

How to Talk to Your Psychiatrist

A Recovery and Wellness Toolkit



PA Mental Health Consumers' Association

4105 Derry Street, Harrisburg, PA 17111

(717) 564-4930 1-800-887-6422 www.pmhca.org

Funded by and developed in collaboration with CABHC, Inc.



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Acknowledgements

This toolkit was developed by Pat Madigan, PMHCA, with the support of CABHC and PMHCA.

The toolkit design was completed by Samantha Harkins, PMHCA.

Additional material was taken from the Consumer Empowerment Guide and the 2011 PMHCA Insight Poetry book.

Introduction

Recovery and wellness are both individual and communal. Why? Because recovery is a self-determined and holistic journey that people undertake to heal and grow. Recovery is facilitated by relationships and environments that provide hope, empowerment, choices and opportunities that promote people reaching their full potential as individuals and community members (OMHSAS “A Call for Change”).

The challenge our mental health system has had to face for years is that people with serious mental illness were not expected to get well. The care given by doctors, psychiatrists, therapists, nurses, state hospitals and community providers was then expected to be set-up in treatment services.

What has changed? We, the consumers, are at the forefront of describing our treatment needs to those providing services and developing our own community supports.

Relationships, hope, choices, decision-making and exercising treatment rights are identified as key elements to our recovery and wellness.

Introduction Continued...

Consumer voice and empowerment means feeling and being in charge of our own life, recovery and wellness. It means that now others **work with** us instead of **doing for** us.

This toolkit provides a framework for decision making and support tools when preparing for a meeting with your psychiatrist.

It was fashioned from the 2011 PMHCA training, How to Talk with Your Psychiatrist and Still Meet All Your Needs, presented to CABHC stakeholders.

We are keenly aware from our lived experiences that we are not a label: we have Voice and we have Choices and decision making opportunities.

This toolkit is presented to you for your use. Take what works and make it your own.

Preparation for Meeting with Your Psychiatrist

Energize, Organize and Act by Cindy Slye-Diouf
PMHCA 2011 Insight Poetry Book

I had to use my energy and organization to act upon what I wanted to do.
It does not matter what I need to accomplish energy is always needed.
You must have a zest in life and energy will accompany it too.
When energy is good you can do a lot of positive things in your life.

Organizing your ideas and what you want to happen and the time frame.
The more organized I got the better I felt about myself and my recovery.
You cannot organize anyone only yourself and that is what I did.
I knew going to my appointments, taking my medications helped me.

Acting upon all the factors to keep well to stay out of the hospitals.
But if necessary one should tell someone if they are not feeling well.
Acting responsibly to do the right things for our Mental and Physical Health.

Having the energy, organization, and acting in a recovery orientated way is the way.



Meeting Preparation Tips



***Energize, organize and act before your initial appointment or continuing visits with your psychiatrist by outlining your current mental and physical health status and reviewing the following Tips:

- Be **honest** with your psychiatrist. Be up front when describing your current mental health, physical health and your current needs for both. Use specific and clear language with descriptions including timeframes for feelings and events that have happened from your last meeting.

Tips Continued...

- Hold a discussion with your psychiatrist emphasizing the importance of communication with your physical health doctor and any physical health specialist treating you. Obtain signed releases from all treating doctors to allow for the sharing of health information. Retain copies of all releases for your records.
- It is **your** decision whether to share your spiritual and personal relationship information with your psychiatrist. However, understand we are holistic beings where our physical, mental, spiritual, intellectual and emotional self works in concert for our life balance. Each area of our lives has impact upon the others and should not be marginalized. We honor this impact through our self acknowledgment of our experiences.
- Talk **with** your psychiatrist about your prescription medication and side effects. Discuss the benefits and risks of any medications or supplements you are taking or are prescribed. Ask what the consequences of stopping or altering prescribed medication routines would be.
- Keep a journal. It can be daily, weekly or whatever you want it to be, as an account of your mental health/physical life experiences. Write about what you are experiencing, like periods of lack of sleep, not eating, mood shifts, isolation, headaches, friendships, weight loss or gain, celebrations and births.

- Share your Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP), Mental Health Advance Directive (MHAD) and Personal Medicine with your psychiatrist. These tools will support you if you have your psychiatrist on board with an understanding of your recovery and wellness tools.
- Talk with your psychiatrist about his/her treatment approach and appointment schedule. **Do not** leave from the initial meeting without a clear and acceptable picture of how future meetings will go. Ask more questions if you are not clear on how your treatment meetings will go. Should you feel uncomfortable with the answers, you may want to seek out a new psychiatrist.
- Contact your psychiatrist if you have a concern or are not doing well. Contact Crisis if you have an emergency. You can prepare for an emergency situation by working with your psychiatrist and developing an emergency plan together. **You** ultimately select and decide who you want as part of this emergency plan. It is important to act if a life-threatening emergency arises. Go to the hospital and the emergency room personnel will contact your psychiatrist and other members of your support team.
- Remember to energize, organize and act before each meeting with your psychiatrist.

Follow-Up from Meeting with Your Psychiatrist

Energize, organize and act following your meeting with your psychiatrist.

- Reflect on the discussions and write notes about the meeting.
- Take time to review your WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan), if you use WRAP as a recovery tool, following your meeting with your psychiatrist. Do you need to add to your Wellness Tools, like considering taking an art class? Maybe a change in your daily schedule, like adding 15 minutes of quiet reflection (no radio, T.V., computer) that will help with filtering suggestions from your psychiatrist about a possible medication change. Take a look at your Crisis Plan and Post Crisis Plan to make any adjustments you feel necessary and are comfortable with.
- The Mental Health Advance Directive provides a clear written statement of your preferences for medical treatment or other wishes or instructions. It can also be used to assign decision-making authority to a person you trust in case you become ill and cannot make decisions (Power of Attorney or Declaration or both). Take time to review your MHAD, if you chose to have one. Include any medication changes, if needed, from

➤ **Follow-Up Continued...**

your recent meeting with your psychiatrist. Remember that your changes, or a new directive, must be witnessed by two individuals, at least 18 years of age. You should also give new copies to your provider, agent, if you have one, and other support people you have designated. More information about MHAD can be found at www.pmhca.org/projects/mhad .

- Personal Medicine is an activity that one does to obtain wellness. Take time to reflect upon your own Personal Medicine tools if you have chosen this as a recovery tool. What works for you? It can be doing yoga, going to a drumming circle, a prayer circle or anything that helps maintain your wellness.
- Put together notes about your last meeting with your psychiatrist to review your benefits and concerns. They can be used to organize your thoughts and possibly to share with the psychiatrist.
- Remember that at any time during your services you have the right to file a complaint and/or grievance about how your services are delivered. Check with Capital Area

Behavioral Health Collaborative, Inc. (CABHC) and Community Behavioral HealthCare Network of PA, Inc. (CBHNP) for the quality management/complaint/grievance process.

**Contact information will be referenced in "Resources."*



Resources

Pennsylvania Mental Health Consumers' Association (PMHCA)

This statewide organization is governed and operated by and for mental health consumers. It provides individual advocacy, systems advocacy, information and referral, technical assistance to CSP and C/FST, and a resource library for mental health consumers. PMHCA also provides trainings on topics, such as empowerment and recovery. Membership dues for consumers are \$20 a year and can be waived for those with a fixed income/no income. PMHCA can be reached at 1-800-887-6422 or by emailing them at pmhca@pmhca.org. You can learn more at www.pmhca.org.

The Mental Health Association in Pennsylvania (MHAPA)

This organization works on behalf of mental health consumers through advocacy, education and public policy. Advocacy work focuses on consumer empowerment and making sure people have access to services and supports. Education is provided to eliminate discrimination against mental illness by improving public understanding, attitudes and actions regarding mental health

Resources Continued...

and mental illnesses. Public policy work is focused on developing and supporting policies that promote mental health, consumer empowerment and access to care. MHAPA can be reached at 1-866-578-3659 or by emailing them at info@mhapa.org. You can learn more about MHAPA on their website at www.mhapa.org. Also, you can find the local county MHA listing on the website.

NAMI PA

This is a statewide organization that helps mental health consumers and their families rebuild their lives and meet the challenges of mental illness. NAMI PA provides programs of support and education, and advocates for better mental health services for their members. They also work to fight stigma and discrimination against those with mental illness through public education. NAMI PA can be reached at 1-800-223-0500 or by emailing them at nami-pa@nami.org. You can learn more about NAMI PA on their website at www.namipa.org. The website includes information, news and website links for NAMI PA affiliates from across Pennsylvania.

Resources Continued...

The Pennsylvania Recovery Organizations Alliance, Inc. (PRO-A)

This organization works to eliminate stigma and discrimination against those affected by alcoholism and other drug addiction through education and advocacy. They do this by providing education and outreach, developing their membership, publishing a newsletter and monitoring the activities and budgets of state and county agencies responsible for drug and alcohol services. You can contact PRO-A at 1-800-858-6040 or by emailing them at info@pro-a.org. You can learn more about PRO-A on their website at www.pro-a.org. The website also provides information about the PRO-A Regional Affiliates, such as Message Carriers, the RASE Project, PRO-ACT and MOMSTELL, from across the state that provide services to specific counties.

Resources Continued...

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)-

Eight Dimensions of Wellness

<http://promoteacceptance.samhsa.gov/10by10/dimensions.aspx>

Take the Pledge for Wellness to Learn More!

Stay informed about the Eight Dimensions of Wellness by signing the [Pledge for Wellness](#) and receiving our regular electronic update.

A Holistic Guide to Physical and Mental Wellness

For people with behavioral health problems, wellness is not the absence of disease, illness or stress, but the presence of purpose in life, active involvement in satisfying work and play, joyful relationships, a healthy body and living environment, and happiness.

Wellness means overall well-being. It incorporates the mental, emotional, physical, occupational, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of a person's life. Each aspect of wellness can affect overall quality of life, so it is important to consider all aspects of health. This is

Resources Continued...

especially important for people with mental and substance use disorders because wellness directly relates to the quality and longevity of your life. That's why SAMHSA encourages you to incorporate the Eight Dimensions of Wellness into your life:

Emotional—Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships

Environmental—Good health by occupying pleasant, stimulating environments that support well-being

Financial—Satisfaction with current and future financial situations

Intellectual —Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills

Occupational-Personal satisfaction and enrichment from one's work

Physical—Recognizing the need for physical activity, healthy foods and sleep

Social—Developing a sense of connection, belonging, and a well-developed support system

Spiritual—Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life

***Please check the SAMHSA website for additional information on recovery and wellness (www.samhsa.gov)

Resources Continued...

Community Behavioral Healthcare Network of Pennsylvania, Inc. (CBHNP)

CBHNP is a full-service behavioral health managed care company that supports almost 4 million Members through specialized behavioral health and human service programs.

Phone: 1-888-722-8646

Member Services Phone: 717-671-6565

Website: www.cbhnp.org

Capital Area Behavioral Health Collaborative, Inc. (CABHC)

CABHC is driven by its mission to ensure access to and delivery of a coordinated, effectively managed, comprehensive array of quality mental health and substance abuse services that reflect the holistic needs of eligible residents.

Phone: 717-671-7190

Website: www.cabhc.org

Resources Continued...

“Learning the Jargon”

The Mental Health System has a language all its own. It is helpful to become familiar with the acronyms (those initials everyone loves to use!)

Acronyms- Commonly used initials that stand for something

BH-MCO	Behavioral Health Managed Care Organization
CAO	County Assistance Office
C/FST	Consumer/ Family Satisfaction Team
CPS	Certified Peer Specialist
CRR	Community Residential Rehabilitation
CSP	Community Support Program
CSTAP	Consumer Satisfaction Team Alliance of PA
D&A	Drug & Alcohol
DPW	Department of Public Welfare
HC	HealthChoices
HMO	Health Maintenance Organization



ICM	Intensive Care Manager
LTSR	Long Term Structured Residence
MA	Medical Assistance
MCO	Managed Care Organization
MH	Mental Health
MHA	Mental Health Association
MR	Mental Retardation
NAMI	National Alliance for Mental Illness
OMAP	Office of Medical Assistance Programs
OMHSAS	Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services
PCP	Primary Care Practitioner
PH-MCO	Physical Health Managed Care Organization
RC	Resource Coordinator
SAP	Service Area Plan
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSDI	Social Security Disability Insurance
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
WRAP	Wellness Recovery Action Plan

Just when you learn all of these, there will surely be new ones added!