

# Persistent *Symptoms*

Some individuals with early psychosis continue to experience symptoms of psychosis even after they have been on medication for a while. If this is your experience, it may be that adjustments to your medication are needed or that these symptoms are slower to respond to treatment.

Open communication with your EPI Clinician and Psychiatrist is extremely important. If they do not know that you are still experience symptoms, they will be limited in how much they can help. If they know about these ongoing symptoms, they can adjust your treatment and also work with you to help you find effective strategies to manage these symptoms.

It is especially important to let your EPI Clinician and Psychiatrist know if you begin to experience an increase in these symptoms in case this is a warning sign of relapse. Prompt initiation of treatment can help to prevent a relapse from occurring.

If you are experiencing persistent symptoms, ask yourself the following questions:

### ***Are there things that help me cope with these symptoms?***

- Determine if these are good or bad coping strategies.
- Good strategies are those that don't have any short or long-term risks (most of the stress management strategies are good coping strategies).

- Bad strategies are those that have either short or long-term risks (an example of a bad strategy would be doing street drugs – although this may help you cope with current symptoms - it significantly increases the risk of relapse).
- If you aren't certain whether your current coping strategies are good or bad, talk with your EPI Clinician about them.

### ***Are there certain things or situations that tend to make these symptoms worse?***

- Consider whether there are certain tasks, activities, places or people that are associated with an increase your symptoms.

Understanding these symptoms can guide you in controlling them by:

- Increasing your use of good coping strategies that work
- Decreasing your exposure to situations that make your symptoms worse

Many people who have persistent symptoms of psychosis have reported that there are things they can do to help reduce these symptoms or help them cope. Many people with early psychosis find that stress increases symptoms. Often stress management strategies can be helpful in decreasing persistent symptoms or by making these symptoms easier to cope with.

In addition to stress management strategies, here are some

strategies that others with persistent psychotic symptoms have found useful.

- Either increasing (going for a walk or exercising) or decreasing (relaxing) level of activity may help with hallucinations or feelings of disorganization.
- Changing posture (sitting down or lying down) helps some people with hallucinations.
- Distracting oneself with some other activity (reading, watching television or listening to music) may help with hallucinations or delusions.
- Using organization strategies or memory aids for problems with disorganized thoughts or memory difficulties.
- Changing auditory input by using earplugs, listening to music through headphones, humming, or talking with other people may be helpful for auditory hallucinations.
- Engaging in reality testing (asking trusted others about thoughts or perceptions to determine whether or not they experience them as well) may be helpful for hallucinations or delusions.

These are just some of the possible strategies that might help you deal with any ongoing symptoms. Every individual is unique in terms of what is the best way to manage persistent symptoms. So it's best to try out a range of different strategies to find ways that work well for you.