



# Taking Your Mental Health Treatment to Heart

Each year, thousands of Canadians of all ages are affected by a mental disorder such as depression, generalized anxiety disorder, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia.

If you are suffering from such a disorder, take comfort: by consulting a health care professional quickly, and by getting involved in your treatment, you are on the right track for recovery.

## / Personalized Treatment

The best treatment for any kind of mental disorder is one **adapted to the needs of the individual**. Therefore, treatment varies from one person to another. Generally, however, treatment for mental disorders is based on a combination of the following elements:

- **Psychotherapy**, which works on the emotions, thoughts and behaviours that are harmful to your well-being.
- **Medication**, which may be necessary to control the symptoms of the illness, restore the brain's chemical balance and place you in a better position to work on the other aspects of your treatment.
- **Strategies** that help you recover, maintain good mental health and deal with the illness.

## Taking the First Steps

Playing an active role in your recovery is entirely possible. The secret is to take it one step at a time.

- The first thing you can do is to **seek professional support**. **Health care professionals** and **community organizations** are there to inform you, advise you and accompany you through this process. Your loved ones can also find support through certain community organizations. If needed, consult the list at the end of this brochure.
- Do not hesitate to create a network of people you can call on when you need an attentive ear or a hand in facing daily challenges (**family members, friends, colleagues, etc.**).
- Gather **information** about your illness and treatment options. Feel free to ask health care professionals or workers in community organizations as many questions as you need to. Make sure that you understand their explanations and recommendations. In order to avoid forgetting important details, take notes or ask someone you trust to accompany you to appointments.

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"I know that to control my illness, I need to get a good night's sleep, manage my stress and take my medication properly. These strategies are my allies!"

Julie, age 27

## / Getting Involved in Your Treatment

Being committed to all aspects of your treatment is the foundation of a strong recovery and **reduces your risk of a relapse, deterioration in your condition or even hospitalization**. It is therefore to your advantage to:

- Establish a trust-based relationship with the people who are accompanying you in your treatment process.
- Actively participate in meetings with your doctor, your psychologist and others.
- Take your medication, while respecting its prescribed dosage, frequency and duration.
- Commit to the improvement of your lifestyle habits. Take pride in your progress and do not let yourself become discouraged; it often takes more than one try to reach objectives.
- **Always ask for the advice of a health care professional before stopping or changing any aspect of your treatment.**

## / Strategies for Regaining Your Balance

A healthy lifestyle and a positive outlook on life promote mental health. For people suffering from a mental illness, these strategies are an integral part of treatment. They contribute to reduced risks of relapse, and help better manage the consequences of the illness.

### To adopt a healthy lifestyle

- Choose a balanced diet, and try to eat at regular hours.
- Be active daily. Go at your own pace and choose physical activities that you enjoy: pleasure is the greatest source of motivation!
- Be careful with substances that act on the nervous system. Alcohol and caffeine should be consumed in moderation, while illicit drugs and tobacco should be entirely avoided.
- Ensure you get enough quality sleep.

### To develop a positive outlook on life

- Manage your stress levels by setting priorities and learning strategies to decrease stress, such as relaxation exercises.
- Promote high self-esteem; appreciate your strengths while accepting your weaknesses.
- Try to focus on the positive aspects of a situation as well as its negative points.
- Surround yourself with positive people.

If you want to change some of your habits, set realistic goals and go at your own pace. Discover what **motivates** and de-motivates you. And above all, have **confidence** in yourself and celebrate your successes!

# / Overcoming Obstacles

## Psychotherapy

**I wonder whether psychotherapy can really be of any use to me.**

Psychotherapy is a central component of the treatment of mental illnesses. Research shows that medication is more effective in preventing relapses if combined with psychological treatment. The best way to dispel your doubts is to ask for as much information as you need. During your initial appointment with a psychotherapist, do not hesitate to ask the professional (psychologist, social worker or psychiatrist, for example) questions about his or her training and approach. Take your time discussing the objectives of your meetings together.

**I am hesitant to confide in others.**

Psychotherapy professionals are there to listen to you without judgment and to help you improve your ability to express what you are feeling. Information you share with a professional is confidential and may not be disclosed without your consent. However, the success of the treatment process depends on a relationship of trust established between you and the professional. If you do not feel comfortable with a given therapist, it is best to consult a different one.

**I am afraid that it will be difficult.**

While psychotherapy can be demanding at times, in the end **the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks**. It's good to keep this in mind during intense periods in the treatment process. Between therapy sessions, talking with family members, friends or people from community organizations will often help you get through your difficulties.

## Medication

**I would prefer not to take any medication.**

Medication may be necessary to halt the symptoms of your illness, improve your quality of life and make psychotherapy more effective. Ask your doctor or pharmacist to tell you about the advantages and disadvantages of the medication prescribed to you. The more information you have, the better equipped you'll be to make informed decisions about your health.

**The side effects bother me.**

If the medication you are prescribed has undesirable effects, talk about it with your doctor or pharmacist. The dose might need to be adjusted, or the medication replaced with another that suits you better. You can also ask people from community organizations for advice on adapting to the effects of medication on your life.

**I have trouble taking my medication.**

With your doctor or pharmacist, try to establish a medication schedule that works with your activities and routine. To avoid forgetting, put a note in your agenda or in an obvious place in your home (for example, on the fridge). If you need to take several types of medication, your pharmacist can give you some tips, such as using a pill organizer.

**I want to stop my medication.**

**The golden rule is to always talk to your doctor about any changes in your medication routine.**

If you want to stop your medication because

- **you are not seeing any improvements:** bear in mind that it sometimes takes a few days to a few weeks before feeling the positive effects of medication. It is also possible that the medication is not the best fit for you and that you would be better suited to a different one. Discuss it with your doctor.
- **you are feeling better:** the medication may still be necessary in order to avoid a relapse.

If you need to take medication long term, it is better to accept this and make it part of your life, in the same way that a person with diabetes takes insulin.





## Tips on Medication

- **Keep your medication** in its original packaging (unless you are using a pill organizer) and respect its storage directions (temperature, exposure to light, etc.)
- **Keep an updated list** of all the medication you are taking and keep it handy at all times.

## Reducing Risk of Suicide

Mental illness is one of the main risk factors of suicide. Suicidal thoughts are the result of great suffering, and are brought about by a state of exhaustion and despair. By managing symptoms and contributing to an improved quality of life, treatment of mental disorders reduces the risk of suicide.

## Careful!

- **Do not take someone else's medication**, and do not share your medication.
- **Before taking natural products or over-the-counter medication**, it is always best to ask a health care professional for advice. These products can have side effects or cause potentially dangerous interactions if they are combined with other medication. Your pharmacist can inform you about possible risks.

## Resources Available to You

### HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

- Your **doctor** or **pharmacist**
- The **CLSC** or **CSSS** in your area  
[www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/en/repertoires/csss](http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/en/repertoires/csss)
- **Ordre des psychologues du Québec**  
[www.ordrepsy.qc.ca](http://www.ordrepsy.qc.ca) / 1 800 561-1223
- Professional services at **school or work**
- **Info-Santé**  
Dial **8-1-1**  
24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- **Douglas Institute**  
[www.douglas.qc.ca](http://www.douglas.qc.ca)

### COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- **Fédération des familles et amis de la personne atteinte de maladie mentale**  
(Federation of families and friends of people with mental illnesses)  
[www.ffapamm.com](http://www.ffapamm.com) / 1 800 323-0474
- **Mental Illness Foundation**  
[www.mentalillnessfoundation.org](http://www.mentalillnessfoundation.org)  
1 888 529-5354
- **Canadian Mental Health Association**  
[www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca)
- **Revivre**  
Quebec Anxiety, Depressive and Bipolar Disorder Support Association  
[www.revivre.org](http://www.revivre.org) / 1 866 REVIVRE (738-4873)

### • Phobies-Zéro

Support and help group for young people and adults suffering from anxiety disorders  
[www.phobies-zero.qc.ca](http://www.phobies-zero.qc.ca) / 1 866 922-0002

### • Société québécoise de la schizophrénie

[www.schizophrenie.qc.ca](http://www.schizophrenie.qc.ca) / 1 866 888-2323

### • Help Online

[www.aideenligne.ca/en](http://www.aideenligne.ca/en) / 1 866 766-5620

### • Association québécoise de prévention du suicide

24 hours a day, 7 days a week everywhere in Québec

[www.aqps.info](http://www.aqps.info)

**1 866 APPELLE (277-3553)**

- In case of an **emergency**, dial **9-1-1**.

### PASS THIS BROCHURE ON!

The information in this brochure should not be interpreted as providing a medical diagnosis, and should not take the place of consultation with a health care professional.

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Professionals and companies can order this brochure by calling 514-985-2466 or 1 800 985-2466, extension 0, or from their AstraZeneca representative.

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