

Shared Decision Making *in Mental Health*



TIPS

*Tips For People Who Use
Mental Health Services*

Taking Charge of Your Recovery

This tip sheet offers ways to take charge of decisions about your mental health treatment and services. You have the right to make these decisions. It is your life and your recovery.



Shared decision making pairs full information and decision making tools with respectful two-way conversation between a person and his or her service provider.

The following 4 tips can help you take charge and get the mental health treatment and services you want.

1 *Play an Active Role in Decisions.*

Shared decision making is about having collaborative and satisfying conversations with providers about your treatment and service options. The word “shared” means that you and a provider share information and consider options, but final decisions about treatment, services, and supports are yours to make.

To be more active in decision making, you can:

- **PREPARE** for appointments. You may want to make a list of your concerns and questions to take with you. When you see a doctor, consider taking with you a list of current medications and any supplements, herbs or roots you use.
- **TELL** the provider what is most important to you. For example, you could say, “**I want to go back to school but I am concerned my medications will make it hard to concentrate. I want to talk to you about options.**”
- **LISTEN** to what the provider has to say. He or she may have ideas or information that will help you.
- **ASK** for explanations or more information. Be certain you understand your options and what is being recommended. Ask questions until you are clear about what you have heard.
- **REMEMBER** what was said. Some people find it helpful to write down what the provider says or to make a tape recording. Others like having someone with them when they talk to a provider.
- **TALK** with the provider about where you agree and where you disagree. See if you can find options that fit your preferences and meet the goals of your recovery plan.

2

Use Tools to Help Make Decisions.

Tools can help you make decisions that are right for you. They can help you prepare for a meeting, clarify your values, remember your questions, get information, and explore options. You can find the tools described below and others at <http://store.samhsa.gov>.

- One tool you may find useful is a decision aid that allows you to compare common antipsychotic medications used to treat mental health conditions. It also helps you consider other kinds of services and recovery activities that can support your recovery.
 - Another tool is a step-by-step workbook called *What Is Right for Me? Making Important Decisions in Everyday Life*. You can use it any time you face a decision that is difficult to make.
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Talk about Decisions with Others.

Some people may not agree with a decision you have made. This can be stressful, especially if your decision goes against what is important to your family or community. You do not need to defend your decision. However, you may find it helpful to explain how you arrived at it. You might say, “I would like to share with you a difficult decision I made. Your support is important to me, even if you disagree with what I decided to do.”

4

Explore Many Approaches to Recovery.

Most people who use mental health services find that many practices support their recovery. These include such things as diet and exercise, yoga, massage, and peer support.

If you use these practices in addition to traditional treatment, they are called “complementary.” If you use them instead of traditional treatment, they are called “alternative.” You can get more information about these practices from The National Center on Complementary and Alternative Medicine at <http://nccam.nih.gov>.

Learn More about Shared Decision Making.

This Tip Sheet is part of a series of materials developed by the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to help make shared decision making a routine part of mental health services. You can find more information and resources for shared decision making at <http://store.samhsa.gov>.

The materials available at this web site include:

- Videos and archived webinars about shared decision making,
 - An interactive decision aid about antipsychotic medications,
 - Step-by-step decision support workbooks,
 - Cool Tools and worksheets,
 - Brochures and informational issue briefs, including one expanding on shared decision making from a service user perspective.
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Other Resources

- The Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center's Center for Shared Decision Making has many resources at <http://www.dhmc.org>.
 - The Ottawa Health Research Institute has a library of decision aids, including some for mental health issues. Find it at <http://www.ohri.ca/home.asp>.
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This publication may be downloaded or ordered at <http://store.samhsa.gov>. Or, please call SAMHSA at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) (English and Español).

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