

Understanding Mental Health Episodes

Worksheet

Use this worksheet to take control of your recovery journey. By preparing when you are feeling well, you may be able reduce the possibility of an episode. Share this with your treatment team and support network and create an episode plan together.

Monitoring Symptoms

Sometimes, your regular symptoms may become more severe, increase in frequency, or last longer. This can be the beginning of an episode.

Which symptoms get stronger and more difficult to ignore when I am experiencing an episode?

Ask yourself these questions:

What symptoms do I have more often than usual when experiencing an episode?

What symptoms last longer than usual when I am experiencing an episode?

Recognizing Early Signs of an Episode

Many episodes occur gradually, beginning with changes in behavior called **warning signs**. By learning to recognize your warning signs, you can get help early and avoid a more serious setback.

If you notice any warning signs of an episode or any changes in your symptoms, talk to your doctor and treatment team right away.

Check off signs that you have experienced before an episode:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Too much or too little sleep | <input type="checkbox"/> Stopping medication or not taking it regularly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling tense, nervous, hostile | <input type="checkbox"/> Social withdrawal or isolation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Increase in paranoia, hallucinations, hearing voices, or risk-taking behaviors (spending money, using alcohol/drugs) | <input type="checkbox"/> False beliefs or delusions (people are against you, overconfident in your abilities) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Confusing or nonsensical speech | <input type="checkbox"/> Change in personal hygiene |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

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Identifying Triggers

Triggers are situations or behaviors that can lead to episodes and are different for everyone. A common cause of an episode is stopping medication; however, episodes can happen even when a person is taking their medication as prescribed.

Life events, like losing a family member, can be stressful. But it is important to know that other life events—like getting a new job or starting a new relationship—can also be stressful.



Check the situations that may be triggers for you:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Moving to a new apartment/house | <input type="checkbox"/> Having money problems |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Starting a new job or relationship | <input type="checkbox"/> Using drugs and alcohol |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being fired from a job | <input type="checkbox"/> Having an illness or death in the family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being invited to a party | <input type="checkbox"/> Fighting with a friend or family member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stopping medication altogether | <input type="checkbox"/> Being bored during the day |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Having difficulty taking medication as prescribed | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Steps to Help Reduce the Risk of Episodes

During periods of stress or change, you may stop doing things that help you stay healthy. Make a list of activities that help you stay well.



Check the activities that can help you stay healthy:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Find activities that reduce stress (listening to music, breathing exercises, meditation) | <input type="checkbox"/> Use supportive treatments and services (psychotherapy or peer counseling) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to appointments regularly | <input type="checkbox"/> Get support from family, friends, or treatment team |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be involved in making decisions about medications and supportive treatments | <input type="checkbox"/> Eat healthy and nutritious food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take medication regularly as prescribed | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise (walking, gym, yoga) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |