

# Healing while living

## 1. Evaluating progress

Area	Patient status on admission [satisfactory / not satisfactory]	On a scale of 1 to 4 please rate your treatment progress			
		1 Improved Greatly	2 Improved	3 Unchanged	4 Worsened
Symptoms	satisfactory / not satisfactory				
Mood	satisfactory / not satisfactory				
Ability to handle daily life/ General functioning	satisfactory / not satisfactory				
Family life	satisfactory / not satisfactory				
Social life	satisfactory / not satisfactory				
Resources	satisfactory / not satisfactory				
Outlook	satisfactory / not satisfactory				

## 2. General tips for recovering

**2.1 Recovery is a process:** This means that it will take time before you will reach a stage where you will feel mentally strong again. Imagine an athlete recovering from an injury. It will take time and hard work to recover.

Take baby steps. At first, you should ease yourself into familiar activities and have modest expectations. Predict that when you return to activities such as socializing and going to work, you will probably feel anxious. Be patient with yourself and remember it will take time but soon your life will return to normal.

**2.2 Set up different activities:** Start off by making a list of 'must do activities', this is basics such as getting up at a certain time or taking a shower.

## Activity Chart







Day: \_\_\_\_\_

Activities	Did I do the activity?		Rate your activities Mastery refers to a sense of accomplishment. 0 = none 5 = highest level
	Yes	No	

**2.3 Practice staying in a routine.** Routine is a huge part of staying well. By doing things the same each day you are creating a habit that will last a lifetime. You can also rate your sense of accomplishment of the activities.

**2.4 Keep a Journal.** Keep a recovery journal. Write down thoughts, ideas, dreams, mood cycles, triggers, appointments, art, poetry or anything else you can put in your journal. Take it with you to therapy, discuss things that bother you, journaling can be freeing. A journal helps keep life in balance, it can help you remember things in detail when the roller coaster is plummeting out of control. Writing down lessons learned will help you remember them and see how you have changed and progressed at a later date.

### Questions you can explore in your journal:

-  What are my strengths?
-  What are my weaknesses?
-  What are my goals?
-  How can I use my strengths to reach my goals?
-  What holds me back from achieving my goals?
-  What other areas of my life do I want to approve?

**2.5 Keep a mood chart: Give an update on your mood, energy levels and thoughts.**

**2.6 Set Medication Reminders.** Set medication reminders to ensure you remember to take your medicine as directed. Your condition can affect your memory. There is a program at [www.MyMedSchedulePlus.com](http://www.MyMedSchedulePlus.com). This program offers written medication schedules, including pictures of your pills, special instructions and dietary considerations, and refill reminders. You can receive a text message reminding you to take your meds. You can also ask someone to manage your medication for you.

**2.7 Relapse Prevention Plan.** Make a list of things to maintain good mental health. Here is an example:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>My Relapse Prevention Plan</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. My mental health diagnosis is: _____</li><li>2. Three symptoms I experience with my illness are:</li><li>3. Stressful events that endangered my mental health and put me in crisis:</li><li>4. What can I do to avoid stressful events in the future:</li><li>5. Current stressors in my life are:</li><li>6. Three ways that I can do to reduce my stress are:</li><li>7. Three of my positive qualities are:</li> <li>8. Supportive friends/family member that I call on a regular basis: Name: Phone number: Name: Phone number:</li> <li>9. A daily community/leisure/healing activity I will engage in is:</li><li>10. An activity I will definitely avoid is:</li><li>11. Three steps I will take to prevent relapse:</li><li>12. If I begin to relapse:</li></ol>
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**2.8 Exercise** increases the endorphins (feel good chemicals) in your brain. For those people that can't get a "good, hard workout", any exercise will do such as gardening or cleaning your house.

**2.9 Master your triggers.** When you learn to identify your triggers, you are able to manage your mood cycles when they begin instead of after they have already started. Knowing what triggers your mood can be an effective tool toward successful recovery.

**2.10 Take a shower every day.** Start the day clean and fresh. Hygiene is the last thing on your mind when you are depressed, but pull yourself to the shower, and you will feel better for doing it.

**2.11 Have hobbies.** Having a hobby gives you something you enjoy doing. Like taking pictures, or writing, watching movies, playing sports, swimming, or creating art are all great hobbies to choose from.

**2.12 Become knowledgeable about the illness and treatment options.** Read as much as you can about your diagnosis and treatment; if there is something you do not understand, ask your mental health professionals.

**2.13 Stay away from alcohol** because it will counteract the working of the medicine. Alcohol in general is bad for any person experiencing mood or anxiety disorders.

**2.15 If you start to feel depressed again** contact your psychiatrist or therapists immediately. Early intervention may help to prevent or minimize the severity of another depressive episode.

**2.16 Think about establishing an emergency plan** with your family, partner or a friend just in case you begin to feel unwell again. This plan will include knowing who will notify your doctor and take you to appointments, who will notify your work, or look after your children, and who will ensure your rent and bills are paid should you need to be hospitalized. You may feel less anxious about the future if you know that a back-up plan exists.

**2.17 Improve your life skills**

Choose skills that you have learned in the hospital or elsewhere and make appoint of integrating them into your life.

Skill Chart

Instructions: Circle the days you worked on each skill

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Skills	Days						
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun



**3. CATERGORIZING MENTAL HEALTH IN ZONES**

We are going through different zones in our lives. We can identify red, orange and green zone. There exist risk factors that throw us into the red and orange zone.

**3.1 Red Zone**



When you relapse you will be in the red zone. Relapse is the term to describe an increase in unhelpful thinking and behaviours after a period of experiencing improved mental health.

Ending up in the red zone can bring back those old risks such as starting to use substances again, self-mutilation, suicide attempts, having anger outbursts and domestic violence incidents taking place. You will experience that “on the edge feeling”. You will recognize that you feel vulnerable and might feel depressed, irritable, you struggle to relax and to sleep, feeling distant from others, feeling unloved, you might feel trapped, having thoughts of running away and you might have the urge or thoughts to break things or to hurt yourself.

### 3.2 Orange Zone

In the orange zone your life is not peaceful. You have stressors to deal with such as financial problems, court cases, relationship problems, traumatic incidents, illness or you have to adapt to new circumstances. You try to cope and to stay strong. You use your own strengths, life skills and support from friends, families and professionals. It depends how well you use these if you are going to go into the green zone or the red zone.

### 3.3 Green Zone

In the green zone you feel happy and at peace. You enjoy your life, feel confident and good about yourself. You take good decisions and you do not make your life complicated.

## 4. The Zone Questionnaire

The Zone Questionnaire can help you to monitor your mental health by helping you to identify risk and protective factors in your life and to categorize whether you in a red, orange or green zone.

**Mark and count the following symptoms that apply to you:**

### 4.1 RED ZONE FACTORS

**In the past two weeks did you experience any of the following risk factors or symptoms?**

	Not at all (0)	Some days (1)	Nearly every day (2)
1. High levels of irritability and aggression?			
2. Substance abuse?			
3. Feeling down and depressed?			
4. The urge or thoughts to break things or to hurt yourself?			
5. Thinking of committing suicide?			
6. Did you hurt yourself?			
7. Excessive and personally offensive sarcasm and rudeness that can damage interpersonal relationships?			
8. Hating yourself?			
9. You felt so good or so hyper that other people said you were not your normal self?			
10. Disinhibited behaviour such as uncharacteristic sexual behaviour (promiscuity, unprotected sex, socially inappropriate propositions, exhibitionism) or other socially inappropriate behaviour?			
11. Feeling like giving up?			
12. Prominent thoughts of guilt or self-blame?			

13. Being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual?			
14. Emotionally downloading on Facebook, Instagram, twitter, WhatsApp or emails?			
15. Feeling trapped?			
16. Having thoughts of running away or to relocate?			
17. Impulsive behaviour?			
18. Your mind wanders off and you create a false reality for yourself?			
19. Anger outbursts?			
20. Isolating yourself from others?			

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ (1) + \_\_\_\_\_ (2) = Total: \_\_\_\_\_ ÷ 2 = \_\_\_\_\_



### Tips for when you end up in the red zone

- Acknowledge that you properly have chemical imbalances and that you are irrational and self-destructive.
- Do not take any impulsive decisions that you can later regret.
- Manage suicidal thoughts - thinking of suicide must indicate a red flag meaning that you are severely depressed and need to protect yourself from yourself. Phone your psychiatrist and your therapists. Surround yourself with friends and family and ask for support. How you feel now will not be the same as how you will feel tomorrow or next week. Our thoughts are influenced by our brain chemistry and hormones. This means that our thoughts constantly change. Just because you think of doing something doesn't mean you have to do it. Remind yourself that all problems and emotional states are only temporary. Tell yourself 'This too will pass'. Think of times when you felt happy and remind yourself that you will reach a stage where you will feel happy and in control again.
- Stop your mind from wandering off, where you create a false reality.
- Do not hurt yourself or others.
- Do not break things.
- Do not speak hurtful words to others or to yourself.
- Remove yourself temporarily by going to hospital or spend a day with a friend you can trust and who will help you to get peace back in your life.
- Take your children to spend a day with a family member or friend you can trust.
- Do fun activities with your family.
- Phone your professional team.
- Do damage control such as saying sorry and show that you still love your family.
- Forgive yourself.
- Do not use alcohol or overdose on tranquilizers – it will create a bigger chemical imbalance.
- Exercise
- Stay away from emotionally downloading on social media.

## 4.2 ORANGE ZONE FACTORS

**In the two past weeks did you experience any of the following risk factors or symptoms?**

	Yes	No
1. Poor self-care, including inadequate diet, poor hygiene?		
2. Financial difficulties?		
3. Exposure to traumatic events or bereavement?		
4. Relationship problems?		
5. Struggle to relax and to sleep?		
6. Feeling distant from others?		
7. Feeling unloved?		
8. Physical illness?		
9. Having to adapt to new circumstances?		
10. You try to cope and to stay strong?		
11. Not setting good boundaries?		
12. Stuck in thoughts of the past?		
13. You do not have a good support structure?		
14. Boredom?		
15. Feeling anxious?		
16. Poor adherence to medical treatments, not taking medication or attending therapy?		
17. Not exercising?		
18. Struggling to organize tasks?		
19. Feeling tired?		
20. Mood changes?		

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ (Yes)

### Tips for when you are in the orange zone

- Handle difficult situations and times:
  - Remember that life is full of ups and downs.
  - See the difficult times as a challenge and an opportunity to grow.
  - Refuse negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones e.g. “It’s going to be okay, just hang in there” and “Don’t give up”.
  - Put things in perspective.
  - Admit you are vulnerable now, but things will get better again.
  - Give things time.
  - Search for the positive side.
  - Learn lessons to be learned.
  - Take one step at a time and one situation at a time.
  - Look for the good things in your life and make a point of appreciating them.
  - Solve the problems that are solvable – use problem solving techniques.
- You cannot avoid stress, but you may learn to cope better by learning to set boundaries and to say “NO” without damaging relationships and your self-respect.

Try to develop a well-balanced life with enough time for work, family and friends, and leisure activities.

- Make a decision that you want to become an overcomer and not a victim. You need to make a decision that you will not allow the trauma to come and steal your life, your dreams, your relationships and your happiness from you.
- Plan how you are going to keep yourself emotionally healthy.
- Focus on your strengths to overcome the trauma or difficult situation.
- Build a support network.
- A healthy lifestyle is important: proper nutrition, exercise and good sleeping habits.
- Use skills and strategies to enhance your mood.
- Structure your day.
- Stick to your goals.
- Do not dwell on negative past events.
- Stay away from drugs and alcohol.
- Treat physical illnesses.
- Pay attention to activities that help to stabilize or improve how you are feeling, and incorporate these into your everyday activities. For example, if walking your dog or going to gym, make sure these are part of your structured routines.
- Keep a Happy Memory Book.

#### 4.3 GREEN ZONE FACTORS

**In the past two weeks did you experience any of the following protective factors?**

	Yes	No
1. Feeling happy and at peace?		
2. Feel confident and good about yourself?		
3. You make good decisions and you do not make your life complicated?		
4. You enjoy your life?		
5. You see the good in yourself and others?		
6. You feel grateful?		
7. You live in the present and do not dwell on the past?		
8. You manage to forgive yourself and others?		
9. You have good energy levels?		
10. You maintain good relationships?		
11. You do fun activities?		
12. Setting boundaries?		
13. Living a balanced lifestyle?		
14. Good time management?		
15. Experiencing a stable mood?		
16. Thinking positive thoughts?		
17. Adhere to therapy and medication prescriptions?		
18. Managing your household and work well?		
19. Eat healthy?		
20. Exercising?		

Total: \_\_\_\_\_ (Yes)

#### Tips on how to stay in the green zone

- Choose to be happy.



- Control your thoughts. An American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson, said, “A man is what he thinks all day long.” By constantly dwelling on thoughts of fear, worry, anger, hate, and failure, you will become depressed and unhappy. Your life is what your thoughts make of it.
- When you open your eyes in the morning, say positive things towards yourself.
- Keep a Gratitude Journal. Give thanks for all your blessings several times a day.
- You must sincerely desire happiness and take ownership of it.
- Live in a relaxed and calm manner.
- Manage your appetite, get a good night’s sleep, and manage stress and pain.
- Stop bad habits that have a negative impact on your life.
- Set boundaries with yourself, others and at the workplace. To get things in balance means to be conscious of the way you are distributing your time, attention, energy and enthusiasm.
- Avoid impulse decisions. Ask yourself; do I want this or do I need this? Sometimes you may have to ask yourself what matters the most. Generally, in making choices, one activity is given more importance than another.