

Getting Better

recovering from mental illness



Feeling better after an episode of mental illness is more likely if you know where to go and what treatment and support you are entitled to. This Factsheet gives a summary of what sort of services are available to help you do this.

Where can you go and what kind of clinical treatment will help recovery?

General Practitioner

It helps to see a GP (preferably the same one) on a regular basis. This way you can get to know each other, discuss ongoing issues and be referred to appropriate community and specialist services as necessary. With psychiatrist support, a GP can monitor medication and other treatments. GPs may provide psychological treatments such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy or refer to a psychologist who can.

Psychiatrist

A psychiatrist can discuss current or ongoing issues of concern, give information about mental illness and its treatment, monitor medication and refer to community services.

Community Mental Health Service

If you are in the public system, ask about getting a case manager. Case managers can coordinate clinical and psychosocial treatments, provide information, education and support to the whole family, as well as referral to community agencies.

Hospitals

People rarely go to hospital unless they are very unwell and when they do it is usually for a short time (about 2-3 weeks). If help is needed urgently, call your psychiatrist or case manager (or a crisis assessment team after work hours) and they can arrange for assessment and hospitalisation if necessary.

Consumer consultants

Many services have consumer consultants who offer support and advice. They may work on a hospital psychiatric ward or be attached to a community mental health service. Your doctor or case manager can put you in touch.

What other kinds of treatment and support are available?

Day Programs

Run by community support agencies, day programs are usually based around a range of recreational activities (such as walking, writing, meditation) or special groups (such as young peoples' group, women's group, cultural/language groups). They often run structured programs where you can learn new skills to help you get back on your feet again, while meeting others in a similar situation. Your local community mental health service or council should be able to direct you to your nearest day program.

Mutual Support Groups

Mutual Support Groups provide a place to meet with others in a similar situation or with similar illnesses, to exchange ideas and discuss common issues in a relaxed, non-judgmental environment. Your local community mental health service or council should be able to direct you to your nearest group.

Financial Assistance

People seriously affected by mental illnesses are usually entitled to financial assistance (such as a disability pension or sickness allowance). To find out if you are entitled contact the Disability Support Worker at your local Centrelink.

Employment

Specialist employment agencies are available to help people affected by psychiatric and other disabilities return to work. For assessment and referral to one of these, contact the Disability Support Worker at your local Centrelink.

Accommodation

There are many different types of accommodation available which range in the level of support provided. To find out more about accommodation options, contact your local community mental health service or council.

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sane

Factsheet

What help is available for family and friends?

Carer Support Agencies

There are a number of organisations set up specifically to help carers, providing support, information and education.

Contact the SANE Helpline on 1800 18 SANE (7263) or at www.sane.org for details.

Financial Assistance

Carers may be eligible for a Carer pension. To find out more, contact the Disability Support Worker at your local Centrelink.

Respite

Carers Australia, Richmond Fellowship and other community agencies have programs for carers wanting a short or long period of respite.

Contact the SANE Helpline on 1800 18 SANE (7263) or at www.sane.org for details.

How can I expect people to behave towards me?

General community

If you feel that you are being discriminated against by anyone because you have a mental illness, call the Disability Discrimination Line in your State or Territory for advice.

Health Professionals

Professionals have the responsibility to treat people with dignity and respect in all situations. If you feel that you are not getting the respect that you deserve, contact the coordinator of the service or the Health Commissioner in your State or Territory.

Media

Journalists, TV and radio presenters can write or say things that are inaccurate or are offensive to people with mental illness.

You can help fight this by making a report to the SANE Stigmawatch program at www.sane.org as well as by complaining directly yourself – see the *SANE Guide to Fighting Stigma* for tips about this.

How do I find out more?

It is important to ask your doctor about any concerns you have.

SANE Australia also produces a range of easy-to-read publications and multimedia resources on mental illness.

For more information about this topic see:

- *The SANE Guide to Medication and other Treatments*
Explains how all the different aspects of treatment work, by looking at clinical care, medication, support in the community and helping yourself.
- *SANE Guide for Consumers*
Provides practical suggestions on ways you can look after yourself, explains what words like 'diagnosis' and 'treatment' actually mean and describes how treatment and medication can help you.
- *The SANE Guide for Families*
Explains how to better handle common issues associated with being a carer such as developing a positive attitude, looking after yourself and getting the help you are entitled to.
- *The SANE Guide to Planning Ahead*
Written for carers to help plan for the future, so that the person you care for can start to live as independently as possible, and develop a network of support for the years ahead.
- *The SANE Guide to Healthy Living*
Explains the benefits of being physically healthy, gives tips on how to started becoming healthier and overcome obstacles as well as giving suggestions on finding support to help stay healthy.
- *SANE Guide to Staying Alive*
Provides practical step-by-step hints and advice for consumers, carers and health professionals on dealing with suicidal thoughts and behaviour.

Use the Order Form which came with this Factsheet or visit the SANE Bookshop at www.sane.org