

Getting Help Toolkit

What to expect when getting help

There are many support options available to your loved one. Effective treatments can involve counselling, medication, or a combination of both. Counselling involves talking about your thoughts and feelings to understand what led to the problems you are experiencing. A counsellor works with you to develop coping strategies and this usually involves learning new skills.



Tips about getting help for the first time

Ask your loved one to think of a set of questions to ask a mental health professional to help your loved one select the right person for them. For example:

- Do they have experience in helping people with the same or similar issues?
- Can they clearly describe how they can help your loved one with the issue that is affecting them?
- Can they explain how the treatment works, how long it will last and what your loved one can expect to happen during treatment?
- Do they understand why your loved one is seeking help?

Find out about best practice treatments

It is important to know that your loved one will be getting the best and most up-to-date treatments available when they seek help from a professional.

- For information on the best treatments for PTSD go to: <https://www.phoenixaustralia.org/australian-guidelines-for-ptsd/>.
- For information around depression go to: <https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/depression/treatment/>.
- For information on effective drug and alcohol treatment go to: <https://www.phoenixaustralia.org/your-recovery/effects-of-trauma-alcohol-substance-use/>.

Get medication right, if applicable

Prescribing medication and getting the dose level right can be a process of trial and error. Encourage your loved one to discuss any concerns about side effects



with their doctor and remind them it is not a good idea to stop taking medication without talking to the doctor first.

Recovery is possible

People who develop mental health issues can and do get better, but every pathway to recovery looks different.

Some people recover with the help of families and friends, while other people need professional help. Recovery usually involves ups and downs.

Find out more about the different ways people recover and how to empower your loved one to seek help.

Give it time - trust the process

Recovery takes time but a good practitioner will help your loved one set goals and let them know how long treatment will go on for. Be patient and persevere, which can be difficult when impacted by mental health symptoms.

Your loved one may not see immediate effects but over time progress can be made.

Your contribution to recovery

You can assist and support your loved one, but you are not responsible for their recovery.

When your loved one is having mental health difficulties you can feel caught up in their struggles. It is important to remember that you can play a supporting role but ultimately, they are responsible for their own recovery.

It can take time to get used to getting treatment or accessing counselling for mental health issues. You can help your loved one by doing a few simple things.

- Acknowledge that opening up can be difficult - In their work your loved ones are rarely encouraged to be vulnerable. Revealing their emotional side can be confronting and 'scary'.
- Review and adjust the treatment approach if treatment isn't working - Although it is important to encourage your loved one to persevere with getting help, sometimes they may not be getting the right treatment or be working with the right professional. Sit down with your loved one and encourage them to talk to their counsellor or doctor about what is not working.
- Challenging and changing family interactions - As your loved one learns to do things differently and improves during treatment, your family interactions and routines may change. Be prepared for adjustments to the way you and your family function as your loved one goes through the counselling process.

