

Participate in Your Own Care

While mental illness is a medical illness that requires professional care there are things individuals can do for themselves that will support and add to a formal treatment plan.

Stick to It. Time and patience is necessary in mental illness treatment. Just as the illness did not arise overnight, it will not disappear overnight. Treatment takes time and may require changes and adjustments to find the most effective solutions. It is tempting to stop when feeling a little better or stop when feeling very poorly, don't. Stay engaged, stay involved, talk to someone.

Avoid alcohol and drugs. Substances can appear to provide relief but they may actually contribute to the problem. Substances temporarily seem to relieve symptoms but in the end they will usually make them worse. Substances can also impair the ability of medications to work effectively.



Stay active. Exercise can help manage symptoms such as depression, stress and anxiety. Activity can also counteract the effects of medications that may cause weight gain.

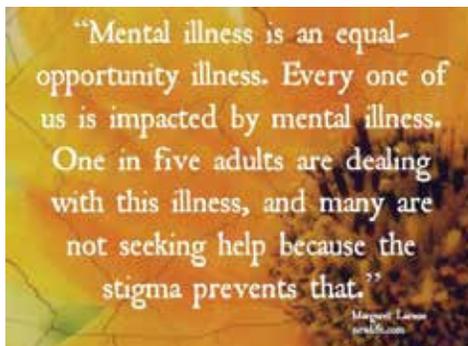
Keep a journal. Keeping track of your personal life can identify what triggers or improves symptoms. It can also be a healthy way to explore and express pain, anger, fear and other emotions.

Stay connected. Participate in social activities and get together with others. Ask for help when you need it and be upfront with others about how you are doing.



Join a support group. Connecting with others facing similar challenges may help you cope.

Find Balance. Healthy eating, getting plenty of sleep, finding ways to care for and pamper yourself are all important to good mental health. Learn skills to deal with stress, cope with challenges, and move forward for personal wellness and recovery.



Learn the Facts

For general information visit the Mental Health & Wellness Collection at the Norfolk County Public Library, Simcoe branch or visit www.ncpl.ca for books, videos and DVDs on mental illness/health, addiction and recovery.

Reviewed and recommended web sites:

www.anxietycanada.ca
www.camh.net
www.cmha.ca
www.drugandalcoholhelpline.ca
www.nedic.ca
www.mooddisorderscanada.ca
www.problemgambling.ca
www.ptsdassociation.com
www.schizophrenia.on.ca
www.suicideprevention.ca



Coping with a mental illness can be challenging. Learn about your illness and include family and support people as well. Knowledge will help those who care about you understand what you are dealing with and learn how they can help.

Pamphlet provided with support from:



For additional information or pamphlets contact:
Community Addiction and Mental Health Services

Wellness & Recovery Centre 1-877-909-4357 x2

Mental Illness TREATMENT

understanding the options



Mental illness can be treated

Asking for help is the first step
to recovery and wellness



Community Addiction and Mental Health Services of Haldimand and Norfolk

**Achieve Mental Health
Wellness & Recovery Centre**

Dedicated to the enhancement of our community through the provision of addiction and mental health services that promote and support wellness.

Early Intervention

In a Canadian mental health survey, only a third of people with feelings and symptoms of a mental illness went for professional help. The majority who had symptoms of a mental illness did **NOT** ask for help. Stigma, shame, fear, and denial, often prevent individuals or their families from seeking help and treatment. However, just as with other medical illnesses, a timely diagnosis, early intervention and treatment contribute significantly to recovery.



Myths and Facts



Myth: I just need to snap out of it, I can deal with this on my own.

Fact: Mental illnesses are real illnesses, they are more than just the ups and downs of life and like other illnesses they need to be treated.

Myth: Why bother going for help, nothing works.

Fact: There are well-researched, accepted, safe and effective therapies available for the treatment of mental illness. This includes counseling, medications, light therapy and other options.

Unfortunately, the majority of people living with depression symptoms never seek help but for those who do, 80% can be successfully treated.

Myth: It is not serious enough to require help.

Fact: Untreated mental illnesses are among the most disabling of all health problems with lost potential and productivity, reports WHO, the World Health Organization. Suicide is often linked to untreated mental illness, so mental illness must always be taken very seriously.

Fact: The first step to recovery is asking for help.

What is Treatment

Many fears that prevent individuals from seeking treatment for mental illness are based on popular media portrayals which reflect outdated images of how mental illness is treated. Visions of the treatments of the past generate fear, apprehension and avoidance in asking for help and treatment.



Historically, those living with mental illness were thought 'beyond recovery' and confined to hospital. Advances in treatment and a new understanding and acceptance that 'recovery happens' allows most treatment to take place in the community. The goal of treatment is to minimize the effects of illness (not cure or eliminate the illness) and to enable individuals to move toward recovery.

Treatment will depend on what type of mental illness an individual has and the severity of the illness. Often, a combination of treatments will provide the best results.

Treatment of mental illness takes time and patience. Different options may need to be explored before the right option is found and results are not immediate.

 Medication, for example, may take 4 - 6 weeks before any significant improvement. Sticking with a treatment plan and giving it time to work is essential.

There are many people who may be involved in providing care for an individual. In addition to the individual, a 'treatment team' may consist of a family doctor, psychiatrist, nurse, social worker, addiction counselor, pharmacist, family members, and peers. The right team will reflect the needs of the individual. New team members may be added or team members may leave as a person's illness or needs change or as they advance in their recovery.



Treatment Options

Medications do not cure mental illness however they can often significantly improve symptoms. Psychiatric medications can also help make other treatments, such as psychotherapy, more effective. Some of the most commonly used classes of medications include:

- Antidepressants
- Anti-anxiety medications
- Mood-stabilizing medications
- Antipsychotic medications



Each class of medications has many options. Selecting the appropriate one will depend on symptoms, medication history, tolerance and response. Those with the same diagnosis may have very different medication needs and responses. If bothersome side effects occur individuals should talk to their doctor before making any changes. Skipping medications could result in an increase of symptoms or having withdrawal like symptoms.

Psycho therapy, talk therapy, involves talking about your illness and related issues with a mental health provider. The focus is to learn about your illness and moods, feelings, thoughts and behavior. The insights and knowledge gained support new coping and stress management skills. There are many types of psychotherapy, each with its own approach to improving mental well-being. It can take place one-on-one, in a group or with family members.

Hospitalization on a mental health unit at a general hospital or in a specialized mental health facility may be required if an individual has severe symptoms, is a danger to themselves or is not responding or having difficulty / side effects with treatment.

Treatment Works . . . Ask For Help