

Persistent Symptoms

Getting Control Over Mental Health Problems

Medication and other treatments provided by your EPI Team are all designed to help you have better control over your mental health problems. In addition to these treatments, many people find that there are other things that they can do to get better control over their mental health problems.

- This booklet outlines five different methods you can try to control your mental health problems.
- You can try these methods will all kinds of different mental health problems - hearing voices, being distressed by thoughts, feeling sad or anxious, etc.
- Don't be disappointed if one method doesn't work. It just might not be the right strategy for you but stick with it for a while to give it a chance.
- Move on to another method after you've worked with one for a while.

With some time and some effort the chances are good that you will find ways of managing your mental health problems that work well for you.

Distracting yourself

- Trying to ignore the mental health problem is helpful for some people.
- When the mental health problem gets worse, start watching TV, listening to music, reading a magazine or talking to a friend on the phone.
- Try different methods of distracting yourself. What is the effect on the mental health problem?
- You can use the table below to track your own findings. The first row is filled in with an example.

Method of distracting myself	Effect on mental health problem
Called my best friend Sam	I no longer had the feeling that somebody was watching me.

Engaging in physical activity

- Some people find becoming more physically active can help with the mental health problem.
- When your mental health problems get worse, try engaging in some form of activity such as exercising in the gym or going for a jog or a walk.
- Try to include activities that you do outside the house versus inside the house; alone or with other people.
- You can use the table below to track your own findings. The first row is filled in with an example.

Type of physical activity	Effect on mental health problem
Went to the gym to work out	I didn't feel as sad or anxious

Relaxing

- Relaxation helps a number of people cope with their mental health problems.
- Do something that you find relaxing. This could involve taking time out (such as taking a hot bath), engaging in imagery exercises or progressive muscle relaxation.
- A number of relaxation methods may have already been reviewed with you by your EPI Clinician – if not, ask him or her about these methods for relaxation.
- You can use the table below to track your own findings. The first row is filled in with an example.

Type of relaxation	Effect on mental health problem
Listened to a relaxation CD	My voices were still the same but I felt less upset by them

Positive Thinking

- Negative thoughts can make mental health problems worse. If you can challenge these negative thoughts through positive thinking then you may notice an improvement in your mental health problems.
- Track what thoughts you have when your mental health problems get worse. Then think about what might have been a more positive way to think. The next time you have these negative thoughts, try to remind yourself about these more positive ways of thinking.
- Challenging your thinking can be very difficult to do on your own. It is a good idea to have a trusted other who you can discuss your thoughts with. They may be able to help you look at things in different ways and reassure you that these positive thoughts are more accurate.
- You can use the table below to track your own findings. The first row is filled in with an example.

Mental Health Problem	Negative thoughts you had at the time	A more positive way to think
Example: Hearing voices that are saying bad things about me	Example: They're right I am a bad person	Example: These voices are not real and what they are saying is not true

Get Creative

- Be as creative as you can in finding ways to control your mental health problems. Start to devise your own methods to see what works for you.
- For example, some creative ways of controlling mental health problems that have worked for people who hear voices include humming, wearing an earplug in one ear or wearing headphones.
- You can use the table below to track your own findings. The first row is filled in with an example.

Creative method for managing mental health problems	Effect on mental health
Humming a tune	The voices are still there but are less loud and less powerful