



RECOVERY

TOOLS FOR

Dealing with Negative Symptoms

What are “negative symptoms?”

Negative symptoms happen with some mental illness like schizophrenia. Negative symptoms are different than positive symptoms. Positive symptoms are symptoms outside the range of what is called “normal.” Positive symptoms include delusions or hallucinations. Negative symptoms, on the other hand, affect how a person functions. Negative symptoms include:

- Apathy (not caring about anything),
- Lack of emotions
- Low energy
- Lack of interest
- Social isolation
- Lack of facial expressions
- Not being able to focus on what is going on around you

Negative symptoms can be just as disabling as hearing voices or having delusions. Medications help a little with the negative symptoms, but taking an active role in your recovery is also important. Here are a few tips to tackle negative symptoms:

Just for Today: Live one day at a time. Focus on now. Don’t try to contemplate the rest of your life. If your waking hours are spent recalling the past, or anticipating the future, you are throwing away life’s most precious gift —TODAY.

Don’t Waste Energy Talking about your goals. Act! Set a plan to help you reach your goals. Keep the plan handy and refer to it often.

Do not dream the impossible— Set your goals high, but know also, what your limitations are. Work hard every day to achieve your goals.

Have a daily routine and a predictable schedule—Make a list of what you want to accomplish each day. This lets you experience success as you check off each goal. It lets you anticipate stress and minimize surprises. Having control over your environment is important because your brain may not always be predictable.

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Learn to manage stress—Learn to recognize when you are getting stressed and remember how you coped with stress in the past. Use your coping skills on a day to day basis.

Take care of yourself—

- Bathe or shower regularly. A clean body gives you self confidence.
- Eat a healthy diet
- Get dressed even if you have no specific place to go.
- Get out of the house. Go outside, even if it is for short walks.

Just for Today, stretch your mind—Learn something new. Pick up a magazine or a newspaper and read a little. If you have more energy, take up a hobby such as art, photography or playing a musical instrument.

Boredom has not place in your life. Learning keeps you excited, stimulated and interested. It also makes you more interesting so it is easier for you to make friends.

Help someone else— Extend yourself and help another person without expecting thanks or credit.

Know how your are feeling and talk about your feelings with people who care about you. Do this before anger and resentment build up. No one can read your mind. Take responsibility for your own emotional health.

Community Mental Health Centers

Pikes Peak MHC
719-572-6330

Spanish Peaks MHC
719-545-2746

San Luis Valley MHC
719-589-3671

Southeast Mental Health Services
719-384-5446

West Central MHC
719-275-2351

Southwest Colorado MHC
970-259-2162

Midwestern MHC
970-249-9694

Colorado West MHC
970-945-2241

Colorado Health Networks believes that people can and do recovery from mental illness. That is why we created *Recovery Techniques*. *Recovery Techniques* is a series of tip sheets that are written by and for consumers about issues, opportunities and obstacles people face in their recovery from mental illness. Other tip sheets in the series "*Managing your Illness*" include "*Coping Skills, General Mental Illness information & Relapse Prevention*". These tip sheets are available through your mental health center or by calling the access to Care line at 1-800-804-5040.