

# Symptom Management

Mood disorders have many symptoms. When your symptoms become constant, they can interfere with your enjoyment of life, make you feel stressed, and increase your risk of relapse. The information below can help you recognize your symptoms. In this way, you can understand your illness and learn how to improve your coping skills for managing your symptoms.

## Have you experienced any of these symptoms?

<p><b>Thinking Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> racing thoughts</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> slowed thinking</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> memory issues</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> difficulty concentrating</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> difficulty paying attention</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mood Symptoms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> sadness</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> hopelessness</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> anxiety</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> anger/irritability</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> sleep issues</li> </ul>	<p><b>Negative Symptoms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> lack of energy</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> lack of interest</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> lack of pleasure</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> lack of expressiveness</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> social withdrawal</li> </ul>
<p><b>Addiction &amp; Recovery Challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> alcohol use</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> drug use</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> other addiction related behavior</li> </ul>	<p><b>Psychotic Symptoms</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> hallucinations (false perceptions such as hearing voices others don't hear)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> delusions (beliefs held despite contradictory evidence)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> unusual or excessive behavior</li> </ul>	

**After identifying your symptoms,** use the information below to consider ways of coping with each type of symptom.

### How can I manage **Thinking Challenges**?

- Ask yourself: *“Do I function better in a noisy or a quiet environment?”* If necessary, try to limit noise from TV or phone.

- In conversation, ask people to slow down or repeat what was said.
- When communicating, summarize the plan to make sure you are clear.
- Make a daily list with small goals.
- Focus on one task at a time.
- Take regular breaks.
- Break large tasks into smaller activities.
- Plan tasks around your best time of day.
- Take your medications as prescribed.
- Other ideas:

### How can I manage **Mood Symptoms**?

- Practice mindfulness of thoughts and feelings.
- Practice relaxation strategies often.
- Identify triggers that often make you feel anxious or angry.
- Recognize early signs of anxiety, irritability, or anger.
- Practice strategies for staying calm when you are feeling reactive.
- Set small goals for the day, for the morning, or even for the next hour.
- Plan something pleasant to do each day.
- Give yourself credit for even small accomplishments.
- Talk to a supportive person about how you are feeling.
- Schedule an activity with a friend.
- Start using sleep hygiene strategies such as having a consistent sleep schedule, avoiding caffeine after 4 PM, daily exercise, adding relaxing bedtime activities, and reducing daytime naps.
- Other ideas:

### How can I manage **Negative Symptoms**?

- Create and follow a daily schedule.
- Identify simple activities or hobbies you used to enjoy.

- Spend at least 5 minutes on a pleasant activity; try to gradually increase this time.
- Try a visualization exercise related to that activity.
- Look at photos from a time when you felt enjoyment from some activity.
- Make a daily goal that involves leaving your room or living space.
- Participate in an activity such as walking or riding an exercise bike.
- Schedule contact with someone every day.
- Schedule an activity with a supportive person.
- Consider volunteer work or jobs that involve contact with other people.
- Do an errand that will take you to a public place around people.
- Join a support group.
- Do some journaling about what is on your mind.
- Share how you feel or what you think to decrease misunderstandings. Use “I” statements.
- Other ideas:

### How can I manage **Psychotic Symptoms**?

- Discuss your beliefs or perceptions with someone you trust.
- If your beliefs, thoughts, or perceptions are upsetting, try a distraction such as music or walking.
- Use affirmations and positive self-talk.
- Use relaxation strategies such as slow deep breathing, a warm shower, or soft music.
- Talk to your doctor if you decide to take action based on your belief (for example, if you take action to defend yourself based on a belief, you or someone else could suffer an injury).
- Contact your doctor or emergency medical services if you might hurt yourself or others based on what the voices tell you to do.
- Other ideas:

## How can I manage **Addiction and Recovery Challenges?**

- Discuss or write about the advantages and disadvantages of using drugs or alcohol.
- Write or discuss the realistic and actual effects that addictions have had on your life. Have you lost a job or lost friends? Have you had legal problems?
- Identify healthy activities that can give you the positive effect you are seeking when using substances or participating in another addictive behavior.
- Learn about the negative effects of using drugs or alcohol, such as worsening depression.
- Join a self-help group such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or Dual Recovery Anonymous.

## Where can I find support and educational resources?

- Michigan Medicine Depression Center Toolkit:  
<http://www.depressioncenter.org/health-information/depression-toolkit/>
- *Mindfulness Matters: Living in the Moment Can Improve Your Health*. From the Michigan Medicine Patient Education Clearinghouse:  
<http://www.med.umich.edu/1libr/InternalMedicine/Mindfulness.pdf>
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI): <http://www.nami.org>

## References

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2010). *Illness Management and Recovery Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) Kit*. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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