

Your  
*Carer's* Resource Guide  
for  
**First Episode Psychosis**

An Information Guide from the  
Early Psychosis Intervention  
Program (EPI),  
Sudbury Community Mental Health  
and Addictions Centre

2018



Health Sciences North  
Horizon Santé-Nord

# Dedication

*We would like to acknowledge  
and thank our clients and families  
who have lived and are living this  
journey.*



*It gets dark sometimes,  
but morning comes.  
Keep hope alive.*



# Contact List

## In case of Emergency:

Crisis Intervention (24 hours) **(705) 675-4760**

Emergency Services **911**

## Your EPI Psychiatrist:

Name Dr. Shivakumar (via reception)

Number 705 523-4988 ext. 4242

## Your Early Intervention in Psychosis Team:

Name Ryan Prieur, Registered Nurse

Number ext. 4265

Name Laurie Milling, Registered Social Worker

Number ext. 4399

Name Sue Lepage, Registered Social Worker

Number ext. 4307

## Your Family Doctor:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_

## Your Pharmacist:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number \_\_\_\_\_



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*When you do nothing, you feel overwhelmed and powerless. But when you get involved, you feel the sense of hope and accomplishment that comes from knowing you are working to make things better.*  
*Pauline R. Kezer*

## Foreword

This Carer's Resource Guide is about hope and education. We believe they go hand in hand. We offer this booklet as a resource for you. It is full of information that will support you through the journey to recovery that you and your loved one are on.

This booklet is also a tool. Its pages can hold your thoughts as you track your recovery progress. We encourage you to make it your own; fill this guide with your personal experiences, observations and questions.



# All About Psychosis Education

Education is the best preparation. This section helps you prepare for the challenging journey your loved one is undertaking.

Here is what you can expect to learn about:

- What is Psychosis?
- What Causes Psychosis?
- What Happens During an Episode of Psychosis?
  - ◊ The Prodromal Phase
  - ◊ The Acute Phase
    - Positive Symptoms
      - ◊ Delusions
      - ◊ Hallucinations
      - ◊ Disorganized Speech and Behaviour
    - Negative Symptoms
    - Other Common Symptoms
      - ◊ Psychosis and Depression
  - ◊ The Recovery Phase
    - Expectations
    - Returning Home From Hospital
    - Rebuilding Self Esteem
    - Returning to School
    - Returning to Work
    - Maintaining Recovery
    - Relapse
      - ◊ Vulnerability
      - ◊ Triggers
      - ◊ Prevention
      - ◊ Intervention



# What is Psychosis?

The word psychosis is used to describe conditions that affect the mind, in which people have trouble distinguishing between what is real and what is not. When this occurs, it is called a psychotic episode. A first episode of psychosis is often very frightening, confusing and distressing, particularly because it is an unfamiliar experience. About 3 out of every 100 people will experience an episode of psychosis in their lifetime. Psychosis affects men and women equally and occurs across all cultures and socioeconomic groups. Psychosis usually first appears in a person's late teens or early 20s. Psychotic illnesses seem to affect women at a later age than men, when women may be farther along in their social and work lives.

## What Causes Psychosis?

In most cases, it is difficult to know what causes a first episode of psychosis. Current research indicates that a combination of biological factors, including genetic factors, create a situation where a person is particularly vulnerable to developing symptoms of psychosis. A number of chemicals in the brain, including dopamine and serotonin, may play a role in how psychosis develops. A stressful event may trigger symptoms of psychosis in a person who is at greater risk. In this way, both a person's biology and environment play a role in producing the symptoms of psychosis.

*Psychosis is no one's fault.*

In a first episode of psychosis, the cause may be particularly unclear. Therefore, it is important for the individual to have a thorough medical assessment to rule out any physical illnesses that may be the cause of the symptoms of psychosis. This assessment involves both medical tests and detailed evaluations by mental health professionals.



*It is important that treatment begins quickly.*

Psychosis is associated with a number of mental illnesses including:

- Substance Abuse
- Depression
- Bipolar Disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Anxiety

However, a clear diagnosis of any of these illnesses is rare if the individual is experiencing a first episode of psychosis. Therefore, it is recommended to initially focus on the **symptoms of psychosis** when the treatment is started.

# What Happens During an Episode of Psychosis?

An episode of psychosis has three distinct phases:

The Prodromal Phase → The Acute Phase → The Recovery Phase

This section will help you to recognize each of these phases. Each phase has its own unique set of signs and symptoms and early recognition can lead to better care and better recovery for your loved one.

## Phase 1: The Prodromal Phase

Even before an episode of psychosis becomes evident, there are often noticeable changes in a person's feelings, thoughts, perceptions and behaviours. The word '**prodrome**' refers to these changes. The exact set of symptoms varies between individuals as does the duration of this phase. However, the prodrome commonly lasts for several months and the following are some symptoms which are often noted.

### Common Symptoms:

- Reduced concentration/attention
  - Reduced drive/motivation, a lack of energy
  - Difficulty sleeping
  - Anxiety
  - Social withdrawal/isolation
  - Suspiciousness/paranoia
  - Irritability
  - Difficulty functioning normally (Going to school/work)
- **Pay attention** to changes in ability and behaviour that seem to be persistent, noticeable and unusual.
  - **Trust yourself.** If you believe something isn't quite right explore and seek out information.
  - **Don't Wait.** If you find the situation is getting out of control, seek out a family doctor or your EPI clinician.
  - **Get the facts.** Learn more about psychosis and its warning signs.
  - **Face your fears.** Mental illness is a frightening thought but early intervention is effective and the outlook can be positive.



## Phase 2: The Acute Phase

The symptoms that are typically associated with psychosis arise during this phase. These symptoms are categorized as either '**positive**' or '**negative**'.

**Positive** symptoms are thoughts or feelings that are “added on” to how a person usually thinks or feels. These symptoms often interfere with normal day to day functioning. They include delusions, disorganized speech and behaviour, and hallucinations.

**Negative** symptoms are almost the opposite. They involve a decrease in, or loss of normal functions. These symptoms are often harder to detect than the positive symptoms because they can be labeled as “typical” teenage behaviours. Careful assessment is sometimes needed to determine whether these symptoms are due to psychosis or something else.

The next few sections will give you a more detailed review of the symptoms of the acute phase. Each section will help you to understand what the symptom is and how the symptoms may affect behaviour.

# Delusions

Delusions are firmly held false beliefs. People experiencing delusions are so truly convinced of their beliefs that not even the most logical argument can change their mind. For them, what they are experiencing is real. Experiencing a delusion can be scary and frustrating for individuals.

Delusions vary a great deal from one person to another. Here is a list of some of the more common delusions:

- *Believing* that you are being followed by someone or monitored by cameras
- *Believing* someone is plotting against you
- *Believing* that you have special abilities or powers
- *Believing* that you or your thoughts are being controlled by an outside force
- *Believing* that certain songs or comments are communicating a hidden message

*Believing* is emphasized in each case because it is important to understand that people's delusions are a part of their reality. A person's behaviours and emotions may be guided by these delusions and so may not be understood by others.

It can also be a scary and frustrating experience for you when someone you care about experiences delusions. Seeking support from others is encouraged, whether it be from family, friends or your EPI clinician.

- Avoid arguing with the individual about their delusions. Delusions are extremely fixed and are difficult to change.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the person's feelings and connect with the emotion of the delusion – e.g. it must be frightening to hear these voices.
- Try to reduce the number of people and noise around the individual and provide a calming setting.
- Acknowledge that these delusions seem real to the person. Avoid pretending to agree and support the delusions.
- It may be appropriate to help the individual check out the facts about his/her beliefs – e.g. getting a brain scan if they believe they have an implant inside his/her head
- Stay calm with both your tone of voice and body language but make sure to consider the safety of both yourself and the individual



# Hallucinations

During psychosis, some people may hear, see, smell, taste or feel something that is not actually there. These changes in perception are called hallucinations.

Hallucinations may lead to some odd behavior as people experiencing them believe that they are real.

The following are some common examples of hallucinations:

- Hearing voices or noises that no one else hears
- Seeing things that no one else sees

- Stay calm and understand the person might be as frightened as you are.
- Distract the person if you can by involving the person in something interesting. For example, you could offer him/her a book or magazine.
- Engage the person in pleasant conversation. If the person wants to talk about the hallucination, you may ask about the experience.
- Encourage the person to be with other positive and supportive people that they know well.
- Avoid blaming yourself or another family member.
- Avoid trying to make sense of the hallucinations.
- Do not laugh or mock the individual about the hallucinations though they may seem very far-fetched to you.
- Avoid underestimating or shrugging off the experience of the hallucination as it is very real to the individual.

*Hallucinations and delusions can be very scary. What was your reaction or feeling?*

## Your Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

# Disorganized Speech and Behaviour

People experiencing an episode of psychosis may behave differently from how they usually do. Many times these changes are due to the symptoms previously described. Disorganized behaviour is unusual behaviour which is inappropriate for the situation a person is in. For example:

- Laughing while describing a personal tragedy
- Sleeping and eating at unusual times

*“ Who knew I’d have to learn to cope with living with someone experiencing psychotic symptoms? I sure didn’t. Gradually I’ve learned how to help my brother live with his symptoms, and to adjust to being around him successfully in the good times and the difficult ones ”*

Disorganized speech refers to the inability to effectively communicate. Some example of disorganized speech include:

- Very frequently switching from topic to topic
- Mixing up words in a sentence or not completing it

These behaviours may become intense enough to disrupt the individual’s ability to perform activities of daily living such as going to work or school.

- Stay calm and do not become agitated.
- Speak to the person in a brief, clear and simple way: repeat, talk slowly and allow some time for the person to answer.
- Give step-by-step instructions when asking the individual to do activities and you may need to write them down.
- Communicate when you don’t understand the individual.
- Avoid paying attention to the inappropriate behaviour.
- Try not to communicate embarrassment through your tone or body language.
- Pay attention and give praise when the individual does something nice and helpful.
- Make it part of the routine to spend time doing something positive – chatting over coffee, walking, gardening, pet care, etc.

# Negative Symptoms



Negative symptoms involve changes in mood and the way one generally feels. For example, a person may experience mood swings during an episode of psychosis and may start to feel unusually excited, depressed or anxious. At other times, a person may show very little emotion or interest towards their environment and may be very unresponsive to the people who are around.

These are some examples of the ways negative symptoms are expressed:

- Not speaking very much, or slow to respond
- Difficulties in coming up with ideas or thinking quickly
- Inability to experience pleasure or joy
- Decreased motivation, initiation, and spontaneity
- Showing little emotion in both their speech and body

## What you can do:

- Be aware that these symptoms are part of the illness and don't take it personally.
- Maintain a structure for each day.
- Try not to get frustrated or hurt that the person isn't showing their feelings much or as much as they used to.
- Be aware that just because the person is not showing their feelings very much, it does not mean that they are not feeling anything.
- Speak simply and clearly to the individual and accept it when they speak simply in return; try not to become hurt at their short responses.
- Keep talking to them no matter how they respond — don't assume the person cannot understand you, even if they don't respond.
- Understand when the person fails to partake in activities and get jobs done.
- Encourage them gently to participate in activities, and ensure them that you are there.
- While letting the person know you are there, do not stop doing enjoyable activities yourself.

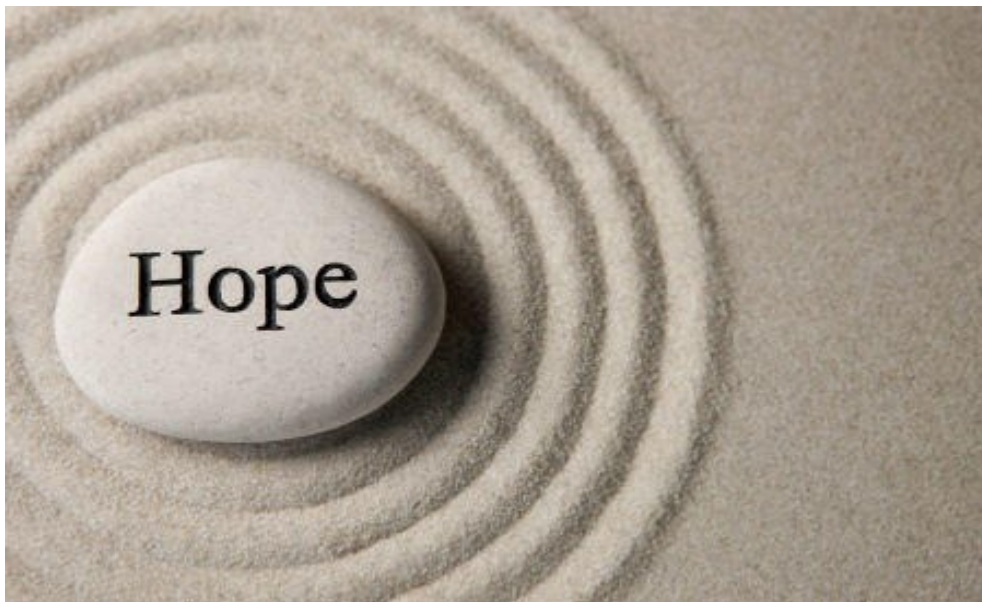
# Other Common Symptoms

It is common for other symptoms or problems to occur alongside the symptoms of psychosis which have just been described.

The entire personality of the individual experiencing psychosis may seem to change. A person may seem to be less interested in friends, school or work. This change may be due to depression or anxiety. These feelings may lead to thoughts of suicide as well as attempts at suicide. For this reason it is advisable to tell your EPI clinician if your loved one expresses these thoughts. **A 24-hour crisis line is available at 705-675-4760.**

Witnessing such behaviour from a loved one can be very distressing for you as family or as friends. Having support to help you cope will help you to deal effectively when experiencing such situations.

The following page gives some information and advice on dealing specifically with depression and psychosis.



# Psychosis and Depression

Depression is not a symptom of psychosis but people who experience psychosis may also experience depression. Depression can vary in its severity. When a person experiences severe depression, some symptoms of psychosis may appear.

There are many signs that signal when a person is depressed. A person who experiences depression may:

- have a hard time concentrating and thinking
- have trouble putting together sentences and thoughts
- give only very short responses while in conversation
- feel constantly tired and uninterested in activities they have previously enjoyed
- just sit staring into space and not move very much at all
- not sleep very much and may wake up early in the morning (e.g. 2 and 4 a.m.)
- experience changes in weight, hair, and skin

In addition to these changes in behaviour, depression also involves changes in feelings. A person with depression may:

- feel helpless or hopeless
- feel worthless or guilty
- feel they have done something terrible and need to be punished

- Be aware that depression is a very real condition reflecting change in the chemicals of the brain and that it is not a reflection of being weak.
- Understand that you cannot cheer a person out of this state.
- Be aware of suicide risk. If you are concerned, do not be afraid to talk to the person about suicide – this will not make him/her act on possible thoughts of suicide. Talk with their treatment team about this issue. Suicidal thoughts may be a reason for hospitalization.
- If the person seems unexpectedly happy, begins to give their possessions away, and organise their affairs, be aware that this is a risk factor for suicide and get help immediately. ***You can call 911 if there is an emergency.***
- Be aware that poor concentration from depression can cause safety issues especially if the individual works with sharp instruments or drives.
- Be aware of whether the person is drinking enough water or eating properly. Again, this issue may need to be attended to in a hospital setting.
- Let the person know that you care about them, and let the person know where you are going even if there is no response.
- Try to sit beside and be in the person's space – often people who are depressed do not like to make demands on others but do appreciate the company. Expect that you will do most of the talking.

# Phase 3: The Recovery Phase

## *“Psychosis is treatable”*

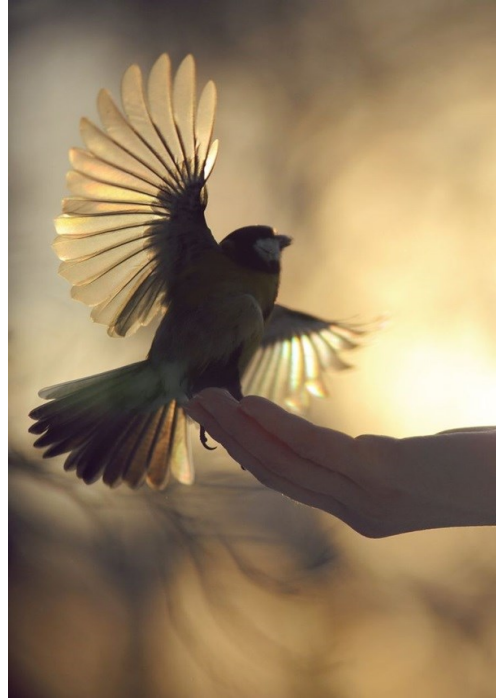
Psychosis is a medical condition that is treatable. Most people who experience a first episode of psychosis will recover. Medical treatment for psychosis can be provided in the community with the help of your EPI team. Your EPI team can also provide home and community visits. On occasion, hospitalization is required; the stay is usually for a short period. If an individual dealing with psychosis takes an active role in their recovery, especially if it is a first episode, the outlook for leading a normal and healthy life is very positive.

An individual can take an active role in recovery by finding out how to recognize warning signs or symptoms, learning how to manage stress, and building up a social support network. Additionally, participating in valued activities such as work, school or recreation can also help in recovery to return quality of life to the individual.

You can support the individual by acting as a source of comfort and knowledge. This role can facilitate an easier transition into a school or workplace. You may also participate in leisure activities with the individual and provide an environment where the individual feels safe and free from judgment.

The rest of this section helps you to understand the process of recovery including:

- What can be expected?
- How can you help a person to rebuild their self-esteem and self-identity?
- How can you help a person to return to school?
- How can you help a person to return to the workplace?
- How can you help a person to maintain their recovery?



## Expectations

The recovery process is different for everyone. Some people recover from an episode of psychosis very quickly while others need more time to respond to treatment. Similarly, some people are ready to return to life and responsibilities soon afterwards while others need to return to their normal activities more gradually.

Everyone needs to have **meaning** in their life. An individual's quality of life may be different after they recover from an episode of psychosis. However, ***different does not have to mean worse, it only means that there has been a change.*** It is important that a person believes recovery is possible and actively takes part in the recovery process. As family and friends, you can support this idea and act as cheerleaders as the individual walks the path of recovery.

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



Sometimes hospitalization is the best route to an effective recovery. This is especially true if a person is a danger to themselves or others. Usually a stay at the hospital is brief but the treatment team may at times feel a longer stay would be the most beneficial. Despite the length of stay, the transition from the hospital back to home may be very difficult on both the individuals and their families.

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 the individual recover by maintaining a calm, positive environment, and by educating yourself about their illness. Sometimes the best education comes from observation. It is important to notice both the successes and limitations of the individual and support their pace for their recovery.

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

- Sleep much more than usual, as much as 12-14 hours a day
- Need to have a lot of alone time
- Prefer a quiet & less stimulating environment
- Feel they are not able to do much and do the things they can more slowly

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.

The most important thing is to encourage the individual to participate in activities they are *ready* for. Balance is the key.

# Returning Home From Hospital

Your relative may seem emotionally distant during this time as well. This distance is part of the illness. Around people, they may be very quiet and may just sit and watch. This behaviour is quite normal. It may take some time for recovering individuals to get used to interacting with others. They may find some simple social tasks such as calling someone on the telephone very difficult. Though this stage can be very challenging for family members, it is important for you to stay involved .

In fact, **you play a very important part during this stage of recovery.** Making sure the recovering individual is eating and drinking properly is vital. Many individuals are on medication during this time. Many of these medications may affect how hungry the individual feels. Unless properly cared for, individuals can gain a lot of weight. You can be immensely useful in helping the individual to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Proper nutrition is a very important part of the road to recovery and should not be ignored. Many individuals in this stage of their recovery may not be able to make suitable decisions about nutrition but you can serve as their guide.



# Rebuilding Self-Esteem

Rebuilding self-esteem is a crucial step towards recovery and also requires attention. Like other elements of recovery, rebuilding self-esteem takes time, patience and the support of friends and family.

You can be extremely helpful in this process by being positive, non-judgmental and available. People recovering from psychosis are often very critical of themselves. They may continually focus on their past failures and forget their past achievements. You can help reduce this negative thinking by reinforcing a more accurate self-description. For example, reminding people of their accomplishments and talents can help them create a more realistic view of their qualities. This reinforcement will help the individual to focus on what they can do.

Rebuilding self-esteem may also help the individual to feel more comfortable in social settings. Participating in social gatherings can also help to rebuild self-esteem, especially if others are supportive. In this way, socializing, and rebuilding self-esteem help one another.



*What qualities do you like most about your loved one?*

*How can I help my loved one reconnect socially*

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## Returning to School

During recovery, individuals and their families often feel the need to resume previous activities very quickly.

Getting back to school may be very rewarding for the individual as it helps set a sense of structure and bring normalcy back into their lives. However, returning to school can be demanding both socially and academically. For these reasons it is important to set realistic goals. Reviewing previous academic records and accomplishments is a good starting point. The individual recovering from psychosis should be emotionally prepared for both successes and failures. It is important to let the person know that you will support them regardless of their performance.

Choosing classes and activities based on the individual's strengths, skills and interests can be a great way to help keep up self-esteem and motivation. A school guidance counselor can be very helpful during this process especially if the counselor knows about psychosis and how it effects a person's abilities. Our EPI clinicians can work with guidance counselors to provide education about psychosis.

Returning to school is an adjustment for most people. To help make this adjustment easier, it may be helpful to have someone accompany the person initially. With time, a person may become more comfortable in a school setting and function more independently.



## Returning to Work

Returning to work can be a challenging step in the recovery process. For most people, work gives a sense of personal identity, meaning and structure to their lives. The transition back to work may be problematic for some people due to various demands and social expectations.

Before a person returns to work, it is important to have a good understanding of the demands of the job as well as an awareness of their present abilities and expectations. Being realistic and expecting challenges is very important. Returning to work before someone is ready may be harmful during recovery.

Being able to deal with the stress of work will take time. Returning to work on a casual or part-time basis is one way of easing the transition back into the work force. Being supportive and helpful with problem solving are two things that you can do to help make the process of going back to work a smoother one.

# Maintaining Recovery

Initially, it may be very difficult to see beyond the diagnosis of psychosis. Learning about psychosis is one of the best ways to help overcome this challenge. As you have read, you play a major role in the recovery of your loved one. Here are some suggestions to maintain recovery:

## Lifestyle

Good habits are essential for maintaining good physical and *mental* health. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle includes:

- Maintaining a good balanced diet and exercise
- Getting adequate sleep each night
- Engaging in meaningful activities
- Take your medication as prescribed

In each situation, the individual should choose wisely to decrease stress levels.

## Social Support

Unfortunately, people recovering from psychosis often withdraw socially and become isolated. Sometimes the family or close friends of these individuals become isolated as well. Maintaining relationships with others is incredibly important and requires work.

Many other sources of social support are also available. The individual is encouraged to try and explore options and then decide what is best.

**Staying Well**, individuals should actively attempt to:

- Be aware of their ability to cope with stress and monitor their own well-being
- Set achievable goals and try to find strategies that work best for them
- Stay social and maintain recreational, scholastic, and work activities
- Stay healthy and follow the prescribed treatment plan that works best for them

**Supporting Health**, what you can do:

- Provide a stable, safe and structured living environment
- Build a strong and informed and reliable social support network



# Relapse

Many individuals who experience a first episode of psychosis will experience another. Those individuals who consistently follow their treatment plan and have a strong support system have a greatly reduced risk of relapse. Our experience shows that positive family involvement enhances the road to recovery and assures a more successful maintenance of recovery.

Sometimes, in spite of everyone's best efforts, a second episode does occur. We call this a relapse. You need to know:

- the initial recovery was real
- future recovery is possible

However, recovery from later episodes may be more difficult. The brain, like any other organ, is delicate and will need longer to recover if it is repeatedly affected by illness. That is why prevention and early intervention are so important.

These next few sections will describe:

- When an individual is particularly vulnerable
- How to detect relapse triggers
- How a relapse can be avoided
- How to respond if a relapse occurs

# Vulnerability

Relapse can occur at any time and for different reasons. The most vulnerable time for a relapse is during times of great stress.

Individuals in this phase will no longer be experiencing positive symptoms such as hallucinations or delusions and will likely be on medication. However, they may be still experiencing other symptoms such as depression and persistent tiredness. *These symptoms are a part of their illness.* Such symptoms may prevent their immediate return to their former responsibilities. This may be a hard time for family members as you may find yourself compensating for these unattended responsibilities. However, it is very important to stay supportive as individuals are particularly vulnerable to experiencing a relapse during this time.

This is especially true if your loved one is making the difficult transition of returning to school or the workplace. There may be many people in their school or workplace who do not understand their illness and do not know that recovery involves gradual improvement. Once they return to school or work, they might immediately be given many demands. This may be very hard on your loved one. That is why your support and understanding is so important.

Creating a safe and non-judgmental home environment is crucial during the recovery phase. One step in creating this positive environment is to reduce the amount of emotion that is expressed in the household. Psychosis can stir up many emotions in families. You may be feeling scared, angry, embarrassed, or simply tired. You may express these emotions verbally or through your body language. Individuals recovering from psychosis are often unprepared to deal with such emotions. They are also especially unprepared to deal with criticism. It may be hard to avoid expressing your emotions especially when your expectations exceed the improvement the individual has made. At these times, it is important to note two things: improvement is gradual, and there are many resources available to help **you** through this time. These resources will be given in the Coping section of this booklet.

# Triggers for Relapse

Relapse can be triggered by the following:

- Not taking medications as prescribed or at all
- Street drug use and alcohol
- Any event or task that causes stress  
e.g. loss of social ties or recreational activities
- Returning to school/work, or other responsibilities too soon

All of these instances place an individual at a much greater risk of relapse. The EPI staff will work with you to help your family member avoid these situations as much as possible.

## **Ending Treatment:**

People may choose to end treatment for different reasons. It is important for you and your loved one to learn about psychosis treatment options together so you can make choices that are right for you.

## **Returning to Responsibilities:**

Some recovering individuals may return to too many responsibilities too soon. Creating a less pressured environment by expressing very little emotion may help prevent this from happening. Your relative should be prepared to make choices which minimize stress. Your EPI team can help educate you and your relative on ways to reduce stress.

## **Stress:**

Stress is common to all of our lives. Our ability to deal with stress depends on our coping skills, problem solving skills, and our social supports. A person recovering from psychosis may not be able to use their skills. **Some individuals may use substances such as alcohol or cannabis to help them cope. These drugs can trigger a relapse.** Lack of coping skills may also lead to their isolation from those they love and trust.

You can help your loved one develop coping skills by learning them yourself. A list of good strategies for problem solving and coping are given in the 'Coping' section of this booklet. These skills can help your relative avoid stress and future relapses.



## Prevention of Relapse

Relapse prevention encompasses a wide range of strategies that focus on reducing the risk of relapse. Relapse prevention is a self-control intervention which tries to enhance one's ability to change problematic thinking and behaviour while making lifestyle changes that reduce the chance for relapse. The three main goals of relapse prevention work are increasing awareness, changing lifestyle and developing coping skills. Oh, and taking medication as prescribed.

Relapse prevention takes a team effort; you, your family, your loved one living with the illness, and the mental health professionals of the EPI program are all part of this team. With active involvement from all of the team members a **relapse may be prevented.**

The ability to manage stress effectively and to overcome adverse circumstances will reduce the risk of relapse. Protectors are those factors which improve our ability to withstand adverse circumstances and increase our tolerance to stress. These include effective family functioning and the ability to problem solve.

The EPI team will support your loved one to identify potential risk factors, focusing on enhancing skills to identify, anticipate and cope with high risk situations, identify sources of stress in their lifestyle while improving their overall coping capacity.

# Relapse Intervention

*Each individual's experience of psychosis is unique and influenced by their personal, family and social histories. The course of the illness and response to treatment also vary widely. No one intervention is likely to address the variety of associated needs.*



When trying to identify whether your family member is experiencing a relapse, it is useful to think back on the signs they showed when they were first becoming ill.

These are some common warning signs:

- Unusual behaviour including isolating themselves
- Hearing voices or seeing things that are not there
- Suspiciousness or beliefs that they have special powers
- Disorganized thoughts and speech that does not make sense
- Changes in sleeping habits
- Difficulty concentrating, anxiety, agitation, or irritability
- Other signs of stress

If you suspect your loved one is going through a relapse, the best thing to do is to act quickly. Contact any member of your EPI treatment team and explain that you believe a relapse is occurring. They will assess the situation, support you and determine what to do.

It is of the highest importance to protect the safety of both yourself and your loved one. If you believe the situation is getting out of hand, contact the 24-hour crisis team at **705 675-4760**. You can also call **911** if there is an emergency.

# All About Persistent Symptoms

This section contains some specific information about persistent symptoms and medications and how to manage them.

Here is what you can expect:

- Persistent Symptoms
- Managing Persistent Symptoms
- Medications





## Persistent Symptoms

Sometimes when individuals are in the early stages of their recovery, their symptoms of psychosis can continue even if they are on medication. It often takes a while for the psychiatrist to work out what the right medication and dosage is for each person. Several combinations might need to be tried to find the medication and dosage that is the most effective with the fewest side effects. Letting the psychiatrist and EPI clinician know about any side effects will help to make these adjustments efficiently.

Open communication with your EPI clinician and psychiatrist is extremely important. As family members, you experience the most contact with your relative and have the most knowledge about who they are as a person. If you feel that the severity of their symptoms is changing, telling an EPI member will help in taking actions to control these changes. If they do not know about these ongoing symptoms, they will be very limited in how they can help.

The treatment plan created for your family member may continually be revised to best suit their changing needs. The EPI team needs your help and observations to make the best treatment plan possible. Early intervention during the recovery phase will also help to prevent a relapse from occurring.

The following two pages will inform you about some important things to consider about persistent symptoms as well as some tips on how best to manage them.



# Persistent Symptoms

Continued...

If you feel that your loved one is experiencing persistent symptoms, ask yourself two very important questions:

- Are there certain things or situations that tend to make these symptoms worse?
- How is the individual coping with these symptoms?

Sometimes there may be certain tasks, activities, places or people that trigger an increase in symptoms experienced by your family member. If this is the case, you may want to write these situations down and communicate them to your EPI clinician. There might be options in how the exposure to these triggers can be lessened or eliminated.

We all have different coping strategies. Some are good and some are not as helpful. Good strategies are those that use stress management techniques; these strategies tend to not have any short or long term risks. Less helpful strategies involve risk. Using street drugs or alcohol, for example, significantly increases the risk of a relapse. Communicate to your EPI clinician the types of strategies your relative is using to cope with their illness. With this knowledge, your EPI team can work with the individual to recognize when they are using less helpful coping skills and can help them to use good skills that work for them.

# Managing Persistent Symptoms

Many people who have persistent symptoms of psychosis have reported that there are things they can do to help reduce these symptoms or help them cope. Many people with early psychosis find that stress increases symptoms. Often stress management strategies can be helpful by decreasing persistent symptoms or by making these symptoms easier to cope with. Using stress management techniques to help yourself cope will help set a good example for your loved one. Both of these factors strengthen the recovery process.

In addition to stress management, here are some strategies that you can suggest to your loved one if they are experiencing persistent symptoms:

- Either increasing (going for a walk, exercising) or decreasing (relaxing) the level of activity may help to decrease hallucinations or feelings of disorganization
- Changing posture, as in sitting or lying down, help some people with their hallucinations
- Distractions in the form of other activities, such as watching TV or listening to music, may help with hallucinations or delusions
- Using organization strategies or memory aids for problems with disorganized thought or memory difficulties
- Changing the sounds in the environment by using earplugs, listening to music, humming, or talking with other people may be helpful for auditory hallucinations; moving the TV or radio into another room is also useful
- Engaging in reality testing (asking trusted others about thought or perceptions to determine whether or not they experience them as well) may be helpful for hallucinations or delusions; Note: allow your loved one to lead the discussion

These are just some of the possible strategies that might help your relative deal with any ongoing symptoms. Teach them to your relative and try to come up with other helpful strategies as well. This will reinforce your bond together and help make your family member's recovery proceed more smoothly.

If you have any concerns about the strategies you are using, or if you would like to learn other effective stress management strategies, do not hesitate to check in with your EPI clinician.



# Medications

Medications are essential in the treatment of psychosis. It relieves symptoms of psychosis and is critical in preventing relapses. Our program nurse can provide additional information and support as required to carefully monitor medication use. If you or your loved one is having difficulty paying for these medications talk to your EPI team members.

There are different medications available to treat psychosis. These medications are called antipsychotics (or sometimes neuroleptics).

The antipsychotic medications are usually divided into two categories:

**First generation (typical) antipsychotic:** Haloperidol (Haldol), Loxapine, Chlorpromazine, etc.

**Second generation (atypical) antipsychotic**—more commonly prescribed and include the following: Aripiprazole (Abilify), Risperidone (Risperdal), Olanzapine (Zyprexa), Quetiapine (Seroquel), Asenapine (Saphris), Ziprasidone (Zeldox), Paliperidone (Invega), Lurasidone (Latuda) and Clozapine (Clozaril).

Second generation (atypical) antipsychotic medications are typically trialled first as they generally have less side effects. Most side effects diminish over time and some people do not experience any side effects.

Some common side effects of the atypical antipsychotics include:

- Tiredness/drowsiness
- Dry mouth
- Blurred vision
- Weight gain
- Changes in blood pressure
- Muscle cramping/stiffness
- Nausea
- Restlessness

The EPI psychiatrist and clinician will closely monitor for side effects. If you or your loved one has developed side effects that are intolerable, it may be recommended to lower the dose, add a medication to reduce side effects, or try a different medication. **It is also important to mention, that having occasional blood work done is an important part in monitoring for side effects and the body's response to the medication.**

# Medications

Continued...

## Remembering to take Medication

Remembering to take medications every day can be difficult. Some people find that keeping their medication next to something they use the same time every day is helpful (ex: keeping medication next to toothbrush). Other people find that using a pill container or “bubble pack” that organizes medications by the day of the week is useful.

If you or your family member and/or friend are having problems remembering to take their medications, talk to your EPI psychiatrist or clinician; they can help find strategies that work for them. **It is also important to know that some of the atypical antipsychotics come in an injectable form which may be helpful for those struggling with taking their medication daily. Please do not hesitate to speak with the EPI psychiatrist or clinician regarding this option.**

## Duration of Antipsychotic Treatment

It is recommended to continue taking medication even after symptoms of psychosis are gone. There is a very high risk of relapse if medication is discontinued too soon. Talk with your EPI psychiatrist regarding how long an individual should remain on medication.



# Medications

Continued...



## Response to Antipsychotic Medication

Generally, treatment begins with a low dose of medication that may gradually be increased over time. This will help prevent side effects. It may take several weeks or even months for the medication to provide the full effect. If the first antipsychotic medication does not produce satisfactory results, often a different antipsychotic will be trialled. Clozapine is often effective for people who have not responded to other antipsychotic medications.

## Other Medications

Depending on the severity of the symptoms you or your family member/friend has experienced, there are other medications that might be used in combination with an antipsychotic. For example, anti-depressants or mood stabilizers might be used for problems with mood. Whenever a medication is prescribed, be sure to find out what symptoms it is meant to help with and what side effects are associated with it.

*Does anyone else in the house use medications? Do they maintain their medication plan?*

# All About Our EPI Program...

This section is all about the Early Psychosis Intervention Program. It informs you about who we are, what we do, and what we believe in. We believe recovery is possible.

Here is what you can expect:

- The EPI Program
- Why Early Psychosis Intervention?
- How do you enter the EPI program?
- What services do we offer?
- What are our principles?





## The Early Psychosis Intervention (EPI) program

The EPI program is a family based program devoted to the treatment and support of individuals and their families experiencing a first episode of psychosis. As well as addressing individual needs, the EPI program provides education and support to the family and carers. EPI consists of a small team of mental health professionals including psychiatry, nursing and social work all dedicated towards the goals of:

- reducing the severity and duration of an episode of psychosis
- minimizing the effects of the illness on school, work, family and one's social life

Early Intervention is an international movement. Sudbury frequently communicates with a larger regional EPI network (REIP) which in turn is influenced by Early Intervention programs throughout Canada, Australia, and the UK. Amongst others, the region of Northeastern Ontario is working together to make recovery from psychosis an expected and likely reality.

It is our mission to provide the benefits of Early Intervention to the Greater Sudbury community. We strive to provide services sensitive to the needs of First Nation communities, Francophone and other ethnic and cultural groups.

# Why Early Intervention?

Psychosis changes how a person thinks and perceives the world. These changes can have a big effect on a person's life, relationships, school and career. The longer the problems go untreated, the more serious the effects will be and the more they will affect the person's future.

Early and effective medical treatment can make a big difference in how quickly a person recovers and can reduce the chances of having another episode. Here are some ways in which early identification, assessment, and treatment lead to better out-comes and a better quality of life. EPI helps to:

- Support wellness for the individual and their family
- reduce treatment delays
- hasten and improve recovery
- reduce social and economic damage
- reduce family impact and distress
- foster and maintain family and social supports
- decrease the need for hospitalization
- lower the risk of substance abuse
- lower the risk of depression and anxiety
- Lower the risk of relapse

The EPI program provides medical management, education, and continuing support to individuals as they remain within their home and community while being connected to those they love and trust. Psychosis is managed with a united effort from mental health care workers, the individual, and their family. We work with you as a team. This method helps the individual to achieve an ideal environment for reaching and maintaining recovery.

# Welcome to the EPI Team!



## **Entering the EPI program:**

You are now part of the team of carers who will work to support wellness in your young person. We will set up regular meetings with you to support you as you support your loved one.

We will also be meeting with your loved one. At these meetings, the EPI member will begin to engage with the individual and schedule several follow-up appointments. Issues such as the need for medications, healthy lifestyle choices, and education about psychosis will be discussed. During this time, the EPI staff will meet with you and your family to discuss any concerns you may be having.

After this introduction, an initial assessment will be completed with the individual and the team including our registered nurse, registered social workers, and psychiatrist. Our EPI team will work with you and your loved one to create the most effective treatment plan.

## **Treatment:**

Once the initial assessment and the treatment plan are complete, the individual and their family can begin treatment. Each treatment plan is designed to suit the needs of the individual. The individual and their family are required to be actively involved in both creating and carrying out this treatment plan.

Resources for both education and support are offered to you and your loved one, individually, as a family and at times through group work.

# What Services are Available?

EPI offers services to prepare and educate an individual and their family in order to take the mystery out of psychosis. These services help the individual throughout their recovery and are intended to address the many different types of obstacles they may face during their illness. These services also provide an opportunity for family members to learn together and strengthen the support network that is so important to recovery.

## Our Services:

- **Case Coordination:** Development of a family based individualized treatment plan will be coordinated by your EPI clinician with input from the client, family and partners, as well as other involved professionals.
- **Psychoeducation:** Psychoeducation involves teaching clients and their families about mental illness. Most families experience confusion and a lack of knowledge of psychosis. Developing a working knowledge of the illness is key. Psychoeducation supports the development of stress management and copings skills while learning to recognize the possible signs of relapse and learning how to access the mental health system in the future. It also encourages an ability to distinguish between the person and the illness and counter any prejudice that you may unknowingly possess.
- **Family Therapy:** First episode psychosis is very disruptive and distressing to families. Family work may be useful to help the family cope with the illness and will be tailored to the needs of each individual family.
- **For Carer's:** Peer to peer connections with current or past EPI families is available.
- **Addictions or Substance Overuse:** Each of our EPI clinicians are cross-trained in providing concurrent disorder treatments. At times, we may recommend a more specialized approach to managing or recovering from substance overuse by partnering with our local or provincial specialists.

- **Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT):** Is a structured psychotherapy directed toward solving current problems by modifying distorted thinking and behavior leading to reduced distress. CBT may be used to treat psychotic symptoms as well as other concerns such as depression and anxiety. Daily structured activities and schedules are highly recommended.
- **Coping Skills and Stress Management Approaches:** Stress management approaches help people to develop coping strategies and reduce vulnerability to stress-induced relapse. This treatment teaches individuals to monitor stress, recognize potential warning symptoms and modify the stressor by adjusting their environment or behaviours. Healthy living skills and activities of daily living will be addressed.
- **Group Programs:** Groups therapy specific to the needs of individuals with early psychosis and their families are available. These groups can provide peer support, education, problem-solving opportunities, and learning through discussion and observation. Group work also provides your loved one with the opportunity to take on an active social role during a time when their psychosocial functioning may be at a low.
- **Other Therapies:** Other therapies will be arranged on an individual basis as needed. These may include specialized addictions counseling to address substance use or misuse, specialized CBT for anxiety or depression, and education and work readiness training.



# The EPI Program Principles

Our program operates from a specific set of principles. These values are intended to best benefit the needs of the individual and family seeking help. Every step that we take towards recovery will reflect these principles and if you as the family feel these values are not being promoted, you have a right to question the treatment.

**The most effective route to recovery employs the right treatment, at the right time, in the right place.**

Our goal is to deliver treatment that is best suited for the individual at the earliest time possible. We believe this treatment should be in a setting that is as comfortable as possible for the individual. Hospitalization is avoided when unnecessary so that the individual may maintain their contact with their loved ones and may remain an able bodied part of their community.

**Psychosis is caused by a mixture of biological and environmental triggers. When treating psychosis, both the biological and environmental factors must be addressed.**

Any treatment plan used by the EPI program will use both medication and various other forms of therapy, such as counseling and family treatment, in order to **fully** treat psychosis. A good treatment plan will include ways in which the family and the individual can change their behavior to produce the most positive and stress-free environment possible while consistently following a medication regimen.

*Any thoughts or questions that have not been answered?*

# Your Notes

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# All About Coping

This section is about you. It informs you about some ways you can cope as an individual.

Here is what you can expect:

- Coping
- Taking Care of Yourself
- Setting Boundaries and Limits
- The Grief Response
- Coping with Grief
- Social Supports
- Stress Management



# Coping



Just as our bodies can sometimes be unpredictable, so can our minds. Psychosis makes us realize this fact. No one is ever prepared for how the many challenges of having psychosis affect a family member. This illness stirs up many emotions, most of which we are unprepared to deal with due to their unfamiliarity. This section tries to reduce this confusion.

Each individual person has their own way to cope and understand both the mental illness as well as the affected individual. Some coping techniques help us maintain our sense of self and sense of hope for our relative. Other techniques are less useful and may lead to more suffering and distress.

This section informs you about some healthy coping techniques. When you read this section it is important to keep in mind that coping is about finding a balance. Dealing with psychosis in the family does not require you to put your life on hold. In fact, coping is about maintaining your quality of life in the face of big changes. This section is about describing some of the thoughts and feelings you might experience in light of the very big and dramatic change of psychosis affecting a family member. The section also provides some information on why we feel these emotions and how best to manage them.

Though these strategies are intended for you as family members, the techniques presented in this section can help your loved one as well. *Teaching* these techniques to the recovering individual can help preserve strong social bonds. *Using* these techniques can help you maintain your well-being and set a great example for everyone who surrounds you to encourage them to do the same.



## Taking Care of Yourself

Mental illness affecting a family member brings on many challenges and stresses for the family. In order to be of help to the person you love, **you need to first take care of yourself.**

When we don't take care of our own needs, we're more likely to become irritable, short-tempered, judgmental, resentful—which can have a negative impact on the ill family member. Self-care does not equal selfish; taking care of you helps the family member you need to care for as well.

Self-care involves taking steps to preserve one's mental and physical health. Recognize when you are feeling stressed. Problem-solve ways to reduce your stress. Maintain your own life and don't let the illness consume the family.

Establishing and maintaining a social support system is a necessity. Mental illness is not something that anyone should have to deal with by themselves. Find supportive friends, co-workers, anyone you feel comfortable talking to about your family member. Talk over your problems with someone you trust. Problems are rarely solved on the first attempt. Try not to get discouraged, and if you do get discouraged don't beat yourself up over it. Try out a number of solutions until you find the ones that work for you.

Hold onto **HOPE**. Focus on the successes, no matter how small.

# Setting Boundaries and Limits

As a family, you will need to make decisions as to the extent of the support you can provide and the conditions under which you can provide that support.

The truth is that you can't force someone to seek treatment or change their behaviors, but you can set standards and boundaries for what you can and will live with when a family member has a mental illness.

When we are placed in a care-giving role, we often want to do as much as possible to help the person. In doing this, we run the risk of overextending ourselves and responding to the needs of others at the expense of our own needs. We may feel obligated to help out of guilt, sincere desire, fear of hurting the person or our own need for approval by others.

Understanding your own needs is not selfish; it is healthy.

In order to best help your family, find some time to sit down and evaluate what you and other family members can realistically do. Communicate the limits of the support you can provide and the expectations you have of your family member.

It's OK to expect basic rules of conduct and cooperation. We all require these to get along with each other. Be aware that feelings of guilt may prevent families from effectively setting limits and realistic expectations for their family member.



*Setting limits is about accepting and respecting your own feelings, and taking your own personal need seriously*

# The Grief Response

*Grief and sorrow are essential and normal.*

Grief is an essential and normal response to loss in one's life. Having a relative or friend diagnosed with a mental illness often comes with a sense of loss.

Some of these losses may be:

- Loss of normal life expectations  
e.g. an inability to work full time
- Change in family roles  
e.g. having to closely "parent" again
- Change in lifestyle  
e.g. participating in less social activities
- Loss of self esteem  
e.g. due to inability to "protect" your loved one
- Loss of identity  
e.g. due to major changes in your loved one

Although some of these losses are very real, others may be temporary while others may only reflect your worst fears. Education and support may keep perceived losses from becoming overwhelming.



# Coping with Grief

There are no simple answers to coping with such dramatic changes as those that sometimes accompany mental illness, but there are certain steps/ideas that can be helpful during this transitional stage.

- Reach out for support — to people you can trust whether they are family, friends, or local support groups.
- Be patient with yourself — the best you can do is **good enough!**
- Be good to yourself — your life is important and your quality of life matters!
- Don't let others burden you with their beliefs or expectations about the illness— don't let misinformed people make you feel guilty or ashamed
- Try journal writing to help release strong emotions and gain perspective
- Get informed about mental illness and services — through literature and with the help of your EPI clinicians
- Maintain a healthy, balanced lifestyle by exercising and eating well

Although life will be changed with mental illness, it does not end. In time, you and your loved one can return to a life that is meaningful and fulfilling.





## Social Supports

Social relationships play an influential role in promoting recovery. It is very important to keep these social networks strong as many times family members of those dealing with psychosis often become socially isolated.

A number of factors may contribute to social isolation. Many families begin avoiding people or socializing less than before their relative experienced the episode of psychosis. Sometimes these symptoms are caused by worries about prejudice that the relative and the family will face. At other times, the family may avoid reaching out to others until the “psychosis goes away.”

It is very important to try to maintain your current social relationships. No one can support the recovery of the relative from psychosis without help from someone they can trust. Cutting yourself off from others in your life is very much like cutting away resources that will preserve your own mental and physical health. So again, it is very important for you to maintain your social supports.

It is also crucial to maintain social ties with your relative dealing with psychosis. **Research has shown that individuals with large social networks tend to have fewer episodes of psychosis and hospitalizations than those with smaller social networks.** This may be because a larger social network is more likely to fulfill human needs for communication, belonging and support. Another reason why support helps in recovery is that it prevents the stress caused by loneliness and isolation.

Social support is another way in which a family can greatly increase the chances of recovery. Strong ties and close contact put you in the perfect position to identify a reoccurrence in symptoms or changes in conditions. This information can be used by your EPI team to promote recovery and well-being within the family.

The EPI team can also work with you and your loved one to help establish healthy social functioning and good communication skills.

**Take satisfaction in your efforts and your families efforts, and celebrate!**

Enjoy your successes and achievements with every step towards recovery and wellness. Congratulate yourselves- you have worked hard and deserve to feel good about your success!

Your successes could not be possible without your efforts and those of your loved one.

Along the way towards wellness, whenever you achieve a step or have made a significant effort, always take time to enjoy the satisfaction of having done so.





# Stress Management

Everyone experiences stress. Our environment continually changes and we must continually change with it. Stress is the “wear and tear” we experience while we adjust. Sometimes stress can be positive; it can provide motivation and incentive to complete the tasks that life calls for. Often times stress can have a negative influence on both our mental and physical health. Stress may cause feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, and depression. It has also been found to cause sleep and appetite disruption, headaches, upset stomach, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Due to its negative effects, managing stress is very important.

People play multiple roles throughout the day. We are simultaneously a parent, a spouse, a sibling, a friend, an employee, or a community member. Each of these roles causes some amount of stress. The goal of this section is not to eliminate all stress, but to learn how to manage it more effectively.

One good way to manage stress is to reduce your emotional response when faced with stress. This can be very difficult but the following sections give you an overview of tips and methods to help you do this.

Here is the information that you can expect to learn from this section:

- What is meant by “stress”
- How to recognize stress
- Some strategies to manage stress
- Clear Thinking and its benefits
- Reducing daily hassles
- Reducing responsibilities

Some other strategies of managing stress (for yourself and for your loved one) include regular exercise, eating well and sleeping well. More information on the benefits provided by these habits are provided in the Lifestyle section of this booklet.



# What is Stress?

Stress can be defined as a strain on your abilities to cope with demands.

Stress results from things such as:

- Many life events that result in change (for example moving to a different city or changing jobs). These can be sources of stress even when they're positive changes.
- Work and/or school can create stress by presenting challenges, difficult tasks and deadlines.
- Conflicts with friends, family, or coworkers.
- Ongoing concerns about money and housing.
- Your own thoughts—for example, by setting impossibly high standards for oneself or worrying excessively about things, you can create stress for yourself.
- Daily hassles, such as getting stuck in traffic, missing the bus, or misplacing your keys.
- Other things such as—drug abuse, poor nutrition and sleeping habits, and physical health problems.

In response to prolonged stress, the body and brain chemistry changes in a way that can result in numerous negative physical and mental responses.

Research has shown that chronic stress can increase the risk of developing depression, anxiety, other mental disorders, and physical health problems. It is important for families to know that for a person who has just experienced an episode of psychosis, stress greatly increases the risk of relapse. However, *it is equally important for all family members to reduce stress.*



## Recognizing Stress

First, you must learn to recognize stress:

Stress symptoms include many mental, social, and physical changes.

Common symptoms of stress include:

- Feelings of exhaustion and fatigue
- Irritability or anxiety
- Changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- Headaches and/or muscle tension
- Increased use of alcohol and/or drugs may also be an indication of stress
- Withdrawal and isolation

Each person's response to stress is unique. Make a note of what you experience when under stress. Be on the lookout for these symptoms. When you notice you are experiencing these symptoms, attempt to decrease your stress level by trying out one or more of the following strategies on the next page.



# Strategies for Managing Stress

## *Anticipating Stress—Managing Stress by Preparing For It*

By anticipating stress, you can prepare for it and work out how to control it when it happens.

You can do this in a number of ways:

### **Rehearsal:**

Rehearsal is a useful strategy for any upcoming event that you are worried about. An example might be a job interview or a certain social situation where you won't know anybody. Go over the event in your mind and rehearse things to say or behaviours to engage in that will prepare you for the event.

### **Problem-Solving and Planning:**

By analyzing the likely causes of stress, you will be able to plan your responses to likely forms of stress. These might be actions to lessen the stress of the situation or may be stress management techniques that you will use.

It is important that you formally plan for this—it is of little use just worrying in an undisciplined way—this will not produce results. Your EPI clinician can review the structured method of problem solving with you during one of your visits.

### **Avoidance:**

Where a situation is likely to be unpleasant, and will not produce any benefit to you, it may be one you can just avoid. However, running away from problems or making things worse by waiting should also be avoided.

Another major method of reducing stress is relaxing. Relaxing in the face of so much stress can be difficult. The following page gives you some exercises which may help you to remain calm and decrease stress.

# Relaxing



## *Relaxation—Adjusting Your Mental and Physical Response to Stress*

Through relaxation you can calm your body and mind and decrease the stress response. There are many different ways in which you can engage in relaxation:

### **Taking Time-Out:**

Allow yourself to engage in calming activities that you enjoy. Some examples include going for a leisurely walk, reading a book for pleasure, or taking a warm bath.

Find activities that are quiet and calming that you enjoy and put time aside to engage in them regularly. Allowing yourself the time to unwind can be very helpful in reducing stress and *you are entitled to this time*.

### **Progressive Muscle Relaxation:**

Progressive muscle relaxation is a physical technique for relaxing your body when your muscles feel tense and can help you reduce the feeling of stress.

The idea behind progressive muscle relaxation is that you tense up a group of muscles so that they are as tightly contracted as possible. Hold them in a state of extreme tension for a few seconds. Then relax the muscles to the previous state. Finally you consciously relax them as much as possible. You can apply this technique to any or all of the muscle groups in your body depending on whether you want to relax just a single area or your whole body.

### **Guided Imagery:**

With imagery you substitute actual experience with scenes from your imagination. Your body reacts to these imagined scenes almost as if they were real. Use the imagined place as a retreat from stress and pressure. However this is NOT a technique that is to be used for a person experiencing, or has experienced, a psychosis. If you would like to learn more about guided imagery, please speak to your EPI clinician.

**Others:** yoga, mindfulness, music, positive journaling, nature walk, carpentry, puzzles...

# All About Healthy Lifestyle

This next section informs about some beneficial ways for you to retain and improve your and your loved one's quality of life.

Here is what you can expect:

- Healthy Lifestyle
- Recreation
- Nutrition & Exercise
- Sleep Habits
- Diet and Exercise
- Sleep Habits





# Recreation

Recreation is the activities that you engage in for enjoyment. There are many different types of recreation, including sports, games, movies, hobbies, and crafts.

It's important to take time to do the things that you enjoy - this helps keep your stress level down and allows you to feel good and have fun.

Many of the different recreational activities involve being with other people doing the same thing (such as many sports). Even if the activity does not require other people, it is often more fun to engage in recreation with others who also enjoy the activity.

You may find that with certain recreational activities, you prefer to be by yourself when doing them. This can be good too because it will allow you to unwind and provides you with valuable time to yourself. Just keep in mind that it's important to maintain your family and social contacts and not become isolated.

Many family members of individuals coping with psychosis find that they have dropped many of the recreational activities they used to enjoy. If this has been your experience, you may want to try to pick up some activities that you used to do, or you may want to try something new. Schedule in time for recreation as it is an essential part of maintaining your well-being. You deserve it. The main thing is to find something that you enjoy and that you have fun doing.

Recreation is a part of life and living. It is important that as a caregiver you do not put your life on hold. This may be difficult to do at first. Give yourself time to get back into the swing of things and keep enjoying life.





## Nutrition and Exercise

The power of diet and exercise is often underestimated. Both healthy habits have the ability to increase and improve your and your loved one's physical and *mental* health. Not only will a balanced diet and regular exercise help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight, it will also help you to reduce your stress and improve the quality of your life.

Remember a good diet is not only about how much you eat, but what you eat as well. The more balanced and healthy your eating habits, the more healthy your entire body will be. A well-balanced diet will provide you with more energy and your body will be receiving all the nutrients it requires to function effectively. More information about nutrition is given in the **Canadian Food Guide**. Health Canada maintains a very good website where you can access the Food Guide and other useful information <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca>

Please note that there is also a lot of inaccurate and even harmful information about nutrition and exercise on the internet and in many magazines and books. The best place to get information is from your EPI clinician or psychiatrist, your family physician or someone who has specialized training in these areas, such as a registered dietician. These professionals can provide you with accurate information and also help you come up with an individualized plan for making changes.

When you enter the EPI program, you are greatly encouraged to adopt healthy eating habits. It may be very hard to make these changes. Healthy eating takes discipline and hard work. Again it is encouraged for you to try your best and begin as slowly as you have to. The important thing is to make that start and gradually work towards changing your eating habits.

Healthy eating takes discipline and hard work. Again it is encouraged for you to try your best and begin as slowly as you have to. The important thing is to make that start and gradually work towards changing your eating habits.



Daily exercise, from walking to more vigorous aerobic activities, is good for your physical health and the health of your loved one. Exercise releases the body's natural endorphins, which provide you with a sense of well-being and increased energy. The increased efficiency in your body will help provide you with better sleep.

Getting regular exercise is also probably one of the best physical stress reduction techniques available. Exercise not only improves your health, it also relaxes tense muscles and reduces your feelings of stress. An important thing to remember is that exercise should be fun—if you do not enjoy it, then you will probably not keep doing it. Think of new ways of getting exercise. For example, make exercise part of your recreation by playing sports or learning how to ski. It is also highly recommended to organize family activities, such as walking, swimming or hiking. In this way, exercising can be a social activity as well.

Remember you are in control of your own lifestyle and you know yourself better than anyone else. Try to make diet and exercise goals that you can reasonably do, but keep working to improve your limits. It is also important to not give up! If you fail to follow your routine for a few days or weeks, pick it back up again.

Keep trying! At the best of times, changing daily routines is difficult. Good diet and exercise plans bring many long term benefits and any steps you take towards a healthy lifestyle are steps you can be proud of. The main thing is not the size of the steps you take but the direction in which you are headed.

# Sleep Habits

Getting adequate sleep every night has a positive impact on your mood and energy throughout your days. Poor sleep habits can lead to difficulties falling asleep, a poor night's sleep or sleeping the day away.

Significant problems with sleep can lead to fatigue and mood problems.

If you have experienced problems with your mood, it is especially important for you to get adequate sleep every night and have good sleep habits.

Here are a few suggestions around how to develop good sleep habits for yourself or your family members:

- Try to keep a regular bedtime and establish a regular rising time in the morning even on weekends and other days off from work.
- Avoid coffee, cola, tea, chocolate, alcohol, and tobacco after supper
- Wind down for a period before sleep time; quiet activities such as reading or relaxing in a hot bath or shower help promote sleep
- Avoid using the bed as a place for gaming, reading, watching Netflix, doing computer work and eating.
- If sleep does not occur after 30 minutes in bed, get up and leave the room to engage in a quiet activity until sleepy again. Then return to bed.
- Avoid taking naps during the day, especially in the evening. If you must nap, do so in the early afternoon for no longer than 30 minutes.
- Try to keep the room dark, quiet and at a comfortable temperature. Make sure that your mattress and pillows are comfortable.
- Heavy exercise should be avoided after dinner because it will delay sleep. However, engaging in gentle exercise after dinner or before bed (such as a slow walk) helps to produce fatigue before sleep.

If you or your loved one have problems sleeping that are not helped by these suggestions, talk to your EPI clinician and psychiatrist. There are many available and effective treatments for significant sleep problems.



# Endnote

Recovery means living well. 'Living well' is defined differently for every individual. For most, it means having social supports and meaningful daily activities. For you it may be different. You have the right to take the time to discover what will give you quality of life. You have the right to actively pursue these goals.

Our message for you:

**KEEP HOPE and KEEP LIVING YOUR LIVES.**

Keep living your lives because you are a person of worth and your life is important too.



# Resources

## **Canada**

### **Early Psychosis Intervention Ontario Network (EPION)**

[help4psychosis.ca](http://help4psychosis.ca)

EPION provides support, information, and care for people suffering from psychosis.

### **Psychosis Supports for Parents**

[psychosissupport.com](http://psychosissupport.com)

A peer support website for families dealing with a loved one who has psychosis.

### **Get the Help Early**

[gethelpearly.ca](http://gethelpearly.ca)

This website was developed by first-episode psychosis youth and parents with the help of dedicated family members who donated their talent, expertise and experience to create a partnership-based early psychosis resource.

### **British Columbia Schizophrenia Society (BCSS)**

[bcss.org](http://bcss.org)

A number of excellent downloads are available on early psychosis intervention, schizophrenia, self-management and other topics. There is also a list of family support groups and educational programs.

### **HeretoHelp**

[heretohelp.bc.ca](http://heretohelp.bc.ca)

HeretoHelp is a website of the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information. The website has a Family Self-care and Recovery from Mental Illness workbook plus a number of other self-care resources

# Resources

## **Early Psychosis Intervention**

[earlypsychosis.ca](http://earlypsychosis.ca)

The material on this website comes from two previously existing BC-based websites concerning early psychosis - psychosissucks.ca (Fraser Health) and hopevancouver.com (Vancouver Coastal Health). A variety of resources, downloads, booklets & toolkits.

## **Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)**

[cmha.ca](http://cmha.ca)

Online resources include A Siblings Guide to Psychosis and information and brochures on a range of mental health problems.

## **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)**

[camh.ca](http://camh.ca)

CAMH has created materials to help clients and their families, professionals and the general public learn more about addiction and mental health issues. Various videos, downloads and guides on psychosis.

## **Treating Psychosis**

[treatingpsychosis.com](http://treatingpsychosis.com)

This website is for those who are living with psychosis and for friends, family members, and clinicians of those affected by psychosis. It provides helpful and up-to-date resources including videos, books and research articles, useful websites, downloadable forms, and interactive materials for both clients and clinicians alike.

## **AnxietyBC**

[anxietybc.com](http://anxietybc.com)

We provide my anxiety plans to help you understand and manage anxiety. Empower yourself by watching our educational videos, downloading the MindShift app and getting involved through Membership.

# Resources

## **Mindcheck.ca**

At mindcheck.ca you can learn more about some common mental health challenges that teens and young adults experience, determine if a problem potentially exists and get connected to resources.

## **International**

### **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)**

[nami.org](http://nami.org)

NAMI is the USA's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness. This website offers a section for families and caregivers as well.

## **Orygen**

[orygen.org.au](http://orygen.org.au)

Orygen is the national centre of excellence in youth mental health in Australia. The website has a great deal of information and resources for both practitioner and the public. It includes articles, webinars and web-based learning on the topic of psychosis.

### **International Early Psychosis Association (IEPA)**

[iepa.org.au](http://iepa.org.au)

IEPA is an international network for the study and treatment of early psychosis. Resources include publications, treatment manuals and links for clients and families (Australia).

## **Rethink Mental Illness**

[rethink.org](http://rethink.org)

British website providing expert, accredited advice and information to everyone affected by mental health problems (includes a network for siblings).  
100 factsheets available to download.

# Resources

## **Moodjuice**

[moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk](http://moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk)

Looks at several areas of caring that can contribute to problems. You may find it helpful to think about each one in turn to see if it applies to you (UK).

## **Hearing Voices Network (HVN)**

[hearing-voices.org](http://hearing-voices.org)

This website offers information, support and understanding to people who hear voices and those who support them (UK).

## **Dual Diagnosis (Concurrent Disorders)**

[dualdiagnosis.org](http://dualdiagnosis.org)

This American website focuses on information and treatment of co-occurring Substance Abuse & Mental Illnesses.

## **Addiction Guide**

[addictionguide.com](http://addictionguide.com)

Addiction Guide provides the most comprehensive information on addiction and addiction treatments (USA).

## **Manuals & Toolkits for Download**

### **How You Can Help: A Toolkit for Families**

[http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/sites/default/files/images/family\\_toolkit\\_full.pdf](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/sites/default/files/images/family_toolkit_full.pdf)

This is a resource for families supporting children, youth and adults with a mental or substance use disorder.

# Resources

## **Dealing with Psychosis**

[http://www.fraserhealth.ca/media/DWP\\_07-02-2012\\_Final.pdf](http://www.fraserhealth.ca/media/DWP_07-02-2012_Final.pdf)

[http://www.fraserhealth.ca/media/DWP\\_For%20The%20Support%20Person.pdf](http://www.fraserhealth.ca/media/DWP_For%20The%20Support%20Person.pdf)

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

## **Coping: when someone in your family has psychosis**

[http://www.earlypsychosis.ca/files/documents/02-EPI-Coping\\_Booklet.pdf](http://www.earlypsychosis.ca/files/documents/02-EPI-Coping_Booklet.pdf)

A booklet to help families understand psychosis, what to expect and what to do.

## **Spouses Handbook**

<http://www.bcsm.org/resources/topics-by-audience/family-friends/2004/05/spouses-handbook>

This booklet was published due to requests from family members who have a spouse ill with schizophrenia, for information specific to their needs.

## **Siblings Guide to Psychosis**

<http://toronto.cmha.ca/files/2012/08/ASiblingsGuideToPsychosis1.pdf>

The Canadian Mental Health Association has developed this sibling resource guide – a guide intended to provide information and support to teens and young adults who have a brother or sister experiencing psychosis

## **Family Self-Care and Recovery from Mental Illness**

<http://www.mdabc.net/sites/default/files/pdf/Family%20Manual.pdf>

This is a very popular manual that offers a wealth of practical guidance for families dealing with mental illness.

# Resources

## **Promoting Recovery from First Episode Psychosis: A Guide for Families**

[https://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/Documents/www.camh.net/About\\_CAMH/Guide\\_to\\_CAMH/Mental\\_Health\\_Programs/chizophrenia\\_Program/3936PromotingRecoveryFirstEpisodePsychosis\\_final.pdf](https://www.camh.ca/en/hospital/Documents/www.camh.net/About_CAMH/Guide_to_CAMH/Mental_Health_Programs/chizophrenia_Program/3936PromotingRecoveryFirstEpisodePsychosis_final.pdf)

This guide is written for families in the First Episode Division of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH). The idea for creating this guide grew from the ongoing input of families and other caregivers who were asking us for information and direction in caring for their loved one experiencing a first episode of psychosis.

## **Understanding, Support and Self-Care - A Resource Manual for Family Members and Caregivers**

<http://www.hongfook.ca/index.php/tutorials/publications-a-resources>

This resource manual is designed for family members, caregivers and friends of individuals with mental illness who are interested in learning about issues related to mental health and mental illness. The manual is available in Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese.

## **What You Need to Know About...Helping Children and Youth with Psychosis**

[http://www.cheo.on.ca/uploads/Mental%20Health/12807\\_Psychosis\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.cheo.on.ca/uploads/Mental%20Health/12807_Psychosis_ENG.pdf)

Fact sheet for parents and caregivers.

## **Psychosis: A Guide for Families Whanau**

<http://www.werrycentre.org.nz/sites/default/files/Psychosis%20Families%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

Fact sheet for parents with a guide for young people.

# Resources

## **Cannabis use and youth: a parent's guide**

<http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/workbook/cannabis-use-and-youth-a-parents-guide>

This guide was developed to help parents weigh the risks (and benefits) of cannabis use and put them in perspective within their individual situation. It offers an honest and thoughtful discussion on cannabis so parents can make better decisions about cannabis use—or non-use—in the context of their families.

## **Voices & Visions**

[http://www.voicecollective.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Parents-Voices-and-Visions-Booklet-2014\\_web.pdf](http://www.voicecollective.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Parents-Voices-and-Visions-Booklet-2014_web.pdf)

So your child hears voices or has other unusual experiences? Don't panic! You are not alone and neither is your child. This booklet is intended to give you some sensible and honest information about voices and visions to help you better understand what your child is experiencing.

## **Healthy Living...It's in Everyone**

<http://keltymentalhealth.ca/toolkits> Toolkit for families includes information, resources, and tools to help children and youth with mental health challenges develop healthy living habits.

# Local Resources

You can register for any of the following Family/Carer Groups offered by HSN or other local community organizations:

**Family Support Night** – peer support for family and friends of those living with mental illness. Last Tuesday of each month. 7-8:30pm. NISA/ Northern Initiative for Social Action. 36 Elgin St., 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Sudbury. Tel: 705.222.6472

**Family & Friends Education Group** – this 7 session education group offers information, skills and support to those impacted by a loved one's mental illness. Sessions are offered 3x a year, on Tuesdays from 6-7:30pm. HSN Mental Health & Addiction Programs. 127 Cedar Street, 4<sup>th</sup> floor, Sudbury. Call 705.523.4988, dial 0 and ask to register.

**Parent Support** – for parents who are experiencing problems with their adolescents or adult children associated with substance abuse. HSN Outpatient Addictions & Gambling Services. 127 Cedar Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Sudbury. Call 705-523-4988 x4211 to register.

**Significant Other Treatment Group** – This 8 session treatment group is for adults who are affected by a loved one with a substance use and/or gambling problem. 6-7:30pm. HSN Outpatient Addictions & Gambling Services. 127 Cedar Street, 2nd floor, Sudbury. Call 705-523-4988 x4211 to register.

**Schizophrenia Society of Ontario** – Sudbury Chapter holds its monthly meetings at 7pm on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month (except December, July and August). 127 Cedar Street, Sudbury. Call B. Pajunen 705.693.3067 or I. Brown 705-566-1624 for further information.

# Highly Recommended

## (by families of EPI)

### **I Am Not Sick, I Don't Need Help!**

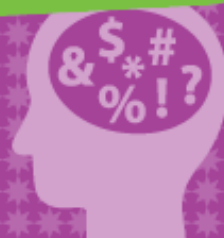
by [Xavier Amador](#) (Author)

"This book fills a tremendous void..." wrote E. Fuller Torrey, M.D., about the first edition of I AM NOT SICK, I Don't Need Help! Ten years later, it still does. In this new edition of Dr. Amador's best-selling book, 6 new chapters have been added, new research on anosognosia (lack of insight) is presented, and new advice is offered from lessons learned from thousands of LEAP seminar participants. You will learn why so many people with serious mental illness are in "denial" and refuse treatment. Whether you are a health care professional, family member, friend or law enforcement professional, you will learn how to build trust and succeed at helping someone with mental illness to accept treatment and services. I AM NOT SICK, I Don't Need Help! is a must-read guide.

Available in English and Spanish, in Paperback, ePUB AND KINDLE EDITIONS. Audio Book Also Available on AUDIBLE, ITUNES, AND KINDLE

\* Author's lectures available found on Youtube & Tedtalks

# Psychosis



## What is psychosis?

People with psychosis have problems in the way they interpret the real world. This means that psychosis may cause you to misinterpret or confuse what is going on around you. Psychosis usually affects your beliefs, thoughts, feelings and behaviour. For example, you may have hallucinations (in which you see or hear things that are not there) or delusions (false beliefs or ideas).



A first episode of psychosis is most likely to happen in late adolescence or in the early adult years. It is often frightening for you and misunderstood by others, but psychosis can be treated and most people make a full recovery. Without treatment psychosis can seriously disrupt your life and development, so it's important to get help as soon as you can.

## What are the symptoms of psychosis?

### Confused thinking:

Everyday thoughts can become confused, making sentences unclear or hard to understand. You might have difficulty concentrating, following a conversation or remembering things. Thoughts can seem to speed up or slow down.

### False beliefs (delusions):

You strongly believe something is real, but it's not. For example, you may believe the way that cars are parked outside the house means you are being watched by the police.

### Hallucinations:

You can see, hear, feel, smell or taste something that is not actually there.

### Changed feelings:

How you feel can change for no obvious reason. You might feel strange and cut off from the world, with everything moving in slow motion. Mood swings are common, and you might feel unusually excited or depressed. You may seem to feel less emotion, or show less emotion to those around you.

### Changed behaviour:

You may be extremely active or have difficulty getting the energy to do things. Your family may notice that you laugh when things don't seem funny to them or become angry or upset without any apparent cause.

## What are the types of psychosis?

Psychosis can occur for lots of reasons. Some possibilities include:



### Drug-induced psychosis:

Using or withdrawing from drugs, especially cannabis and amphetamines, can cause psychotic symptoms that last for short or long periods



### Brief reactive psychosis:

Psychotic symptoms appear suddenly after a major stress in the person's life. Recovery is often quick



### Schizophrenia:

An illness in which the symptoms have continued for at least six months. Many people with schizophrenia lead happy and fulfilling lives, and many make a full recovery



### Bipolar disorder:

Involves major changes including extreme highs and lows. People can experience psychotic symptoms as part of this disorder



### Depression:

Psychotic symptoms can occur in people with very severe depression

# Psychosis



## What causes psychosis?

There is no one 'cause' of psychosis. It is often a combination of biological, psychological, social and environmental factors. This includes your genes (inherited factors) and the things you are exposed to in your life (e.g., stress, drug use or severe social problems).



## How do I get help?

Try to seek help as soon as possible if you have symptoms of psychosis, or if things don't seem quite right. Tell someone you trust such as a parent, teacher or friend if you are having some strange experiences that you cannot explain.



Safe and effective treatment for psychosis is easily available. The earlier you seek help the better the results and the quicker your recovery. General practitioners (GPs) and clinicians at **headspace** or your local mental health centre will be able to provide the help you need.

## How is psychosis treated?

Treatments usually involve education about the illness, counselling, family support, practical support (such as helping you get back to school or work) and medications. Avoiding illegal drugs, reducing stress and learning ways to cope with stress can help you to recover and prevent the symptoms from returning in the future.

## How do I help someone cope with psychosis?

Try to be calm and supportive as it can be frightening and confusing to experience psychosis. If you are worried about a friend or family member seek help from your GP, **headspace** centre or local mental health service. Encourage the young person to get

professional treatment as early as possible. Practical help can assist a person to stay safe and feel secure. This might mean helping them to pay bills or rent, or getting them to medical appointments.



If you think someone needs immediate medical support call **000** or your local hospital or mental health service. Remember the person may be responding to things that are very real to them but do not make sense to you.

Supporting someone with psychosis can be a stressful experience for the whole family. There are support groups for family and friends so think about what help you may also need.

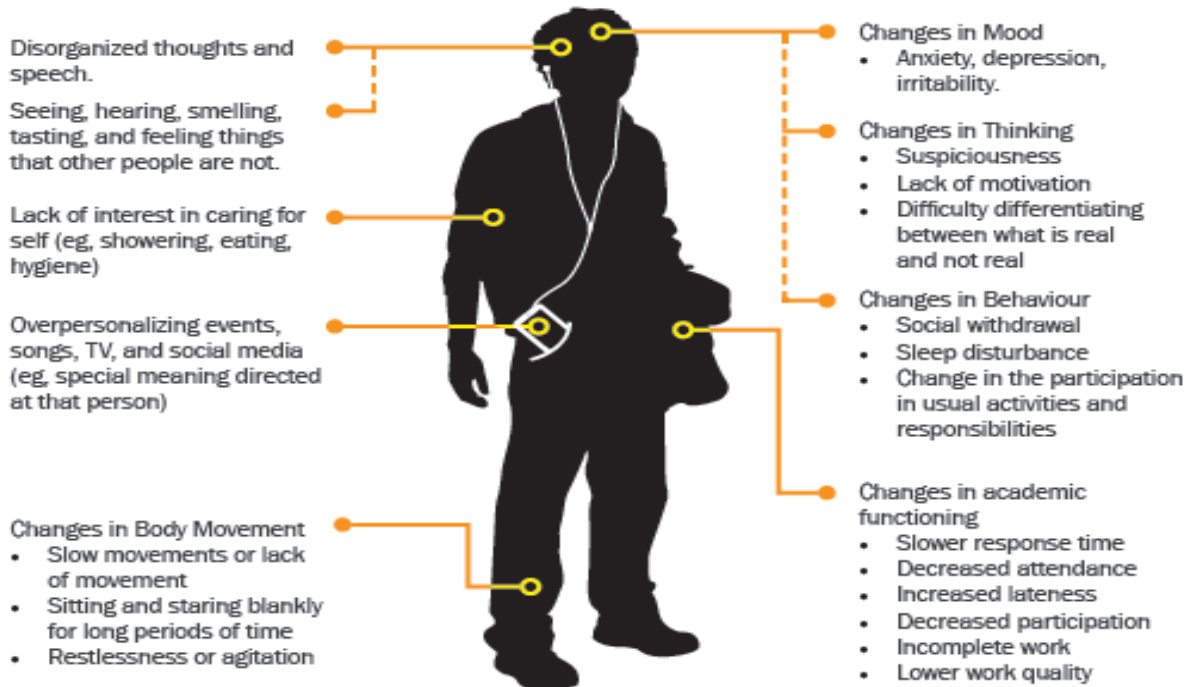



**headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

Fact sheets are for general information only. They are not intended to be and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific medical or health advice. While every effort is taken to ensure the information is accurate, **headspace** makes no representations and gives no warranties that this information is correct, current, complete, reliable or suitable for any purpose. We disclaim all responsibility and liability for any direct or indirect loss, damage, cost or expense whatsoever in the use of or reliance upon this information.

# The ANATOMY of FIRST EPISODE PSYCHOSIS



LOOK BEYOND THE SURFACE.			
If any of these are interfering or blocking what you want to do, contact your family physician or your local Early Psychosis Intervention program.			
<b>POSITIVE SYMPTOMS</b>	<b>POSITIVE SYMPTOMS:</b> Something ADDED.	<b>NEGATIVE SYMPTOMS:</b> Something MISSING.	<b>COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS:</b> Something CHANGED.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hallucinations</li> <li>• Delusions (false beliefs)</li> <li>• Disorganized thoughts and speech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apathy</li> <li>• Reduced socializing</li> <li>• Restricted facial expression</li> <li>• Change in rate of speech</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulties with attention, concentration, memory, planning, and organization</li> </ul>
<b>NEGATIVE SYMPTOMS</b>			
<b>COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS</b>			

Help is available. Go to [www.epion.ca](http://www.epion.ca) to find your local Early Psychosis Intervention Program.



The Early Psychosis Intervention Ontario Network (EPION) is a network of specialized service providers, clients, and their families. Our goal is to provide early treatment and support to all Ontarians dealing with psychosis.



# EARLY PSYCHOSIS INTERVENTION

## WHAT IS PSYCHOSIS?

The term “psychosis” describes conditions that affect the mind, causing a **loss of contact with reality** or trouble deciding what’s real and what’s not. Common symptoms of psychosis include **hallucinations**, **delusions** (false beliefs), **paranoia**, or disorganized thoughts and speech.



**Psychosis is a symptom.**  
Like a fever or a cough;  
psychosis is not a diagnosis.

### WATCH FOR



**Stress Vulnerability.**  
When stress increases, youth are more likely to experience psychosis.

**Changes in Mood**  
Anxiety, depression, irritability.

**Changes in Thinking**  
Suspiciousness, amotivation, difficulties with memory and concentration.

**Changes in Behaviour**  
Social withdrawal, sleep disturbance, decline in role functioning.

### REMEMBER

#### POSITIVE SYMPTOMS

#### NEGATIVE SYMPTOMS

#### COGNITIVE SYMPTOMS

**Look beyond the surface.**  
Positive symptoms are just the tip of the iceberg.

**Dispel Myths and Stigma**  
Stay informed, open-minded, and non-discriminating.

**It Can Happen to Anyone**  
Psychosis is most common in young adults. Most make a full recovery.

**Watch Your Language**  
Banish hurtful words like “crazy” and “psycho”.

### WHAT TO DO

To find a service, visit  
[www.epion.ca](http://www.epion.ca)



**Don't Dismiss.**  
Don't dismiss behavioural changes as a part of adolescence.

**Play it Safe**  
Take family concerns seriously!

**Make a Referral**  
When the youth and family are ready, refer to local services.

**Keep the Door Open**  
Your responsibility does not end with referral. Ongoing support is essential to recovery.

Help is available. Go to [www.epion.ca](http://www.epion.ca) to find your local Early Psychosis Intervention Program.



**EPION**  
EARLY PSYCHOSIS INTERVENTION  
ONTARIO NETWORK

The Early Psychosis Intervention Ontario Network (EPION) is a network of specialized service providers, clients, and their families. Our goal is to provide early treatment and support to all Ontarians dealing with psychosis.