

Helping you set
your brain
free
from
psychosis.

 BC Partners for
Mental Health and
Addictions Information
www.heretohelp.bc.ca



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More Information and Help

BC Schizophrenia Society helps people with psychosis or schizophrenia and families of people with any kind of mental illness. Their internet address is www.bcss.org They are also in the phone book.

Early Psychosis Intervention Program—Fraser Health Authority - This program is for people who live in the Fraser South area of Greater Vancouver but even if you live somewhere else it has a lot of useful information on its website. There are early psychosis intervention programs in other places in BC which are on this website too. You can find them by clicking on 'how to get help' www.psychosissucks.ca

The Force Society for Kids Mental Health - This site has information for parents of children with mental illness. www.bckidsmentalhealth.org



Help with Psychosis

This booklet has information to help you take care of yourself and prevent relapse. It has information, and places for you to keep track of other information like warning signs for relapse, things you want to discuss with your doctor, and numbers of people who can help you.



It's likely your doctor has prescribed medication to help you get better. While medication will hopefully take care of a lot of your symptoms, this booklet has information on some other things that will help. We hope you will go over this booklet with your doctor and ask any questions you want to.

Where Does Psychosis Come From?



In a group of 100 people, about 3 of them, on average will have psychosis at some point in their lives. Psychosis is a problem that makes it hard for a person to think and can make you hear, see and believe things that seem very real, but aren't. Scientists think that psychosis is caused by a mixture of things a person is born with, along with stress from life events, drugs or illness. There is more about this idea on the next page.

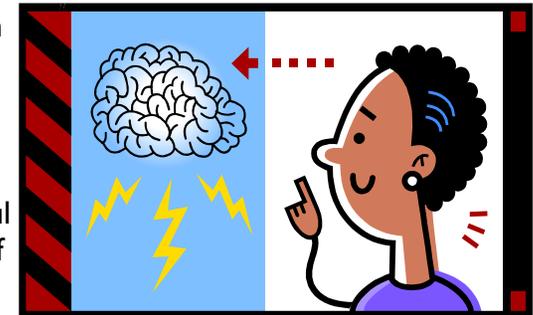
Relapse Early Warning Signs

Thinking back to the first time you were ill with psychosis, what were some of the signs that you were getting sick? Your family or friends may have some signs they noticed too. Circle the signs on the list that happened for you, and add any other ones you can think of. This list will help you to ask for help if you start to get sick again.

Common Early Warning Signs	My Early Warning Signs
<p>Strong Warning Signs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hallucinations / voices, • Suspiciousness, • Mixed up thoughts, • Talking but not making sense, • Having a hard time concentrating, • Really odd behaviour, • Believing you have special powers, • Feeling rested after almost no sleep for several days. 	
<p>May be normal reactions to stress or early warning signs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleeping too much or too little, • Feeling anxious, • Feeling agitated, • Feeling depressed, • Having a hard time concentrating, • Wanting to be alone a lot, • Becoming cranky or irritable. 	

Coping with Symptoms

While the medication your doctor has prescribed will hopefully eventually take care of your symptoms, it is helpful to have some ways of coping until the right treatment for you is worked out. Always



Here are some things you can do yourself.

make sure you tell your doctor or care team about any symptoms you are still having so they can help you.

Here are some things that have worked for other people.

1. Keep your stress low. Page 4 in this book has some information on how to do this. Your doctor or care team will also be able to help you figure out some other ways as well.
2. Relax your body. Breathing slow and deep can help.
3. Get some exercise like going for a walk.
4. Changing how you are sitting or standing can help—like sitting down if you are standing up, or standing up if you are sitting down.
5. Distract yourself by reading or listening to music or watching television.
6. Humming, listening to music with headphones, reading out loud or talking to people can help drown out voices you might be hearing.
7. Reality testing—This is where you ask people you trust whether they see or hear what you see and hear.



Stress Management

Stress is caused when things go on (good or bad) that wear you down or worry you.

When you are under stress you might feel:



Confused



Angry



Sad



Frightened



Ashamed

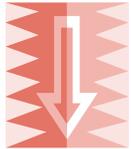


Anxious



Ignored

STRESS



STRESS



STRESS



STRESS

How to take care of stress

Practice—If you're worried about something coming up, practicing what you will do and say beforehand can help.

Plan and problem-solve— more about this on page 9

Avoid unpleasant situations if you can do it without creating more stress later on.

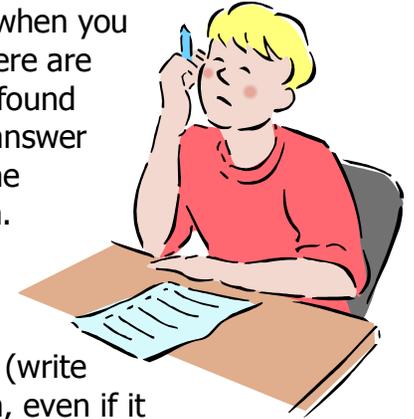
Be nice to yourself—while you are recovering you're likely to have a lot less energy to do things, be a lot quieter, need a lot more time alone, and like to stay out of large crowds or noisy places. Try not to be hard on yourself about the time it takes to heal your brain.

Do something peaceful that you enjoy like taking a bath, going on a relaxing walk, or reading a fun book. (Look on the next page for more ideas.)

Relax—Practice paying attention to and relaxing your body (progressive relaxation). Breathing slowly and deeply helps.

Problem Solving

Problems are easier to solve when you break them down in steps. Here are some steps that others have found useful. On a piece of paper, answer the questions below about one problem you want to work on.



- 1) What is the problem?
- 2) What are some possible solutions to the problem? (write down as many as you can, even if it seems like they are silly or won't work.)
- 3) For each solution you came up with, write down: What are the good things about this solution? What are bad things that could come out of this solution right away? What about in the future? Do you have what you need to carry out this solution?
- 4) Decide what solution you will try.
- 5) What are the steps to make this solution work? Start with baby steps that you could do right away.
- 6) Once you've started on that solution, check and see how it's going. Is the solution working the way you thought it would? Does anything need to be changed? Do you need to try another solution?



Congratulations! Solving problems takes patience and persistence. In time, you will find that you will get better at coping when problems come up.

Social Support

People with lots of supportive friends and family tend to do better at staying well and need to go to the hospital less than people with less people they are close to. Having friends helps a person keep from feeling lonely and isolated, which cuts down on stress.



Having people close to you who know you can help you by giving you people you can talk to, encourage you and help you notice if you are having a relapse. Often people have a harder time being around people while they are recovering than before they got sick. This is normal and not something you need to be embarrassed about. It is a good idea to ask for help from your doctor or care team if you are feeling stuck.

Some ways to have a healthy social network:

- 1) Keep in touch or get back in touch with old friends.
- 2) Join a support group for other people with psychosis.

Some suggestions to improve your social system either on your own or with some help from your care team:

- 1) Make a list of some friends or family you would like to see more or be more connected to.
- 2) Make a list of things you could do to connect or reconnect with them.
- 3) Pick the easiest thing to do and start with that. Then go from there.



Positive Habits



▲ Getting a good night's sleep can help you feel better and have more energy.



Eating a balanced diet ▲ helps your body be healthy and have more energy. It also helps reduce stress.

Find things you find fun to do—and do them. Try out new activities until you find some you like. ▼



Exercising and playing sports can give you more energy and help reduce stress. Exercising or playing a game with a friend can help you be social with others, and can be fun too!



Talking to Your Doctor

Sometimes it can be difficult to remember to talk about all the things that are bothering you at your appointment. This list will help remind you to discuss any problems you may need help with. Please go through the list and check any boxes that apply to you. (You may want to make photocopies of this page.)

Overall, how are you feeling today?

Very Well

Not at all well.

Overall, how is your medication suiting you at the moment?

Very Well

Not at all well.

Overall, how are you coping with everyday living at the moment?

Very Well

Not at all well.

Help with Psychosis

Recovery is Expected.

Problem	Is this a problem for you?		Would you like to talk about it?	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Do you have difficulties sleeping?				
Do you often forget things?				
Do you feel tired?				
Do you find it difficult to get going or be energetic?				
Do you no longer enjoy the things you used to?				
Are you feeling tense?				
Are you feeling lonely?				
Are you easily upset?				
Do you have thoughts or experiences that bother you?				
Are you having problems with your medication?				
Aside from your medication are you satisfied with your treatment?				
Are you having problems getting along with your family or other people?				
Do you have enough money for the things you need?				
Do you feel your life is boring?				
Are you having problems where you live?				
Do you have problems finding things to do?				
Is going out or getting around a problem?				
Is the sexual part of your life satisfactory?				
Do you want more information about your illness and treatment?				

If you have any other problems, what are they?