.

If you miss a scheduled time, for whatever reason, reschedule for another time. For example, if Sam wasn't able to go to the community centre on Thursday because it was a holiday, then he could reschedule for Friday, making a note in his calendar.

#### Using a Calendar

A calendar or day planner is also a good place to track your other activities and write down reminders. You can list your:

- Appointments
- Times to see friends
- Important dates like library-book-due dates and deadlines for paying bills

Your calendar provides you with a place to plan your activities for each coming week. By looking at your coming week you can make sure that you have a good balance of time for:

- Responsibilities
- Friends
- Recreation
- Relaxation





### Understanding

## 4. Review Your Goal

After you have done some work towards your goal, take time to review your progress.

Sometimes you may find that you have not made any progress toward your goal. Don't blame yourself if that's the case. There are no failures in goal setting, just readjusting the difficulty of the goal and the steps you are taking to get there.

**Here are three common reasons why goal setting may not work.**

### 1. Problems encountered along the way

Sometimes unanticipated problems come up that prevent you from working toward your goal. It might be that there were some new stressors in your life, and your priority shifted to coping with these. Perhaps you didn't have all the resources you needed to work on the goal. There could have been a problem with money, transportation, or another resource. Maybe your original plan was no longer possible. You may have planned, for example, to go for a swim three times a week, but then the pool closed for repairs.

Your problem-solving skills can be used to explore solutions for any problems you encounter along the way to your goal.

### 2. The goal you set was too difficult

Finding the right *level* of goal takes time and practice. It's common for people to set ambitious goals when goal setting and then find out later that these goals were much too difficult. Revising the difficulty of your goals is part of the goal-setting process and is to be expected.

### 3. The goal is no longer attractive

Your goals may simply change over time. Just because something was your goal a few weeks or months ago doesn't mean that it is today. If your goal no longer seems important to you, then change your goal. Goal setting is simply a skill to help you achieve the goals you *want* to achieve.



*Understanding*

**You should expect to revise your goals, especially when first starting to practice this skill.** It is challenging to set goals at the right level of difficulty. Practice will help you get better at this.

**In reviewing your goals, you will often find that you have made progress.** Congratulate yourself when this happens! As you work towards a goal, whenever you have achieved a step or made a significant effort, take time to enjoy the satisfaction of having done so.

### **REWARD YOURSELF**

**It's a good idea to build in some rewards for yourself in your goal setting. Rewards don't have to be something that cost money. Rewards can also involve taking time to do something nice for yourself, such as spending the afternoon at the park with a friend or going on a picnic with your family at the beach.**



# Understanding Cognition

*Cognition* refers to the mental processes or thinking skills that allow people to learn and function in daily life, including our ability to function:

- At home
- In the community
- At school/work
- In our relationships

These are the skills needed to process information, think, read, understand, and solve problems. Some of the main types of cognition include: attention, memory, processing information, solving problems, and planning/organizing. These cognitive skills overlap with each other and work together as bits of information enter the brain, are processed, and acted upon.

Daily tasks such as managing the home, negotiating transportation, shopping, taking care of finances, or maintaining one's health can become extremely difficult when some or all of one's cognitive skills are not functioning well.

It takes time to learn and apply the suggestions about how to handle problems with cognition. It also takes time to see the positive effects of your efforts.

It may be harder for a person with psychosis to tackle cognitive problems. Be patient and slowly try to use the strategies in this section. A reasonable goal is to try adding one new technique every month.



## Understanding

# Cognition and Psychosis

Most people with psychosis experience some degree of cognitive problems. For some, changes in cognitive functioning may be one of the earliest signs of the illness (occurring even before psychotic symptoms begin). Research has shown that the parts of the brain responsible for specific cognitive abilities often do not function the same way for people with psychosis.

Not everyone with psychosis is affected by cognitive difficulties in the same way. Some experience more problems with a certain aspect of cognition, such as attention or memory. Cognitive problems may come and go for some people. For example, cognitive problems may be most noticeable during episodes of illness. For others, the cognitive problems continue even when other symptoms go away.

Certain types of cognition are particularly likely to be affected in people with psychosis. These areas include:

1. Attention
2. Learning and memory
3. Critical-thinking skills (e.g., planning, organizing, problem solving, abstract thinking)
4. Social cognition

## *Number One: Attention*

*Attention* allows us to stay focused on a task for a certain period of time—even in the face of distractions.

### HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE ATTENTION PROBLEMS?

People with attention difficulties often have trouble concentrating on a task for a long period of time. They might also become distracted, especially when other things are happening around them. Finally, some people may find it hard to concentrate on several things at once, like when you need to *multitask*.

Some of the following could indicate problems with attention and concentration:

- Can't remember a phone number you just read for long enough to dial it correctly
- Can't repeat the last five digits of a number



## Understanding

- Can't repeat a four- or five-digit number backwards
- Loses track of time
- Can't concentrate enough to read
- Is easily distracted
- Feels bored
- Interrupts others during conversations
- Tries to do too many things at once
- Seems absent-minded
- Gives up easily
- Is easily confused
- Has trouble learning simple things

### WHAT CAN I DO?

Here are some strategies that might help with focusing your attention.

- **Don't put too much demand on your attention span:** Keep things simple, direct, and to the point. Limit the time spent on any given task. For example, you may only be able to spend ten minutes on a task at a time.
- **Focus on one thing at a time:** Don't try to divide your attention among different tasks. Focusing on more than one thing can become overwhelming.
- **Take breaks:** It is important to rest and take breaks to prevent yourself from becoming overwhelmed by challenging tasks.
- **Limit distractions:** Simplify the environment by removing distractors such as background noises, multiple speakers in a conversation, and/or disorganized surroundings. Having something to fiddle with, such as a squishy ball, can help keep restless hands busy while you focus on the task.
- **Use cues and reminders:** Cues such as self-talk, a touch or look from someone, or a visual reminder can help you focus and bring back your attention when it goes off-track.
- **Mix it up:** Vary the content or setting of the information or task. You might try alternating between different tasks to keep yourself interested and engaged.





Understanding

## Number Two: Learning and Memory

Learning and memory are closely connected. *Learning* is when you pick up new information or skills. *Memory* is the process of storing knowledge and skills and recalling them later.

### HOW DO I LEARN BEST?

Everyone has ways they prefer to learn new things. There are theories that each person has a preferred *learning style*. For example, some people may be “better with words” and learn best when *told* how to do something. Others may be “good with their hands” and learn best when physically guided through the steps of a new task. Although scientists don’t agree about the idea of learning styles, people still have ways they prefer to learn. For example, some really like to study early in the morning, some at night. If you know your preferences, you can use them to make learning easier for yourself.



Your Turn!

## Your Turn!

Here is a checklist that can help you get to know your individual learning preferences. Check which statements best apply to you. I learn best:

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> In the morning   | <input type="checkbox"/> By doing                         | <input type="checkbox"/> By doing it alone        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In the evening   | <input type="checkbox"/> By reading                       | <input type="checkbox"/> With other people around |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In the afternoon | <input type="checkbox"/> By mimicking                     | <input type="checkbox"/> With routines            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> By listening     | <input type="checkbox"/> By trial and error               | <input type="checkbox"/> With music/TV on         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> By seeing        | <input type="checkbox"/> By learning small bits at a time | <input type="checkbox"/> In a quiet environment   |

Please check the following statements that match your learning style. I:

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Like to work with my hands | <input type="checkbox"/> Tend to think first in terms of the big picture | <input type="checkbox"/> Like to stay really focused on one thing at a time |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tend to be detail oriented | <input type="checkbox"/> Like a lot of freedom to explore an idea        |   |



### Understanding

Use your responses to guide how you attempt to learn something new. For example, if you prefer to learn by hearing rather than reading, try to find and use books on tape or instructional DVDs. If you learn best in the afternoon, wait until the afternoon before you try to learn something new. Try comparing how well you learn when you try to use your preferred approaches and how well you learn when you do not use your preferred approaches.

### HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE MEMORY PROBLEMS?

People with psychosis may have memory problems. Memory difficulties can occur for both verbal and visual information. When verbal memory is affected you may have more difficulty remembering instructions that have been explained to you, such as directions, or remembering information you have read. When visual memory is a problem, you might notice that you have trouble remembering things you have seen.



### Your Turn!

## Your Turn!

Some of the following could indicate problems with memory. Please check the ones that apply to you. I:

- Forget to take medications at prescribed times
- Have trouble keeping scheduled appointments
- Don't follow through with plans or activities
- Have trouble remembering strategies that would help with remembering (e.g., forgetting to set the alarm, bring a watch, or carry a bus schedule)
- Misplace things
- Lose track of money
- Forget important dates (e.g., birthdays)
- Ask people to repeat things frequently
- Ask the same question again and again
- Get lost while travelling (e.g., forgetting directions)
- Have trouble remembering what I have read
- Forget names
- Take longer to learn things than before
- Can't recall what happened at meetings with other people
- Can't recall what was discussed at a meeting
- Don't remember the characters in a show



## Understanding

### WHAT CAN I DO?

Here are some strategies that often help decrease problems with memory.

- **Avoid distractions:** When trying to remember something, it is important that you pay attention to the source of the information. Strategies such as making sure you are in a quiet environment, focusing on one thing at a time, and minimizing the number of people in a conversation can help.
- **Make use of repetition:** It can help to have important information or instructions repeated. For example, during conversations you may ask people to repeat themselves or you could try saying what you heard out loud using your own words to make sure you understood it. When reading, you may need to re-read important parts several times. Developing habits/routines can also help you remember. For example, keeping your keys in the same location at home lessens the chances of misplacing them.
- **Use memory aids:** It can be helpful to have a way of recording important information so you can refer back to it. This will help you if you forget it. When possible, write down important information. For example, keeping a diary of important ideas, a day planner for appointments/contact information, or lists of things to do or buy are common memory aids used by many people.

**Electronic devices (e.g., cell phones) are great memory aids since they have calendars, take voice memos, and can even remind you about events.**

- **Cue your memory:** There are a number of ways you can cue your memory to help you remember something.
  - *Mnemonics* are groups of words or letters that help you remember more detailed information. For example, students use the first letters of the mnemonic “*Never Eat Shredded Wheat*” to remember the order of directions on a compass: North, East, West, and South.
  - Alarms can also be helpful in cueing one’s memory, for example, to take medication at a certain time.
  - Strategically placed sticky notes with reminders (“turn off the stove”) can also be helpful.



Understanding

- **Try multiple ways of remembering:** For some people, simply listening to information isn't enough to learn something new. Instead, it may be easier if important information is also presented visually. Similarly, when trying to remember something visual (e.g., where you parked the car), it may help to make an effort to think about the location using words as well: "The car is parked on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor to the right of the mall entrance."

### Number Three: Critical-thinking Skills

Critical-thinking skills include a range of cognitive processes and abilities such as reasoning, problem solving, planning/organizing, and self-monitoring.

#### HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE PROBLEMS WITH CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS?

People who have trouble with critical-thinking skills often have trouble with goal-directed behaviour. For instance, they have trouble "getting themselves going" to begin tasks, coming up with plans, or dealing with problems that arise.

### Your Turn!

Some of the following could indicate problems with critical thinking. Please check the ones that apply to you. I:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respond impulsively   | <input type="checkbox"/> Have trouble making decisions (even simple ones)          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have trouble understanding the consequences of actions      | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't plan ahead  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Repeat the same mistakes over and over                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Am disorganized   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have trouble getting things started                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Have trouble finishing things that have been started      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have trouble with changes in routine                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Have trouble recognizing when my actions may be dangerous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have difficulty dealing with surprises or unexpected events | <input type="checkbox"/> Have trouble recognizing mistakes                         |

#### WHAT CAN I DO?

Here are some strategies that often help with critical-thinking skills.

- **Come up with routines:** Having routines (e.g., schedules, doing things the same way over and over) can help with organization and planning. For example, certain tasks such as doing the laundry could be scheduled for the same day and time each week.



Your Turn!





## Understanding

- **Plan your day:** Use a planning tool such as a day planner to help you organize your time. (Your mobile phone probably has a great calendar built into it.) Because it can be hard to remember to use a planner in the first place, you may want to come up with a daily routine (e.g., use the day planner every morning with your first coffee of the day) or use a memory cue (e.g., an alarm) to remind you.
- **Break down tasks:** Complex tasks with many steps can be overwhelming for people who struggle with critical-thinking skills. It can help to talk to a family member, friend, or health professional about ways to break down a large task into smaller components that are easier to tackle.
- **Make lists:** Try keeping ongoing lists (e.g., of supplies such as groceries) and bringing these lists along whenever you go shopping or do other errands.
- **Set priorities:** One way to set priorities is to re-write lists with the most important items at the top, or to group items in some way. For example, you might group all errands that need to be done on the same day, or group those that are in the same geographical area.
- **Try playing games:** Engaging your mind in solving puzzles or playing games can help to train your critical-thinking skills. There are many popular games that encourage players to plan ahead, develop strategies, and adapt to changing circumstances (e.g., chess, Sudoku puzzles, and card games such as Solitaire).

## Number Four: Social Cognition

*Social cognition* refers to the thinking skills and processes involved when we interact with other people. For example, some of the main social-thinking skills include:

- Being able to read social cues such as facial expressions or tone of voice
- Interpreting other people's behaviours
- Developing ideas about what other people might be thinking

### HOW CAN I TELL IF I HAVE PROBLEMS WITH SOCIAL COGNITION?

People who have trouble with social cognition often end up feeling confused in social situations. Unfortunately, when someone has trouble “reading” other people, that person may also end up feeling rejected or angry. This can lead to withdrawal and hostility toward others.





*Your Turn!*

## Your Turn!

Some of the following could indicate problems with social cognition.

Please check any that apply. I:

- Have trouble reading social cues (e.g., facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice)
- Misinterpret what people say
- Am easily manipulated by others
- Have difficulty telling the difference between playful and mean-spirited teasing
- Have difficulty guessing what other people may be thinking
- Have trouble figuring out jokes, or when people are joking
- Jump to conclusions about a social interaction
- Have difficulty figuring out what other people will do or how they might react
- Have trouble explaining things in a way that other people can understand

### WHAT CAN I DO?

Here are some strategies that often help with social-cognition skills.

- **Get clarification in the moment:** Ask the person you are speaking with what he/she meant (“What do you mean by that?”). Or use your own words to restate what you believe the other person has said so that he/she can correct you if needed (“So what you are saying is ...”).
- **Ask others for their opinions:** Ask a friend or someone you trust to give you a second opinion about a confusing situation. People you trust might also be helpful in suggesting ways to deal with situations in which a misunderstanding has occurred.
- **Keep track of problem situations:** Keep track of the kinds of social situations in which you experience problems or misunderstandings. You may be able to find out if you are consistently misinterpreting certain types of situations or behaviours. Again, others may be able to help you plan ways to deal with these types of situations before they occur again.



*Understanding*



## Understanding

- **Give the other person the benefit of the doubt:** Most people are not intentionally mean, even if they do end up hurting our feelings from time to time. Try not to overreact to situations that you experience for the first time. If a social problem occurs over and over, then you can try some of the problem-solving techniques to see what is contributing to the problem and come up with ways to handle it in an open and respectful manner.

## General Tips

Several of the strategies discussed in this section are ones that are used by many people—not only people with psychosis. You may even find that you are already using some of these strategies but have not realized how important they are for you. You will probably find that the more you practice these strategies, the easier and more helpful they will become.

Here are some general tips for making use of cognitive strategies.

- Take time to think about and identify your problem areas.
- Try to make use of your areas of strength. Many of the checklists in this section can also point out things that are easier for you. Try to build on these strengths when you come up with plans to tackle problem areas.
- Don't try to work on too many cognitive problems at one time. Start by focusing on one or two areas that cause the most difficulty in your day-to-day life.
- Don't be afraid to tell others about the cognitive difficulties that you are struggling with. Unfortunately, individuals with cognitive problems can be mistakenly judged as being “lazy” or “unmotivated” when, in fact, it is their cognitive weaknesses that make it difficult for them to perform tasks effectively. Other people are more likely to try to help if they understand what is going on.
- Remember that your general health and emotional well-being can also impact your cognitive abilities. Most people think best (e.g., pay attention, remember things better) when they are rested and not emotionally stressed.







# Connecting With Other People

*Psychosis may cause you to disconnect from other people.*

Psychosis can make you feel uncomfortable around others. You may find yourself spending more and more time alone. This section will help you think about how to re-establish your connections with others.

**Having good relationships with other people is important to your recovery from psychosis.** Other people can help support you when you feel stressed or are dealing with symptoms. You will also feel good knowing that you can help others by being there for them when they need you. When things are going well, other people are fun to be with.

In this section you will take a look at your:

1. Social circle
2. Social skills
3. Opportunities for connecting with other people

## 1. Social Circle

**Your social circle consists of the people around you who can support you.** Everybody's social circle is different.

People in your social circle may include:

- Family
- Friends
- Health Professionals
- Other people such as a boss, a soccer coach, or a teacher







*Your Turn!*

## Your Turn!

**Think about the people you already have in your life.** Imagine yourself at the middle of the circle. Around this inner circle write the names of all the supportive people you currently have in your life.

**Consider whether your social circle is right for you.** It's okay to have only a few people in your social circle, as long as you feel you are getting the support you need. Having a few people who are very supportive is better than having a lot of people who aren't that supportive! Also, consider whether there is a good balance in the *types* of supportive people you have around you. For example, there may be lots of health professionals and family in your life. Would you like other types of friends, as well?



*Think of  
Supportive  
Friends*



*Write Down*





Understanding

## 2. Social Skills

*Social skills are things that people do to make and keep good connections with other people.*

Social skills include:

- Starting a conversation
- Asking other people questions
- Listening to other people
- Speaking your mind
- Giving compliments
- Responding to criticism
- Saying “no” when asked to do something you don’t want to do
- Asking someone to do something with you
- Being polite—remembering to say “please” and “thank you”

**Psychosis can sometimes interfere with a person’s social skills.**

Things that you used to do easily may now be difficult. Some people lose confidence. Symptoms of psychosis can also make engaging in basic social skills more difficult. The good news is that social skills can become easier with practice. Also, look at the *Number Four: Social Cognition* subsection (Page 56) for additional ideas about dealing with social situations.



*Your Turn!*

## Your Turn!

**Think about your social skills.** Write down two social skills you are good at. Then think of two social skills where you need practice and write these down.

**TWO SOCIAL SKILLS  
I AM GOOD AT**

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**TWO SOCIAL SKILLS  
I NEED TO PRACTICE**

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



*Write Down*

Talk to your Support Person about how to improve those last two social skills. You may want to work on some social skills with your Support Person a few times first. You can then find opportunities to practice social skills with other people.



Understanding

### 3. Opportunities For Connecting With Other People

*Having psychosis means that you have had a different type of experience from most people.*

Even when your psychosis is under control, you may feel like you think differently from the average person.

Lots of people are okay with the fact that you are different in this way. Unfortunately, there are some people who find it difficult to relate to folks who are different from them in any way. **Think about where you can find people who accept you as you are.** You will find many people out there.

Consider whether any of these methods for connecting with other people will work for you.

- Get back in touch with old friends or family members you haven't seen for a while.
- Ask any current friends if they want to do something with some of the other people they know (such as go to a movie together as a group).
- Join a support group for people who have similar mental-health challenges.
- Join a club or group that matches your interests. The group could focus on sports, art, music, cooking, or whatever it is that you like to do.



*Your Turn!*

## **Your Turn!**

**Think about your opportunities to connect with people.** Identify two different opportunities you might have for expanding your social circle. Then make a plan to act on these opportunities. The goal-setting section in this toolkit can help you with your plans.

### **TWO OPPORTUNITIES I HAVE FOR CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE**

1 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Preventing Relapse

*Good treatment helps people with psychosis get better.*

A *relapse* is when psychosis comes back after you've recovered.

**Getting good treatment helps prevent psychosis from coming back.**

We presented the formula for good treatment earlier in this toolkit. Here it is again:

**Good treatment = medication + support + skills**

You can reduce your risk of relapse by taking antipsychotic medication, using the skills in this toolkit, and having helpful support.

Even if you are getting good treatment and doing everything right, there is still a risk that psychosis may come back.

**Use the skills in this section to:**

- Control the triggers for psychosis (page 67)
- Recognize the early-warning signs of psychosis (page 69)
- Prevent psychosis from coming back (page 71)

These skills can help you stay well.



## Understanding

# Using a “Relapse Prevention Plan” Worksheet

Here’s an example of a completed relapse prevention plan. Use this step-by-step plan to create your own relapse prevention plan.

## SAM’S RELAPSE PREVENTION PLAN

### NAME:

- Sam Packard

### TRIGGERS I AM TRYING TO CONTROL:

1. Making sure I go to bed regularly at 11pm and sleep well
2. Preparing in advance for a job interview I have coming up

### MY EARLY-WARNING SIGNS ARE:

1. Sleeping only 5 hours a night for 3 nights in a row
2. Not wanting to see my friends for 3 days in a row
3. Not showering or washing up for 3 days in a row

*NOTE: Any other unusual changes should also be noted.*

### WHEN I HAVE ANY OF THESE EARLY-WARNING SIGNS, I WILL DO THE FOLLOWING:

1. Inform my case manager (555-4441) and my mother (555-9822) immediately
2. Increase my dose of antipsychotic medication by 0.5mg as pre-arranged by my psychiatrist
3. Arrange a problem-solving session with my case manager and/or mother as soon as possible
4. Use relaxation methods to keep myself as calm as possible

### PHONE NUMBERS OF MY HEALTH PROFESSIONAL(S):

- Daniel Wong (case manager) 555-4441
- Dr. Pamela Sun (psychiatrist) 555-9980

### PHONE NUMBERS OF MY SUPPORT PERSON(S):

- Julia Packard (mother) 555-9822
- Gordon Singh (neighbour) 555-8156

### IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY, I WILL DO THE FOLLOWING:

- Contact my case manager (555-4441) and my mother (555-9822) immediately
- If unable to reach my case manager or mother, then I will go to the hospital emergency room



Understanding

# 1. Controlling Triggers For Psychosis

Many different factors contribute to psychosis. Some of these factors, such as your genes, can't be changed. Other factors *can* be changed. These are **triggers** for psychosis. For example, a stressful situation can trigger a psychotic experience. However, you can deactivate this trigger by using problem-solving and stress-management skills. Recreational drug use can trigger psychosis, but you can deactivate this trigger by limiting the use of drugs.

**Some of the more common triggers for psychosis include:**

- Break-up of a relationship
- Family arguments
- Problems with friends
- Problems at work or school
- Death of a loved one
- Drug or alcohol use
- Poor sleep

**Look back at the last time you experienced psychosis.** What was happening at the time? Did you experience life changes? Was something making you stressed? Had your lifestyle changed?





Your Turn!

## Your Turn!

**Are any triggers currently increasing your risk of psychosis?** Are you experiencing or anticipating any stressful situations? Might your drug use or sleep habits increase your risk?

In the space below write down anything that might be one of your triggers. You can use the skills in this toolkit to start to control them. *Note: Please realize that following through on a plan to control triggers may be hard to accomplish during a bad flare-up of psychosis.*



Write Down

### MY TRIGGERS FOR PSYCHOSIS

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### MY PLAN TO CONTROL THESE TRIGGERS

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Understanding

## 2. Recognizing the Early-warning Signs of Psychosis

Many people experience changes in behaviour, thoughts, or feelings before any more obvious symptoms of psychosis appear. **These are often called “early-warning signs”, signals that something is not right.** These are the experiences that may have occurred before you started to hear voices or became preoccupied with unrealistic thoughts.

### Common early-warning signs:

- Sleeping too much or too little
- Feeling anxious or tense
- Finding it difficult to concentrate
- Feeling more sensitive to sounds, lights, or colours
- Feeling down or sad
- Missing work or school
- Feeling “high” or excited
- Talking more or less than usual
- Not enjoying hobbies or other usual fun activities
- Not taking care of personal hygiene
- Not wanting to go out or spend time with family or friends
- Becoming easily annoyed at others
- Feeling suspicious of other people
- Avoiding things you need to do

**Think back to the time before you developed psychosis, when you first noticed that you weren’t doing as well as usual. What were the first changes you noticed?**

Knowing what early-warning signs you had before developing psychosis will help you recognize what to look for. The same changes may signal a future relapse.



Understanding

Early-warning signs may be a normal response to stress. You might start to experience these changes in a stressful situation. Responding to early-warning signs and lowering your stress both help reduce the risk of a relapse.

**Examining early-warning signs is most helpful when you can be specific about them.** Stating that you had “problems sleeping” before psychosis is not specific. It is better to state that you “slept only five hours a night for one solid week.” Ask your Support Person to help you write your early-warning signs so that they are specific.

**You want to catch these signs as early as possible.** Stay on the cautious side at first and accept that you may have some “false alarms.” You can change your list of early-warning signs when you have more experience.

## Your Turn!

**What were your early-warning signs before you experienced symptoms of psychosis?** If you have experienced psychosis more than once, is there a pattern to the type of early-warning signs that you have experienced?

Ask other people who were around you if they noticed any early-warning signs. Try to write down any early-warning signs in a way that allows other people to observe them (for example, *crying every day for three days in a row* instead of *feeling sad for three days*). Be specific in writing down your early-warning signs. Try to think of the earliest warning signs that you experienced.

**Write down the three most obvious early-warning signs you have experienced.**



Your Turn!



Write Down

### MY EARLY-WARNING SIGNS FOR PSYCHOSIS

1	_____
2	_____
3	_____



*Understanding*

### 3. Preventing Psychosis from Coming Back

**Use your list of early-warning signs to watch for any of these changes in the future.** Early-warning signs indicate that psychosis might be coming back.

**It's good to be alert to any other unusual changes.** Early-warning signs might change over time. Check with your health professionals and Support Person if you notice any unusual changes.

You need a plan for when you experience early-warning signs. The purpose of this plan is to help prevent the psychosis from coming back. This is your **Relapse Prevention Plan**. With a good relapse prevention plan you can take specific steps to prevent a relapse from happening.



**Your Turn!**

## Your Turn!

**Work with your Support Person and health professionals to come up with your own plan.** Talk with the health professional who is prescribing your medication to see if any pre-arranged medication strategies are right for you.

You should also come up with an emergency plan in case things suddenly get really bad. You can use this plan if you have thoughts of suicide, or if you can't cope with your symptoms.



**Write Down**

### MY RELAPSE PREVENTION PLAN

Name:

Triggers I am trying to control:

My early-warning signs are:

When I have any of these early-warning signs, I will do the following:

*NOTE: Any other unusual changes should also be acted on.*

Phone numbers of my health professional(s):

Phone numbers of my Support Person(s):

In case of an emergency, I will do the following:





### *Understanding*

## *Using Your Relapse Prevention Plan...*

After you have filled in this relapse prevention plan, you should print it and **keep it someplace handy, such as your wallet.**

It's important that your **health professionals, Support Person, and family or very close friends also have a copy.** You will be more likely to catch early-warnings signs if you have a number of people watching for them.

Your relapse prevention plan needs to be **checked regularly** in order to:

- Update your triggers. Triggers may change over time.
- Update your early-warning signs, being very cautious at first.
- Update your plan as needed (e.g., phone numbers).



# Dealing With Symptoms

The main symptoms of psychosis involve problems with knowing what is real. These symptoms include:

- **Hearing or seeing things that aren't there**
- **Unusual thoughts that won't go away**

Medication should provide better control over these symptoms. However, medication doesn't always make the symptoms go away completely. Many people with psychosis continue to have these types of symptoms, even though they are taking medication. While the medication helps a lot, it may not be enough.

**Here are three additional strategies to help you deal with symptoms.**

- **Distract yourself**
- **Perform a reality check**
- **Challenge unrealistic thinking**

There is no special order for these three strategies. Pick and choose which strategy you would like to start with.

Don't be disappointed if one strategy doesn't work. It might not be the right one for you. Stick with it for a while to give it a chance, then try another strategy. Also, remember that decreasing stress is an important strategy (see the *Managing Stress* section on page 27).

**With some time and effort the odds are good that you will develop an effective way to deal with your symptoms.**



### Understanding

## Distract Yourself

While this strategy sounds simple, it may require some effort on your part. The technique is to ignore the symptom by distracting yourself in some way. Distracting yourself from an imaginary voice that you are hearing or an unusual thought you are having is not that easy. Finding a successful way to distract yourself may take time and effort. The effort can be worth it, though. If the strategy works, then you have a handy way of reducing the symptom quickly.

One way to practice distracting yourself is to try and get an obnoxious tune out of your head. Sometimes you will hear or remember a popular song or advertising jingle that you can't stop singing or humming. Rather than be frustrated by the experience, use it to try a *practice round* of distracting yourself. Hum or sing a more enjoyable song. Most people find that the better song successfully distracts them from the annoying one.

**Note:** **Distracting yourself might not make the symptom go away completely. It might only reduce how much it bothers you.** Consider the reduction a step in the right direction.

You can also try a *distracting* strategy if you have problems with hearing or seeing things that aren't there (hallucinations) or if you have thoughts that distress you. When the symptoms start up, do something to distract yourself from them.

**Here are some ideas for distracting yourself.**

- Watch TV
- Listen to music—try listening with and without headphones
- Read a magazine
- Talk to a family member or friend—try talking on the phone and in-person
- Pursue a hobby—painting, gardening, playing the piano, etc.
- Do something active—go for a walk, bike ride, swim, etc.

You can also combine two or more distractions. You could listen to music at the same time that you engage in a hobby. You could wear headphones and listen to music while going for a walk.





### Understanding

**It's best to try different ways to distract yourself.** Reading might not work for you, while listening to music might. Continue your technique(s) for at least several days. If your symptom only occurs once in a while, then you will need to spread these techniques out for a longer time. Try different ways of distracting yourself to see if one particular method helps more than others.

#### **If you hear voices...**

People who hear voices sometimes report that wearing earplugs helps. Earplugs can be purchased at most drug stores. The next time you hear voices, try the earplugs in one or both ears and see if it helps.

Other people who hear voices report that sometimes quietly humming to themselves is helpful, too.



### Your Turn!

## Your Turn!

**Use this worksheet to keep track of your findings. After each attempt to distract yourself fill in the worksheet to record how well you did.**

Try different ways of distracting yourself and write them down in the worksheet. Look over your findings to see if certain methods help more than others. You can use these new skills to reduce future symptoms.

Don't be discouraged if you don't get immediate results. The *distract-yourself* method doesn't work for everyone. Even with a less-than-perfect record it is still worth the effort. Put a star by the methods that worked.



Write Down

My Symptom: \_\_\_\_\_

METHOD OF DISTRACTING MYSELF	EFFECT ON SYMPTOM	STAR* (IF METHOD WAS SUCCESSFUL)
Start singing or humming a song to myself.	Symptom diminishes.	



Understanding

## Perform a Reality Check

With psychosis, you don't always know if what you just experienced was real or not. You may wonder, "Was that voice I just heard really there?" or "Did that thought really make sense?"

Psychosis can get in the way of your grasp on reality. You can quickly become confused and fearful. In this sense, psychosis can be similar to having a bad drug experience.

Performing a reality check can be a useful strategy to help you regain your grasp on what is real.

**Contact your Support Person as soon as you have an experience or thought that seems unconnected to reality.** It can be helpful to have more than one person supporting you. If one Support Person is unavailable, you can contact a second Support Person.

Tell your Support Person what you have just experienced or thought. Your Support Person will help you determine whether or not this was real. Remember, you chose this person to support you because you felt you could trust him or her. If that person says your experience is not well connected to reality, trust your Support Person's opinion.



### Understanding

The important purpose of this strategy is to perform a reality check *as soon as you are not sure if something is real or not*. Start on the conservative side. Contact your Support Person if you have the slightest doubt. With time and practice you will get better at recognizing the difference. Performing reality checks is a skill that can help prevent you from panicking and making your symptoms worse.

Even with your best efforts at performing a reality check as soon as possible, sometimes things get worse, and you find yourself afraid and unsure. Contact your Support Person. This person can help you through the bad experience you are having.

## Challenge Unrealistic Thinking

Psychosis can cause your thoughts to become distorted. You may find it difficult to think in a realistic way about certain situations. This technique teaches you how to challenge these unrealistic thoughts.

**Note:** Challenging distorted thoughts is extremely difficult when your psychosis is severe.

### Use this technique when:

- Your psychosis is already *well-controlled with medication*, but you want even better control over your symptoms.
- OR
- You think the psychosis is *possibly starting to come back*, and you want to prevent it from getting worse.

Challenging your own thoughts can be difficult, even when you are healthy. It is crucial to have your Support Person help you. You may have a thought that isn't realistic and not know it. Your Support Person is there to help you look at things in different ways.

The goal of this strategy is to replace *unrealistic* thinking with *realistic* thinking. Realistic thinking is consistent with reality and gets you back on track with what's really happening.



## Understanding

**When your thoughts become distressing or start to preoccupy you, challenge them to see if they are realistic.**

This is easier to do if you write things down.

- FIRST:** Use the worksheet to describe the **situation** that led to the thought as objectively as you can. Don't insert your opinions about the situation here. Just write down the facts.
- SECOND:** Write down the **thoughts you are having at the time**. Don't censor these thoughts. Write down whatever is distressing or preoccupying you.
- THIRD:** Write down **more realistic thoughts**, thoughts that fit better with what is really happening.

## Special Thought-challenging Worksheets

**SITUATION:** Ray and Joey were talking on the phone and I heard them laughing. Ray and I then watched a DVD together, but I couldn't focus on the movie. I went home.

### MY THOUGHTS

They were laughing about me. They are planning to do something bad to me and they were laughing about it. They're not really my friends after all. I better not go out with them tomorrow.

### MORE REALISTIC THOUGHTS

I have known these two guys for five years. They have never done anything bad to me. It would be completely out of character for them to do something bad to somebody else—they are both very nice guys.

Joey's always cracking jokes. He probably just said something funny to Ray. I have no proof that they were laughing at me. I could have asked Ray right away what they were laughing at. I still could.

If I don't go out with them tomorrow, I'll just feel lonely and bored. I'll go out with them tomorrow and have a good time.

It's not easy to challenge your own thinking, especially when your thoughts can lead to negative emotions such as sadness, anger, or fear.



## Understanding

**Take a closer look at your own thoughts before trying to come up with thoughts that are more realistic.** You can do this by asking yourself questions about your thoughts. Don't forget to have your Support Person help you with this.

### THOUGHT QUESTIONS

My thought:

What evidence is there to support this thought?

What evidence is there to contradict this thought?

Can I get any more evidence? For example, perhaps I can talk to somebody else who was there at the time and see how he or she viewed the situation.

What are the odds of this thought being true?

If this thought is true, then what else must be true in order to support it?

Where does thinking like this get me? Does it help me at all, or does it just make things worse?

Would other people agree with my thoughts? What does my Support Person think?

If other people wouldn't agree, what might they say is a more accurate way of thinking?





## Understanding

### **If you hear voices...**

Use the same types of questions if you hear voices. For example, if you hear a voice that tells you “You are a failure, you are nothing” you might end up thinking that what the voice says is true.

Ask similar questions to evaluate what the voice is saying. For example:

- Note down what the voice is saying:
- What evidence is there to support what the voice is saying?
- What evidence is there that contradicts what the voice is saying?
- Would other people agree with what the voice is saying?  
What does my Support Person think?

Thinking about the voices in a more realistic way helps take away their power over you. They won't be as able to affect how you feel about things.



*Your Turn!*

## Your Turn!

**Use these questions to come up with more realistic ways to think about things.** Pick a thought that is distressing or preoccupying you and ask yourself the *Thought Questions* on the next page.

Be patient and have your Support Person help you. Challenging one's thoughts is always difficult, but it does get easier with practice. You may find that realistic thoughts will even happen automatically when you start having unrealistic thoughts. You'll end up "talking back" to any unrealistic thoughts. This is a great thing! Be patient. Remember, you have to work at it.



*Write Down*

**SITUATION:**

**MY THOUGHTS**

**MORE REALISTIC THOUGHTS**



*Write Down*

## THOUGHT QUESTIONS

My thought:

What evidence is there to support this thought?

What evidence is there to contradict this thought?

Can I get any more evidence? For example, perhaps I can talk to somebody else who was there at the time and see how he or she viewed the situation.

What are the odds of this thought being true?

If this thought is true, then what else must be true in order to support it?

Where does thinking like this get me? Does it help me at all, or does it just make things worse?

Would other people agree with my thoughts? What does my Support Person think?

If other people wouldn't agree, what might they say is a more accurate way of thinking?





# Congratulations!

*Congratulations for taking the time  
to learn new skills!*

We hope it has helped.

Learning new skills isn't easy.

Keep working at it. Your skills will get better and better.

**BE PROUD OF YOUR EFFORTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS.**



# For the Support Person

Welcome to this self-care guide and thank you for agreeing to act as a Support Person. Your involvement is an important part of the support for the person in recovery.

You may be a relative, mental health professional, friend, co-worker, neighbour, or mentor to the person you are supporting. For simplicity's sake, we will use the term *person in recovery* to identify the person you are supporting.

Feel free to read this entire manual if you like. Please know, though, that you do not have to read the entire manual to be an effective Support Person. Two important sections that you should read are “About this Toolkit” (page 3) and “Monitoring Your Progress” (page 5) which are at the beginning of the document. You can read individual sections in any order you choose. Also, the person in recovery can work on the sections in any order. The sections are ordered in a way that introduces some exercises early on to build skills that will be useful in the later sections. So, although it is not necessary, it may be a bit better to work on the earlier sections first.

It is okay to share this *Support Person* section with the person in recovery. There are no secrets in this, or any, of the sections.

In general, you can help the person in recovery fill out any of the worksheets, and you can help make information more understandable to the person in recovery by putting things in your own words.



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There are five sub-sections to this section of the self-care guide:

1. The *General Overview of Each Section* provides a brief outline of what each section covers.
2. The *General Tips on Supporting the Person in Recovery* shares ideas on how to support the other person in general, including when filling out the different worksheets.
3. The *Detailed Description of Each Section* provides more specific information about how you can assist the person in recovery.
4. The *Index* lists all of the pages in the guide that include the term *Support Person*. The number of occurrences in the index is an indication of how important you are. **You can refer to this index to see where the person in recovery is being asked to seek your support.**
5. The *Additional Resources* section of the guide provides links to other sources of information that you may find helpful.

Recovering from psychosis can be viewed as the effective mix of three things.

### **Good Outcome = Capacity + Motivation + Opportunity**

The prescribed medications increase someone's *capacity* to think and function better.

People with psychosis often have difficulties maintaining *motivation*. As a Support Person, you can be particularly effective helping the person in recovery maintain motivation.

Getting the *opportunity* to do things that lead to a better life can be restricted in people with psychosis. This self-care guide and your involvement can help the person in recovery gain some of the skills that increase the chances of finding better opportunities.



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# 1. General Overview of Each Section

This overview briefly introduces each of the sections of the self-care guide. The overview should provide you with enough of an understanding to go ahead and begin reading the in-depth sections of the guide that interest you. The person in recovery also may want to read this *General Overview* section to help her or him choose which sections to work on.

**Remember, the guide is primarily for the person in recovery. Your role is to be supportive.**

## *What is Psychosis?*

This section provides background information on psychosis. It outlines common symptoms of psychosis and examines six different factors that may contribute to the onset of psychosis. You will probably want to read this and talk it over with the person in recovery.

## *What Can You Do about Psychosis?*

This section emphasizes the importance of learning new skills, finding good support, and taking effective medication. Most of the activities in this section focus on medication. Learning new skills and finding good support is the focus of much of the rest of the guide.

## *Taking Care of Your Health*

This section includes information on sleep, exercise, and other factors that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. You can act as a support when the person in recovery starts to make efforts to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

## *Managing Stress*

Stress is a part of every person's life. Learning to deal with and manage stress are important skills. In addition to helping the person in recovery develop techniques for relaxation, you can gently let the person in recovery know when he or she may be reacting to stressful situations and mention previous effective methods that were used to reduce or cope with stress.



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## *Solving Problems*

Problems can increase one's stress level. This section explains a popular and effective six-step method used to identify and solve problems.

## *Setting Goals and Moving Forward*

Regardless of whether a person has symptoms, a meaningful life still involves having goals and aspirations. This section provides tips and worksheets to assist the person in recovery in setting specific, attainable goals.

## *Understanding Cognition*

This section contains information on *cognition* and shows how psychosis can affect cognitive abilities. It then introduces practical suggestions for identifying which areas of cognition might be stronger and weaker. Most importantly, it presents some useful ways that a person in recovery can better deal with difficulties concerning memory, attention, and other cognitive processes.

## *Connecting with Other People*

People with psychosis often disconnect from other people and may become isolated. This section contains activities to help people examine their current social circles, develop social skills, and identify opportunities for connecting with other people.

## *Preventing Relapse*

The activities in this section include identifying and controlling triggers for psychosis, recognizing early-warning signs of a relapse, and then developing a full relapse prevention plan.

## *Dealing with Symptoms*

This is a more complicated section that may be a bit of a challenge for both you and the person in recovery. It discusses some non-medication techniques aimed at dealing with the symptoms of psychosis. As the Support Person you can be helpful in providing assistance with all three of the different strategies mentioned in this section. Be honest, respectful, and caring when you provide feedback. Talking about psychotic symptoms with the person in recovery can easily lead to arguments about who is correct. *Agreeing to disagree* is usually okay if the relationship is built on trust and acceptance of each other. There are more ideas about how you can best help the person in recovery in the next section, *General Tips on Supporting the Person in recovery*, on the next page.



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## 2. General Tips on Supporting the Person in Recovery

### *Remember Your Role*

The most important guideline to keep in mind is: **You are a supporter, not a director.**

The Support Person's role is to assist and follow the lead of the person in recovery, not dictate to the person in recovery what to do. Part of the recovery process involves gradually assuming more responsibility for one's own choices. Making independent choices includes how the person in recovery engages with this self-care guide.

**Be supportive and non-judgmental. Don't let the role of Support Person jeopardize your relationship with the person in recovery.**

### *Help with Organization and Record-Keeping*

It is recommended to keep some record of:

1. When a toolkit section was done
2. The exercises that the person in recovery works on alone
3. Where and how often the person in recovery tries the exercises
4. When you will review the successes and challenges that occurred

As the Support Person, you can really help with this kind of scheduling and record-keeping. The person in recovery may fill out worksheets completely alone, and may ask you for some support in keeping them organized and in one place.

The person in recovery may find it useful to have a photocopy or written record that reminds him or her of key elements of an exercise. The person in recovery could then refer to the copy when appropriate. The guide is meant to be flexible. There are no strict rules about how the two of you should work on any particular section.



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## *Begin with Small Changes*

Several sections of the self-care guide involve making changes. You can help ensure success by reminding the person in recovery to begin with one or two small changes and make positive progress on those before moving on to additional changes. Too many changes at once—or changes that are too large—can be overwhelming rather than helpful.

## *Be Flexible in the Timing of Progress*

Periodically check on the progress of the person in recovery. Different people work through the guide at different speeds. Someone might complete a section in a few days. Other sections may require a week or more to finish. It is also possible to work on more than one section in the same week.

Avoid encouraging the person in recovery to attempt too many things at once. Learning is usually more effective when the person in recovery focuses on one thing for a while and then comes back to it again after a break. A break can last for a few minutes, a few days, or even several weeks. Some sections, such as the *Understanding Cognition* section, involve quite a few different techniques. Allow plenty of time to practice these techniques over long periods of time.

## *Share Ideas and Provide Encouragement*

Be willing to share your own ideas and suggestions. Also, be willing to share your feedback, particularly when you notice a positive difference. Lots of positive feedback and encouragement can be quite empowering.

## *Set an Appropriate Pace*

One of your jobs is to help the person in recovery set and maintain a comfortable pace. Keep *pace* in mind both during specific sessions of using the guide, as well as in determining when to tackle new sections. Be sensitive that you are *following* the overall pace of the person in recovery. However, even with this recognition in mind, you can at times influence the pace. Sometimes you may want to speed up the pace. At other times it will be important to slow the process down.

## *Check on Energy and Concentration*

Check with the person in recovery periodically to gauge her or his energy and level of concentration. It is better to spend ten to twenty productive minutes on a section rather than an hour when the person in recovery cannot maintain concentration.



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## *Help with Motivation*

Sometimes your role may simply be to motivate the person in recovery. Motivation can come in many forms, from acting as a supportive coach to being a good role model.

## *Try the Following Teaching Technique*

Some research shows that people with the psychotic disorder of schizophrenia do not tend to benefit from the teaching techniques most people know. For example, it is typical for a person who is trying to learn a new skill to have a teacher explain what has to be done, and then for the teacher to ask the person to try it. The teacher sees the slight failures, gives *corrective feedback*, and expects the student to learn from that feedback. This teaching technique may not work well for people with schizophrenia.

An effective technique for many people with schizophrenia starts by isolating a small part of a bigger task. After a certain level of proficiency with this first step is achieved, the student builds on that small element by adding another small element. This *errorless* learning approach often works better for people with schizophrenia when they are trying to learn. This incremental, stepwise approach can also reduce arguments and misunderstandings. Mastering a small step sets the stage for adding a bit more, and then a bit more. Positive results, however small, increase motivation. Failure, however small, can lead to less motivation and poorer learning.

## *Helping to Fill Out the Worksheets*

You may not need to assist in filling out all of the worksheets. The person in recovery may choose to fill out some worksheets independently. That's great.

It's a good idea for the person in recovery to write down the dates the worksheets are filled out and keep the completed worksheets in a binder or folder. These completed worksheets can be a valuable resource

Allow ample time to fill out the worksheets. The steps don't all have to be completed in one session. Check to see if the person in recovery needs a break or wants to continue on another day. With some worksheets it is especially helpful to take enough time (hours to days) to think things through.





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### 3. Detailed Description of Each Section

The following topics provide more specific tips and strategies for supporting the person in recovery in each of the sections of the self-care guide. Remember, your best role is to *assist* the person in recovery in making decisions and provide guidance to complete the worksheets. You don't need to make decisions for the person in recovery.

#### *What is Psychosis? (Page 7)*

The goal of this section is to provide an explanation of psychosis, as well as describe some of its common symptoms.

Everyone's experiences of the described symptoms fall on a range from completely normal to abnormal. For example, many people without psychosis occasionally experience the visual hallucination of seeing a mirage in a desert. When these types of experiences become more frequent and persistent, that state of mind is regarded as *psychotic*.

Some people are uncomfortable with the word *psychosis*. That's fine. The other sections of this guide will still be useful. You don't need to convince the person in recovery of the presence of psychosis. Your job as the Support Person is not to argue about terms such as *psychosis*.

The best way to help the person in recovery answer the questions in the worksheets in this section is to be supportive and non-judgmental. The first two sets of questions are open-ended.

- Strange or unrealistic thoughts that won't go away
- Images or sounds that aren't there

All of these questions do not have to be answered in one session. The list can be adjusted by adding (and even deleting) items as they occur (or cease to occur).

The third set of questions, the questions that involve checking boxes that match changes in state of mind on page 9, are not limited to the six questions on the list. Please feel free to add and check more changes if you feel the additions are appropriate.



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The *six factors that can influence the onset of psychosis* discussed at the beginning of this section may be hard to understand if you read all at once. Providing examples from your life or the life of the person in recovery may make the concepts more understandable.

It may be helpful to first listen to the description of her or his thoughts prior to an onset and then help show how these thoughts fit with the six factors.

### *What Can You Do About Psychosis? (Page 14)*

The person in recovery and an appropriate health professional should complete the first two worksheets in this section, *My Medications* and *My Medications—Possible Side Effects*. You may want to accompany the person in recovery on a visit to a doctor or other health professional to assist in filling out these worksheets.

Aspects to consider for the third worksheet, *How Taking Medication Has Helped Me*, are changes in mental and physical states (both good and bad) and how the medication makes the person in recovery feel about her or himself.

Additionally, your support will be helpful with encouraging the person in recovery to continue taking any prescribed medications. You may be able to suggest a specific strategy that reminds and encourages the person in recovery to take the medications on a regular schedule.

### *Taking Care of Your Health (Page 21)*

The three factors covered in this section are:

1. Sleep
2. Eating and Exercise
3. Drugs and Alcohol

**Sleep:** Getting enough sleep helps reduce stress and contributes to general well-being.

**Eating and Exercise:** Weight gain is a common problem for people with psychosis. You can use the techniques in the *Setting Goals and Moving Forward* section on page 41 to assist in improving the diet and exercise regimen of the person in recovery.

Remember that small changes are usually easier to accomplish and maintain than large ones.





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**Drugs and Alcohol:** Your feedback may be helpful in providing the person in recovery with ideas of both positive and negative effects when filling out the first worksheet in this section. You can refer to the *Setting Goals* section on page 41 for techniques on how to reduce any harm associated with drug and alcohol use.

## *Managing Stress (Page 27)*

As a Support Person the four points about stress to keep in mind are:

1. Too much stress can make anybody's mental health suffer. It is well known that stress can make psychosis worse.
2. You can help the person in recovery learn to reduce stress using the methods described in this section.
3. You can let the person in recovery know when she or he is showing signs of stress.
4. You can also prompt the person in recovery to employ the stress-reducing and relaxation techniques covered in this section.

There are many ways to manage stress. The two methods described in this section are *relaxation* and *preparation*.

### RELAXATION

Please feel free to share any relaxation techniques you have found. You may also want to investigate some relaxation books, CDs, or programs with the person in recovery.

### PREPARATION

An effective way to help the person in recovery with the preparation method is to role play different situations so she or he can practice *rehearsing*. You can discuss what topics and situations may arise before the role play, and then practice them with the person in recovery.

*Rehearsal* works in two ways. First, through rehearsal the person in recovery begins to see the imagined stressful event as less of a challenge. This has the positive effect of decreasing the perception of threat associated with that event. Second, rehearsal increases the perception of competence, so the person in recovery feels more able to face the challenge posed by the stressful event.



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As with other techniques, begin with small, easier items. Focusing on the most stressful possible situation as the first answer to the *Stressful situation coming soon...* question might increase the person's stress. Please remember that the goal is to *manage stress*, not increase it. You could suggest beginning with situations that are only mildly stressful.

## OTHER WAYS OF REDUCING STRESS

The *Solving Problems* section provides additional strategies for dealing with stressful situations.

Also, keep in mind that sometimes stress is the result of taking on too much. The best solution may be to help the person in recovery evaluate the overall situation and lower the number of commitments. Any potential reduction in commitments should not add stress in the long term, nor negatively affect the person's self-esteem.

## *Solving Problems (Page 31)*

Problems generate stress, and stress can make psychosis worse. The *Solving Problems* section of the guide presents specific steps to help reduce and/or eliminate problems. For this section, the six listed steps should be followed in order.

### STEP ONE: CHOOSE THE PROBLEM

- Help the person in recovery be more specific about the problem. Be honest and straightforward with your assessment.
- Encourage the person in recovery to start with a small problem. Once you are both comfortable with the problem-solving method, you can try working on bigger problems.

### STEP TWO: UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM

- Understanding the problem more clearly can lead to better solutions.
- If the example in the guide doesn't seem clear, provide another example. Make one up or use an example familiar to the person in recovery.
- Help the person in recovery understand the problem better by talking about it. Use the questions on the worksheet or others you think of. For example, ask about factors associated with the problem.





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### STEP THREE: COME UP WITH DIFFERENT SOLUTIONS

- This is the *brainstorming* step. Work with the person in recovery to think of as many solutions as you can. Try not to judge the solutions you both come up with. Don't worry if some of the solutions at first seem "way out there." Brainstorming "wacky" ideas can sometimes lead to a workable solution.
- Think of as many solutions as possible (not just four). Use extra paper if needed.
- It's a good idea to take a break after brainstorming. Check with the person in recovery about taking a short break—or even wait to continue another day. Sometimes a bit more time leads to additional solutions.

### STEP FOUR: COMPARE YOUR SOLUTIONS

- Look at each of the proposed solutions with the person in recovery. Are these ideas realistic? Your perspective will be useful.
- If the example in the guide doesn't seem clear, provide another example. Make one up or use an example familiar to the person in recovery.

### STEP FIVE: PICK THE BEST SOLUTION

- Try not to rush to pick the best solution. Take enough time to think about each one.
- Help the person in recovery look at different aspects of each solution. What is positive about the idea? What might the negatives be?
- Cross out the solutions that are unacceptable.
- Imagine trying out each of the solutions. This can be helpful in picking the best one.
- The best solution may end up being a combination or variation of the solutions on the list.

### STEP SIX: PUT YOUR SOLUTION INTO ACTION

- Help the person in recovery carry out the steps needed to implement the solution.
- Use the goal-setting method for strategies on how to carry out the solution.
- Arrange a time to check on the progress and revise the solution, if needed.
- Be encouraging. Acknowledge and congratulate the person in recovery's efforts.





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## Setting Goals and Moving Forward (Page 41)

Setting and then achieving goals leads to a happier, more fulfilled life. This section of the guide presents specific steps to help with setting and achieving goals. For this section, the four steps listed need to be followed in order.

### STEP ONE: SELECT YOUR GOAL

- The greatest chance for success is for the *person in recovery* to select the goal.
- You are there to assist, not to direct.
- You can provide feedback about what you think might be realistic goals for the person in recovery; you shouldn't determine the person's goals.
- Encourage the person in recovery to **begin with smaller goals** as a way to set the stage for attaining larger goals later on.

### STEP TWO: DEFINE YOUR GOAL

- You can be particularly useful by suggesting smaller or time-limited goals that can be measured easily.
- Goals that are stated in the form of specific items that can be crossed off or checked on a daily basis are easier to work with than more general, vague goals.

### STEP THREE: MOVE TOWARDS YOUR GOAL

- A great sense of accomplishment and increased motivation come from tracking positive steps towards a goal.
- While you may want to help the person in recovery set up a workable system, the best results usually come when the person records the tracking results.

### STEP FOUR: REVIEW YOUR GOAL

- Goals should frequently be re-evaluated and reviewed.
- You can also aid the person in recovery in updating her or his goals.
- New goals can be added as old goals are achieved.
- Unachieved goals can be modified or set aside.



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## Understanding Cognition (Page 49)

*Cognition* is the mental process of gaining knowledge and understanding. Some cognitive abilities are:

- Attention
- Memory
- Processing information
- Solving problems
- Planning and organizing
- Recognizing and understanding emotions in oneself and other people

People with psychosis frequently experience problems with cognition. The ways that psychosis affects people vary widely from person to person.

Reading the *Understanding Cognition* section on page 49 will likely provide you with a better perspective on what the person in recovery is experiencing. For example, you may recognize some of the items in the list of attention problems on pages 50 and 51.

The areas discussed in this section are:

- Learning preferences
  - Attention
  - Learning and memory
  - Critical-thinking skills
  - Social cognition
- 1. Learning preferences:** People learn in different ways. Your objective viewpoint and feedback may help the person in recovery recognize her or his own learning preferences when filling out the checklists in this section. Knowing and incorporating a person's learning preferences can help increase the chances she or he will get the most out of any learning situation.
  - 2. Attention:** You can be useful in helping the person in recovery apply the *What Can I Do?* strategies on page 51 to focus her or his attention.
  - 3. Learning and memory:** Support the person in recovery when choosing and trying some of the strategies for dealing with learning and memory difficulties.







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- 4. Critical-thinking skills:** After filling out the checklist in this section you can assist the person in recovery in developing and following the suggested strategies. Remember, though, reminding someone to follow routines can frequently be seen as nagging, rather than as helpful.
- 5. Social cognition:** As a Support Person you can help the person in recovery interpret social situations. These could be situations between the two of you, situations in which you were present along with others, or situations in which you were not present.

### *Connecting with Other People (Page 59)*

This section has three elements:

- Social circle
- Social skills
- Opportunities for connecting with other people

#### **SOCIAL CIRCLE**

You will probably want to use a blank sheet of paper—or several sheets—when assisting the person in recovery in filling in the names of the various people in her or his social circle. You can also fill this information out by labelling “me” (referring to the person in recovery) across the top of a blank sheet of paper and dividing the page into four columns for the four categories: family, friends, health professionals, and other people.

Your perspective may help the person in recovery fill in members of her or his social circle that may otherwise be overlooked.

After the person in recovery has compiled this list you can invite him or her to look at it more closely. Which ones are the good relationships to develop? Along with possibly adding relationships worth developing to the list, should some people be taken off? Your viewpoint may be useful in helping the person in recovery determine which types of friends have the most positive effects.

#### **SOCIAL SKILLS**

Some people may be too shy to think of social skills at which they are good. If this is the case, you can point out some of these skills. This is also a nice opportunity to praise the person in recovery and build up some self-esteem.







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Some fundamental social skills are presented. You can help the person in recovery practice those social skills. Role playing various social skills with the person in recovery can add confidence, as well as provide practice.

### OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECTING WITH OTHER PEOPLE

You can provide encouragement to make connections with new and old friends. The goal-setting section has techniques that are also useful for making social connections. You may also be able to provide introductions and opportunities for the person in recovery to expand her or his social circle.

### *Preventing Relapse (Page 65)*

Relapse prevention can be seen as a range of lower-level interventions progressing to higher-level interventions. Lower-level relapse-prevention efforts focus on:

- Trying to prevent a relapse from occurring by following treatments
- Minimizing recognized triggers
- Coping with stress

Higher-level relapse prevention involves creating a plan for when things are getting worse. A higher-level prevention plan sets out exactly whom to contact and what else should be done before there is a full-blown relapse.

Fortunately, psychotic episodes don't come unannounced and out of the blue. There tends to be a sequence the person goes through. The goal is to recognize the person's sequence and break the pattern of relapse early. The sequence may progress to early-warning signs. Being aware of the person's early-warning signs will allow everyone to help prevent further deterioration. If the trend towards psychosis continues, you need to seek professional help.

The activities in this section include:

1. Identifying and controlling triggers for psychosis
2. Recognizing the early-warning signs of psychosis
3. Developing a full relapse prevention plan

The relapse prevention plan should be developed with input from the person in recovery's health professionals. Discuss with the person in recovery who are the appropriate people who should have a copy of the relapse prevention plan.



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## Dealing with Symptoms (Page 74)

Some symptoms persist, even with effective medication. This section discusses three different strategies for dealing with symptoms.

- 1. Distract yourself:** The person in recovery may call on you to help with this method. Spending time with the person in recovery—in person or on the phone—may provide enough of a distraction.
- 2. Perform a reality check:** Your calm, rational feedback is especially important for this method. Be prepared to have your feedback discounted or challenged by the person in recovery. Persistence and patience usually yield results. You don't want the discussion to escalate into an argument. You can “agree to disagree.”
- 3. Challenge unrealistic thinking:** Your unbiased feedback is important here, as well. You are there to help the person in recovery explore his or her thoughts using the questions in the guide as prompts. The process is more of a dialogue than a debate. This is true even if you are a trained therapist.

## 4. Index

The following pages include references to the Support Person. You may want to read these pages when assisting the person in recovery.

INDEX	
PAGE #	COMMENTS
2	Table of Contents: For the Support Person
3	Numerous mentions of Support Person
20	Your Support Person, whether that is a health professional, family member or close friend, is there to help you.
28	Your health professional or Support Person can help you learn these methods of deep relaxation.



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## INDEX

PAGE #	COMMENTS
30	You can also try rehearsing situations with your Support Person. For example, if you have an upcoming job interview you can ask your Support Person to pretend to be the interviewer.
30	Consider using problem-solving techniques or rehearsal with your Support Person to help you prepare.
31	Ask your Support Person for help if you get stuck.
34	Once you have chosen a problem, spend a few minutes describing your problem to your Support Person.
36	If you have difficulties, ask your Support Person for some suggestions.
38	Discuss what is good and bad about your potential solutions with your Support Person.
43	Your Support Person can help you select a goal, but the goal that you decide on should be your own.
45	Check with your Support Person to see if he or she thinks your goal is set at the right level.
62	Talk to your Support Person about how to improve those last two social skills.
62	You may want to work on some social skills with your Support Person a few times first.
66	Phone numbers of my Support Person(s):
70	Ask your Support Person to help you write your early-warning signs so that they are specific.
71	Check with your health professionals and Support Person if you notice any unusual changes.



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## INDEX

PAGE #	COMMENTS
72	Phone numbers of my Support Person(s): _____
73	It's important that your health professionals, Support Person, and family or very close friends also have a copy.
77	Numerous mentions of Support Person.
78	Several mentions of Support Person.
80	Don't forget to have your Support Person help you with this.
80	Would other people agree with my thoughts? What does my Support Person think?
82	Be patient and have your Support Person help you.



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## 5. Additional Resources

### HERE TO HELP

Includes a range of toolkits including *Family Self-Care and Recovery from Mental Illness Toolkit* and *How You Can Help: A Toolkit for Families*

<http://heretohelp.bc.ca/publications/toolkits>

### BRITISH COLUMBIA SCHIZOPHRENIA SOCIETY

Support and information for families and friends of people with schizophrenia

<http://www.bcscs.org/>

### HEALTH LINK BC

Locate Early Psychosis Intervention programs and other mental health programs across the province. Also includes information on numerous health and mental health conditions.

<http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/>

### PSYCHOSIS SUCKS

Website for the Fraser Health Early Psychosis Intervention Program. Handouts and information on early psychosis including a *Family Coping Booklet*.

<http://www.psychosissucks.ca/>

### HELP OVERCOME PSYCHOSIS EARLY

Website for the Vancouver/Richmond Early Psychosis Intervention Program.

<http://hopevancouver.com/>

### BC MINISTRY OF HEALTH SERVICES

Includes publications such as the *Early Psychosis Care Guide*, *EPI Standards and Guidelines*, and the *Family Physician Guide*.

<http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/library/publications/>

### MINDCHECK

A BC website designed to assist teenagers and young adults in identifying mental health and substance-use problems early and direct people to the appropriate resources.

<http://mindcheck.ca/>



# Additional Worksheets

Writing things down will make it easier for you to learn the skills covered in this toolkit.

Here are some extra copies of the worksheets that you can use for:

- Progress Form (Pg. 6)
- Medications (Pgs. 15 and 17)
- Problem Solving (Pg. 38)
- Goal Setting (Pg. 45)
- Relapse Prevention Plan (Pg. 72)
- Challenging Unrealistic Thinking (Pg. 82)





Write Down

## Worksheet: Progress Form (Pg. 6)

PROGRESS FORM				
AREA TO RATE	RATING BEFORE	STRATEGY USED	RATING AFTER 2 WEEKS	RATING AFTER 4 WEEKS

Rating scale:                      1 = no problem                      5 = definitely an issue                      10 = huge problem



Write Down

## Worksheet: Medications (Pg. 15)

### MY MEDICATIONS

NAME OF MEDICATION	PROBLEMS THIS MEDICATION WILL HELP WITH	DOSE AND TIMES TO TAKE THIS MEDICATION
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>





Write Down

## Worksheet: My Medications Possible Side Effects (Pg. 17)

### MY MEDICATIONS – POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS

NAME OF MEDICATION	MILD AND COMMON SIDE EFFECTS (Report next time you see your health professional)
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>



Write Down

## Worksheet: Problem Solving (Pg. 38)

POSSIBLE SOLUTION	WHAT'S GOOD ABOUT THIS?	WHAT'S BAD ABOUT THIS?
<p>① _____ _____ _____ _____ _____</p>	<p>_____ _____ _____ _____ _____</p>	<p>_____ _____ _____ _____ _____</p>
<p>② _____ _____ _____ _____ _____</p>	<p>_____ _____ _____ _____ _____</p>	<p>_____ _____ _____ _____ _____</p>
<p>③ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____</p>	<p>_____ _____ _____ _____ _____</p>	<p>_____ _____ _____ _____ _____</p>
<p>④ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____</p>	<p>_____ _____ _____ _____ _____</p>	<p>_____ _____ _____ _____ _____</p>





Write Down

## Worksheet: Relapse Prevention Plan (Pg. 72)

### MY RELAPSE PREVENTION PLAN

Name:

Triggers I am trying to control:

My early-warning signs are:

When I have any of these early-warning signs, I will do the following:

*NOTE: Any other unusual changes should also be acted on.*

Phone numbers of my health professional(s):

Phone numbers of my Support Person(s):

In case of an emergency, I will do the following:





Write Down

## Worksheet: Challenging Unrealistic Thinking (Pg. 82)

SITUATION:

**MY THOUGHTS**

**MORE REALISTIC THOUGHTS**

This toolkit provides evidence-based information and tools for individuals with psychosis and support persons.

The content of the toolkit was based upon:

- A thorough review of published research evidence
- Consultation with provincial experts in the area of early psychosis
- Consultation with a Provincial Advisory Committee comprised of representatives from the BC Regional Health Authorities and Provincial Health Services Authority, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Feedback from individuals with psychosis, family members, and clinicians

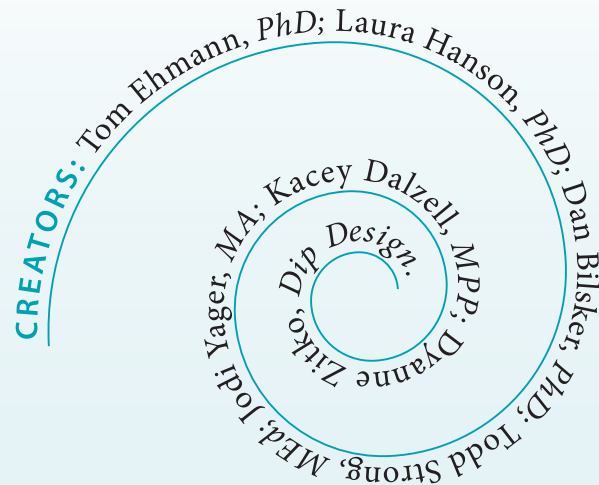
The information contained in this toolkit reflects the knowledge and evidence at the time of its release. As new research emerges, the toolkit will evolve to ensure that it is based on the best evidence.

This toolkit is meant to provide individuals with psychosis and their support persons with accurate information about psychosis. It is not a replacement for professional treatment of psychosis.



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