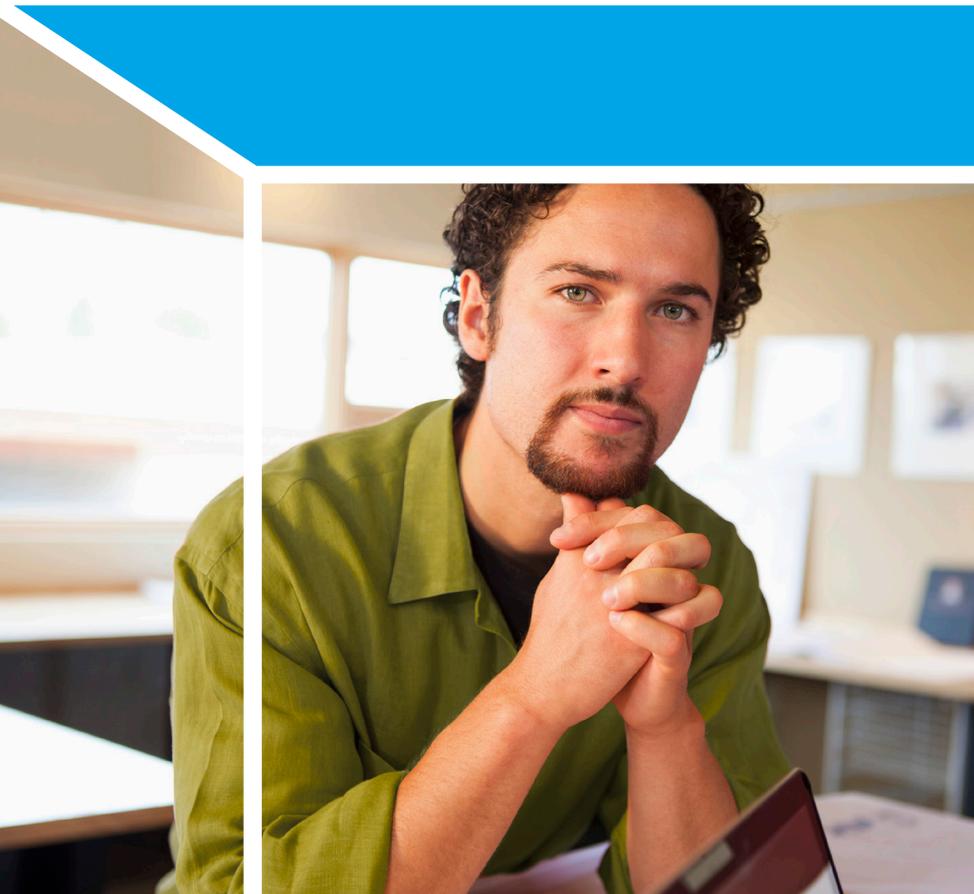




Working Together to Support Adherence in Mental Health



## Talking With Patients About Setting Goals to Support Wellness

**A Resource  
for Providers**

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# Talking With Patients About Setting Goals to Support Wellness



Learning how to set and working toward personal goals is an important part of your patients' mental health wellness. Goal setting may help patients focus on their daily lives as well as what they'd like to achieve in the future.<sup>2</sup>

Setting goals with patients is one way to keep them engaged in their treatment choices and plan.<sup>3</sup> Increased engagement may help patients remain more adherent to the treatment plan.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, patients may not always feel like coming to their appointments.<sup>5</sup> Talk to patients about the importance of keeping appointments and encourage other engagement strategies such as bringing loved ones or friends to appointments.<sup>5</sup>

Patients managing a mental health condition may recognize setting and pursuing goals are important to recovery. Nonetheless, mental health conditions can make this difficult at times. As their health care provider, you can offer patients support and guidance when setting wellness goals.<sup>2</sup>

## Considerations to Share with Patients for Setting and Pursuing Goals

**In order to help make goal setting more manageable, encourage patients to<sup>2</sup>:**

- Break large goals down into smaller ones
- Start with short-term goals that are simpler and more likely to be achieved
- Focus on one goal at a time
- Not be discouraged if it takes longer than planned to accomplish a goal
- Try other strategies if their first attempt to achieve a goal does not work
- Get support
- Stay positive

**As a mental health care provider, it is important that you help increase patients' confidence about setting and pursuing wellness goals.<sup>2</sup>**

## Tips to engage patients in a dialogue setting personal wellness goals

Before talking about goals, you may want to ask more about patients' lives, such as<sup>2</sup>:

- Where do you live? Do you like where you're living?
- With whom do you spend time? Is there anyone you would like to spend more or less time with?
- What is a typical day like for you?
- Do you currently work or volunteer?
- Is there anything you would rather be doing?

You may also consider discussing what patients' goals were before their condition presented by asking<sup>2</sup>:

- When you were younger, what did you imagine yourself doing when you grew up?
- What types of things did you used to enjoy doing?
- How far did you go in school? Did you want to go further?

Answers to questions like these may help you gain insight into and stimulate discussion around your patients' preferences, hopes, and interests. For example, if your patient tells you she was a high school athlete and enjoys sports, you could explore whether she might be interested in volunteering as a coach or pursuing a job at a sporting goods store.



## Questions to help your patient identify wellness goals<sup>2</sup>

- What kind of hobbies, sports, or activities make you happy or would you like to participate in?
- What kind of living situation would you like?
- What 2 areas of your life are you dissatisfied with and would like to improve?
- What do you do with your friends?
- Would you like to change your financial situation?

Engagement strategies can  
help support patient care.

**References:** **1.** US Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA's working definition of recovery: 10 guiding principles of recovery. <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/PEP12-RECDEF/PEP12-RECDEF.pdf>. Accessed October 17, 2017. **2.** US Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Illness Management and Recovery: Practitioner Guides and Handouts. Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, US Department of Health and Human Services; 2009. **3.** National Alliance on Mental Illness. Engagement: A New Standard for Mental Health. Arlington, VA: National Alliance on Mental Illness; 2016. **4.** Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Innovations in Practice Shared Decision Making in Mental Health. SMA 10-1121. Washington, DC; US Department of Health and Human Services; 2010. **5.** Mental Health America. "What is bipolar disorder?" A guide to hope and recovery for African Americans. <https://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/what-bipolar-disorder-guide-hope-and-recovery-african-americans>. Published 2017. Accessed December 8, 2017.