

An Overview of TREATMENT OPTIONS

Being diagnosed with a serious mental illness (SMI) can be overwhelming. This is true for both the person who receives the diagnosis and for those who love them. Fortunately, there are many treatment options to consider when it comes to effectively managing SMI.

There is no “one size fits all” approach. It’s important to understand some of the basics on the various treatment options that you may have. That’s helpful as you work with your treatment team on the best plan to help you manage symptoms and meet your recovery goals. This is called a person-centered treatment plan – and it’s important that you are involved in forming it.¹

PSYCHOTHERAPY



This is also known as "talk therapy."

During psychotherapy, you speak with a trained therapist typically over several sessions. You work to better understand your feelings and behaviors and learn new coping abilities.

One example of psychotherapy is called **cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)**.² CBT focuses on how negative thoughts can affect feelings and behaviors. During CBT, a therapist works with you to find better ways to think about tough situations and how to manage them.

When you improve thought patterns and learn new ways to cope, it can often improve many of the symptoms you may experience.

PSYCHOEDUCATION



This involves specific sessions to educate you about mental health issues.

This supported learning can take place in a group or one-on-one and can include family members as well. It helps you:



learn more about your diagnosis



better understand your symptoms



find solutions for recovery and your relationships with others



offers many options for support and education that you can explore

SUPPORT GROUPS



These groups can be led by a therapist or a peer.

Peer-led groups include a trained leader who also has experience with mental illness and recovery. They are a valuable way to:



reduce feelings of isolation



talk with others about similar experiences



share ideas for coping and recovery



discover new resources in the community

PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATIONS



Medications are often a part of an effective treatment plan.

They help the brain chemicals that regulate emotions and thought patterns. Medication can be a vital part of living well with SMI. It's important to keep in mind that:

- ✓ **It may take some time to find the ideal medication and dosage.** Make sure that you communicate openly about how it's working with your psychiatrist and treatment team.
- ✓ **Medications are usually more effective when combined with psychotherapy.³**
- ✓ **As the medication reduces symptoms, other areas of treatment can become more beneficial.** For example, a medication can ease symptoms of depression. This may allow you to better engage in psychotherapy.³
- ✓ **It's important that you maintain the dose and schedule for your medications as your doctor prescribes it.** This ensures that the medication has time to begin working and helps you monitor how your symptoms respond.
- ✓ **There are also long-acting injectable medications (LAIs) that you may find more convenient.** LAIs may allow for lower dosages due to their ability to maintain steadier levels of medication.⁴

It's also important to keep track of how you are feeling. And you should make a consistent effort to take care of your overall health. When you do these things, it helps you on your journey to find the best outcomes.

OTHER SUPPORTIVE, EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES



These are some of the other options that are commonly included in treatment plans:

- ✓ **Assertive Community Treatment (ACT)** offers clinical and support services in a community-based setting, such as your home. This team approach can include a case manager, nurse, psychiatrist, and peer support. ACT can reduce the need for hospitalization and improve quality of life and social functioning.⁵
- ✓ **Supported Employment** helps people join the workforce with the support they need to find and maintain a job.⁶ Your interests and strengths are matched with work opportunities and you can receive help with questions or concerns along the way. Supported employment can also sometimes offer additional skills and training.

- ✓ **Clubhouses** are community centers that allow people to work with staff on peer-driven programs that teach new skills, continue education, or offer social activities. This can be helpful to add to your treatment plan.⁷

COMPLEMENTARY HEALTH APPROACHES



Traditional treatments often do not fully relieve symptoms of SMI.

That's why many people turn to complementary health approaches to help with recovery. These options may be useful when added to other treatments. They can include:⁸⁻¹¹



improved diet and nutrition



yoga, meditation, or other forms of exercise, which research shows has positive effects on depression¹²



improved sleep habits, which can improve symptoms

ECT, TMS, AND OTHER BRAIN STIMULATION THERAPIES



These may be suggested by your psychiatrist if other treatment methods are not effective.

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) or transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) are therapies that stimulate the brain with electricity or magnets. They are provided in a safe, medical setting.

These forms of therapy may seem intimidating at first. However, data show that brain stimulation is effective.¹³ Your treatment team can provide clear information and answer all of your questions about these options.



Make sure you engage with your treatment team as they work to create your treatment plan. Discuss a range of options and ask any questions you have. Shared decision-making promotes good conversations that support recovery and focuses on the care that's best for you. Your path to recovery can include many options that make it possible to manage symptoms, feel better, and live well with SMI.

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