

How to Help People Recovering from Psychosis

What Family and Friends Need to Know



“My daughter didn’t know at first what she needed, but she did need us. It took some time, but now her good days are the norm rather than the exception.”

What to Expect

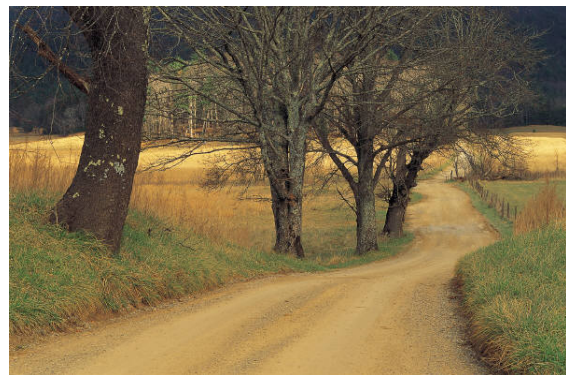
When your family member comes home from the hospital, many of their symptoms may be reduced or gone, but some may remain. You can help them recover by maintaining a calm, positive environment for them, and by educating yourself on their illness.

It is quite normal for a person who has just experienced psychosis to:

- Sleep much more than usual
- Need to have a lot of quiet, alone time.
- Be slower and not feel able to do much.

Slowing down and resting is part of allowing the brain to heal. Each person will recover at their own pace, and it could take up to a year of this type of rest for someone to recover. It is a good idea to gently encourage the person to do simple chores, hang out with family or go out to do activities they used to like when they feel up to it.

Your relative may seem emotionally distant during this time as well. This is part of the illness as well, and is not about their relationship with you. When around people, they may be very quiet and just sit and watch, which is quite normal.



Positive Factors in Promoting Recovery

These are some of the factors on a smooth road to recovery.

- Strong social support networks
- Stable living condition
- Safe and structured environment
- Sense of purpose or direction, feeling of contributing to society
- Someone to discuss experiences and feelings with and provide practical help
- A good understanding of what has happened
- Physical well-being
- Effective medication without distressing side-effects
- Sense of realistic expectation and hope about the future

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Identifying relapse triggers

It is useful to think back on the signs your family member showed when they were becoming ill. Often, but not always, they will show similar signs if they are heading into a relapse or are under too much stress. Your relative may have signs that are particular to them. **The following are some common warning signs:** hallucinations / voices, suspiciousness, disorganized thoughts, speech that doesn't make sense, difficulty concentrating, bizarre behaviour, a belief they have special powers or feeling rested after almost no sleep for several days. Changes in sleeping habits, anxiety, agitation, depression, difficulties concentrating, isolating, and irritability may be signs of a relapse or they may be signs the person is under too much stress.

Supporting Health

- ♥ Calm, quiet environment.
- ♥ Gentle encouragement.
- ♥ Let the person recover at their own pace.
- ♥ Keep healthy foods around.
- ♥ Provide encouragement if the person needs help with daily chores and personal care.
- ♥ Give them their space to have quiet, rest and calm while they recover.



For More Information

Early Psychosis Intervention Program—Fraser South Health Authority www.psychosissucks.ca This site includes a lot of useful information including a booklet for families in the 'downloads' section. The booklet includes good information for families on coping with symptoms.

BC Schizophrenia Society—Also offers resources on psychosis for families. www.bcscs.org

"How You Can Help—A Toolkit for Families" - at the BC Partners for Mental Health & Addictions Information site at www.heretohelp.bc.ca