

Success with Mental Health

Chapter 2: Living with Mental Health Condition(s)

There are a lot of people that have mental illness and they're able to live the life they want. This includes doctors, attorneys, mechanics, business people, cab drivers and celebrities to name a few. If mental health affects you or your loved one, life can be good but with some extra work it can be even better. Life will be just different but it'll just take some planning for when depression/anxiety symptoms cause problems. This is when a treatment plan is necessary.

Having a plan changes everything. This works in almost every part of life. There should be a plan of what needs to be done when symptoms occur. Symptoms can come on suddenly or may be gradual and that's why it's very important to know what to do ahead of time. It's very difficult to figure what to do when symptoms make it harder to think so having a plan will be a lifeline to find the right type of help that's necessary.. If you or a loved one is affected by mental illness the following information is critical to living the best life possible. **There are 4 major parts of controlling mental illness:**

1. **Know yourself or your loved one**
2. **Have a good support system (family, friends, therapist)**
3. **Get the right type of help early on**
4. **Have and follow a treatment plan**

Know yourself or learn about a loved one dealing with mental health:

This is very easily overlooked but an important part of a person or loved one to remember about mental illness. The person is separate from the condition. Have a mental illness isn't very different in living with other types of long-term health issues such as heart disease, lupus, stroke, arthritis among others.

A lot of times when someone is sick, the condition takes over then it can feel like the person is the condition! A person that has a mental health condition doesn't have a choice in being mentally ill. It's not their fault they're having symptoms but sometimes people that don't deal with mental health don't think about this at all. If mental illness is a part of your or your loved one's life, always remember it's never your fault.

There is still a lot of stigma about people who have mental health issues such as that person is acting out, being lazy, irresponsible or not being intelligent. This thinking could be due to lack of knowledge, ignorance, fear or other issues. There is still more education and treatment necessary so people with mental health conditions can be more accepted members of society at a greater level.

Anyone can be diagnosed with a mental illness at any time!

Know your Symptoms

Recognizing the Early Signs

Signs/symptoms can vary a lot from person to person. Knowing and dealing with symptoms early on goes a long way in dealing with depression/anxiety and other mental health conditions. This helps in controlling mental disorders to a better degree which is priceless. It can help prevent some major problems such as more mental stress, possibly more medication(s), missed time off work, feeling tired or being isolated at home most of the time. Self-awareness when dealing with mental health will save you/loved ones over and over again

Severity of Symptoms

It's not always easy to figure out if symptoms are mild, moderate or severe. It's harder to know this especially when the type of symptoms can vary but the following is a guideline. Ask the mental health provider their idea of what is considered mild, moderate and severe.

Mild symptoms: when symptoms don't or barely interfere with life. Even though, the mental condition(s) is there, it's not hard to deal with or manage life.

Moderate symptoms: when symptoms start to interfere with life such as work, school, relationships and responsibilities among other plans.

Severe symptoms: this is when symptoms prevent what is needed to be done most days of the week, if not every day. This may include not being able to get out of bed, hygiene problems, not being able to take care of pets/children and not able to go to school/work.

When dealing with mental health conditions over a long time, symptoms will vary from mild, moderate to severe but the main goal is to keep them as mild as possible

Symptoms: 3-to-Treat-1 Rule

Mental health conditions can come with many types of symptoms. The symptoms can be psychological, physical or both. It's important to start managing these symptoms early so that way you or your loved one can live a life with minimal problems caused by mental health.

One symptom: 3 actions

When there are symptoms and it depends on how bad it affects life, there will possibly be 3 actions needed to control it. Three things may be needed to treat 1 symptom. For instance, when dealing with depression and a symptom is hopelessness. There might be several things that need to be done to control this 1 symptom. This can include the following: go out to a movie/ trip with family or friends, talk with a therapist/ crisis line and taking a day off school or work. Or, it could include a combination of other actions. The actions would change depending on the person and what has worked for that person in the past.

Another example for the 3-to-1 rule would be having an anxiety attack. This could be a 3-action solution such as the following: doing deep breathing several times a day, taking a "as needed"

medication asap when you feel symptoms are starting to get worse and calling the health care provider for advice and/or an appointment.

It would be a good idea to write down the 3-part actions for certain symptoms and put it where you/loved one can easily have access and follow it. Put it on a calendar, cell phone, journal or tablet/computer. This way there is always a plan in place. Doing the 3-for-1 symptom treatment might reduce bigger problems such as worsened symptoms including being admitted into hospital. Fill out or print the following page to see how well it can work!

Symptom Checker



Symptom:

Actions: list 3 or more things you will do to control it

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



Symptom:

Actions: list 3 or more things you will do to control it

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

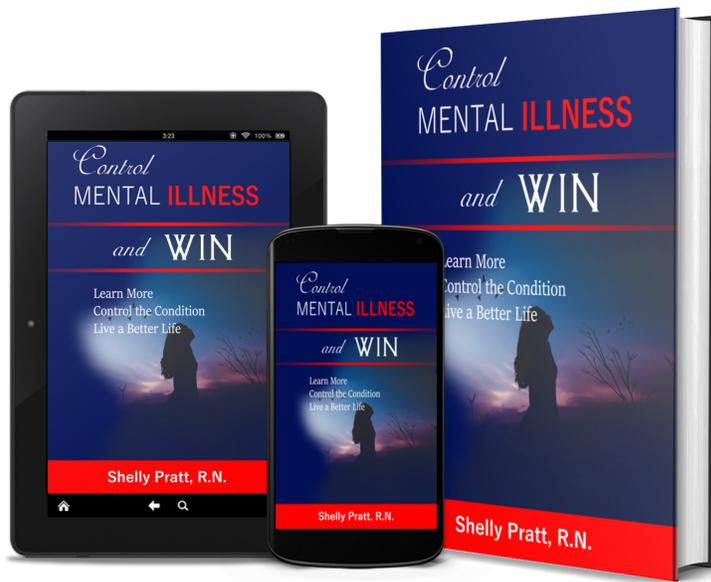


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