

Shared Decision Making *in Mental Health*



TIPS

*For Mental Health
Service Providers*

Using Shared Decision Making in Your Practice

This tip sheet offers ways to integrate shared decision making into your practice, as well as sources for tools and additional information.



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Shared decision making pairs full information and decision making tools with respectful two-way conversation between a person and his or her service provider.

The following 6 tips can help you involve individuals in decision making about their treatment and services.

1 *Support the person's right to make decisions.*

People have the right to make—and take responsibility for—their personal and treatment decisions. Ask them what type of help would be useful in their decision making process, such as emotional support or practical information. Ensure that full, objective, and understandable information is available. Cultural values and beliefs may affect whether the person prefers a more or less active role in decision making.

2 *Reframe everyday activities as opportunities for decision making.*

Ask, “What do you think your options are?” rather than “I suggest...” Many decisions depend heavily on an individual's personal preferences, goals, and cultural values and beliefs. Acknowledge that some decisions can be difficult to make, and give people the time and support they need to make their decisions.

3 *Help the person generate options.*

There is almost always more than one option. Brainstorming is an effective way to create a list of options. Encourage creativity; any idea is a good idea when brainstorming. Suggest “watchful waiting” as an option since immediate action is not always the best choice. To help without taking over the process, ask for permission before presenting your opinions.

4 *Discuss benefits and risks of all options.*

Tools like decisional balance scales and charts can help the person think about his or her options. One of the simplest is to list all of the options on a sheet of paper and then write the pros and cons of each option. “What are the person’s priorities? Identifying these priorities can help the person decide which option best reflects what is important to him or her.

5 *Use decision making tools.*

Tools can help a person clarify values, get information, explore options, and foster meaningful discussion with providers. You can find the tools described below and others at: <http://store.samhsa.gov>.

SAMHSA has created an interactive decision aid that allows individuals to compare antipsychotic medications used to treat mental health conditions. It also helps them consider services and a variety of wellness activities as part of an overall recovery plan.

Also available are a series of 1-page, downloadable “cool tools” that includes worksheets, a medication side effect checklist, questions to ask about recommended medications, and conversation starters.

Another tool is a step-by-step general decision making workbook called, *What Is Right for Me? Making Important Decisions in Everyday Life*, which is designed for individuals to use alone or with support. A companion workbook titled, *Supporting Choice: Helping Someone Make an Important Decision*, is designed to help a supporter guide a person through the process of making a difficult decision.

6 *Check on how a decision turned out.*

Decision making is often an ongoing process and circumstances can change. You can check with the person about how a decision turned out and help him or her make another decision, if needed. When a decision did not work out as hoped, focus on what was learned and the opportunity to consider options again with this new information. Remind the person that this is part of the process of decision making.

Learn More about Shared Decision Making

This Tip Sheet is part of a series of materials developed by the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to help make shared decision making a routine part of mental health services. You can find more information and resources for shared decision making at <http://store.samhsa.gov>.

The materials available at this web site include:

- Videos and archived webinars about shared decision making,
 - An interactive decision aid about antipsychotic medications,
 - Step-by-step decision support workbooks,
 - Cool Tools and worksheets,
 - Brochures and informational issue briefs, including one expanding on shared decision making in practice.
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Here are some other resources you may find helpful.

- Journals that publish articles about shared decision making in health and mental health include Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal (<http://www.bu.edu/cpr/prj>), Psychiatric Services (<http://psychservices.psychiatryonline.org>), and Patient Education and Counseling (<http://www.pec-journal.com>).
 - The Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center's Center for Shared Decision Making features a wealth of resources at <http://www.dhmc.org>. Included are a glossary of terms and links to online resources about shared decision making.
 - The Ottawa Health Research Institute (OHRI) offers a free online tutorial on skills for providing decision support. The tutorial is self-paced and includes a downloadable PDF of the course material for offline reading. See <http://decisionaid.ohri.ca>.
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This publication may be downloaded or ordered at <http://store.samhsa.gov>. Or, please call SAMHSA at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) (English and Español).

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