



The Lounge - Food For Thought

Keeping Yourself Well After Mental Health Problems

So you have been unwell – where to now?

Sometimes it can feel like you are walking around with a tattoo on your forehead saying “mental illness” but this is not true.

So whether you have experienced depression, psychosis, body image issues or anxiety it is important to try not to be afraid of getting back into your life. However keep in mind that it will take time. How long depends on you and the support you find. So what can you do now to keep well?

There are many things that you may need to do. They include being aware of extra stresses, being careful about drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, keeping safe, taking medication, relaxing, trying to have a healthy diet, exercise and setting some goals.

Often there are a number of situations or factors that may have been involved in this mental health problem.

By learning what trigger factors may have caused your condition, you can help to reduce the risk of a relapse. These can be different for each person but some common ones are:

- Events that are stressful – death of a family member or friend, parents divorcing, relationship break-ups, moving, unemployment, exams
- Places that could be stressful – school, work, home, travelling, Centrelink
- The way you deal with stressful situations – avoiding, suppressing or ignoring stressful issues, bottling things up and having everything catching up with you or blowing your cool
- A chemical imbalance in the brain which may be natural, caused through use of drugs and alcohol or a combination of these
- Genes that are common in your family, though it does not mean that everyone in your family will develop an illness
- The people you hang out with – daily hassles with friends and family
- Money problems

Stress can build up without you noticing, so learning to recognise how stress affects you is important. If you are getting stressed out, take time to relax and identify what is stressing you out.

Can you make any changes? Do you need some assistance? Remember there is help available through family, friends and various services.

Taking a walk, reading a book, having a bath or listening to some music are a few good ways to take your mind off things. You may need to learn how to relax. There are many techniques – meditation, yoga, Tai Chi and muscle relaxation are some that might require some practice.

Playing sport, going for a run, swim or ride are more physical ways to relax.

Some helpful ways to stay well are:

- Being aware of your trigger factors
- Knowing your early warning signs
- Getting help when needed and being able to talk to your health worker/doctor
- If needed find a medication that works for you (there are many). If you need to change it or have any issues with it, consult your doctor
- Setting goals that are realistic and rewarding yourself when completed
- Not isolating yourself, keep in touch with supportive friends and family
- Being good to yourself with a balanced lifestyle (diet, sleep, exercise etc.)
- Identify the things you like, your strengths and hold a positive view of the future
- Talking with those close to you, you don't have to go through it alone

Experiencing mental health problems can be a time in your life that is confusing and scary. Try to learn to take control of your problems and not let the condition control you. Although your life might have changed, it will still be rewarding. In fact, you may make changes that take you in a better direction than before, even if it was not what you had planned.

This information was found at Headroom - <http://www.headroom.net.au/lounge>
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