

New Farm Clinic

Relapse Prevention Guide

Discharge Planning & Community Support Brochure



RAMSAY MENTAL HEALTH

NEW FARM
CLINIC

What is a Relapse?

Relapse is the term used to describe an increase in unhelpful thinking and behaviours after a period of feeling improved or after experiencing better mental health. A relapse can involve difficulties coping with day to day activities, increased symptoms of your illness or when previous symptoms reoccur.

People can experience one or more relapses of their illness. These relapses are exacerbations of their existing illness and may or may not require hospitalisation.

It is important to recognise that these reactions are a normal part of the recovery phase. Remember that recovery is a process, ease yourself into familiar activities and have modest expectations. New Farm Clinic staff can assist you to plan a strategy for discharge, recovery and relapse prevention.

What is Relapse Prevention?

Prior to a relapse, people will often experience changes in their feelings, thoughts & behaviours that indicate an increase in illness symptoms and decline in mental health. These changes are referred to as early warning signs.

Relapse prevention is the term used to describe a way of identifying triggers, early warning signs and developing appropriate response plans. Identifying early warning signs as quickly as possible means an individual can take positive action and seek help early to minimise or possibly prevent the impact of a relapse on their quality of life.

Relapse prevention is an essential part of the recovery process. Relapse prevention is about maximising wellness for people with mental illness by reducing the likelihood and impact of relapse.

This guide is designed to assist you in developing your own relapse prevention strategy. It will help to reinforce the things that you do to maintain your emotional and physical wellbeing.



What are Relapse Warning Signs?

Sometimes before a relapse occurs people can experience changes in their symptoms or in some aspect of their behaviour, thoughts or feelings. These are called warning signs, and usually they indicate that a relapse may happen.

The key to preventing relapse is to be able to identify your warning signs as early as possible. By doing so you might then be able to avert the relapse altogether or, at least reduce it's impact and it's severity on your health.

Some of the more common early warning signs of relapse are:

- Feeling depressed or unhappy
- Feeling tense or restless
- Feeling anxious or worried
- Feeling unsafe or threatened
- Feeling paranoid - thinking that people are talking about you
- Feeling irritated, quick tempered or aggressive
- Not being able to concentrate for significant lengths of time
- Experiencing eating or appetite changes
- Overuse of alcohol or drug taking
- Problems with getting adequate sleep
- Withdrawing socially -staying home
- Feeling anxious about going out or going to work
- Hearing voices
- Experiencing racing thoughts or disordered thoughts
- Having mood swings-becoming excited and high or the opposite- feeling very low and suicidal

It is also important to have a plan of what to do should you experience a reoccurrence of any of these signs.

Remember, that these warning signs may be just a sign that you are stressed about a situation or event, and do not always mean that you are becoming unwell again. Furthermore, by simply recognising that you are stressed and taking action to reduce the stress you may be decreasing the likelihood of experiencing a relapse.

Asking for Help

Sometimes other people, besides yourself need to be involved in your care. The reason for this is purely to help in times of 'unwellness'. By having a dedicated helper you can avoid a relapse as you often don't realise yourself that you are becoming unwell. Remember, the earlier your warning signs are detected, the greater the likelihood that you can prevent a relapse, or reduce its severity.

Things to consider when choosing others for help and assistance are:

- Someone who is supportive, interested and trusted
- Knowledgeable about your illness
- Aware of your warning signs in the past
- Helpful when you have been ill before
- Sees you frequently eg. once a week
- Willing to help you in this way

This helper may assist you in various ways:

- Help you identify and monitor your warning signs
- Agree to tell you if they think you are becoming unwell

Preventing a Relapse

It is important to use periods of wellness as an opportunity to actively prevent relapse. You need to monitor or pay attention to how you are feeling, so that you can catch early warnings of a possible relapse.

In preventing a relapse there are a number of strategies you may find helpful in dealing with the warning signs or the symptoms of relapse.

Making a plan

Preventing a relapse requires you to develop a plan that is tailored to maintaining new behaviours and thoughts. The plan could involve integrating positive behaviours into your daily routine. These activities could include diversion activities, various coping skills and emotional support.

Coping skills often involve asking for help from an experienced peer/family member or using relaxation skills to help reduce the strength of anxiety. Look for alternative activities and work on recognising your warning signs. Finding different ways of dealing with emotional states and rehearsing new responses will help you to achieve more positive results from those events that you would have previously had difficulty managing.

Talking about how you feel

Talking with a friend, family member or trusted person about how you feel can often leave you feeling calmer and more comfortable. If you feel you need professional help and support, you can access therapy services.

Relaxation techniques

Relaxation techniques have been found to be very useful; these can include refocusing techniques such as meditation, deep breathing exercises (where you breathe from the diaphragm and not the chest) and progressive muscle relaxation which involves focusing on each muscle group, one at a time, and then tensing and relaxing the muscles.

Active problem solving

This involves looking at what the problem is, thinking of all possible solutions, identifying what the consequences of each are and then choosing what the best solution would be.

Diary writing

Writing a diary can be very helpful for some individuals. Writing down what you are experiencing can be an effective way of gaining a new perspective on the problem and making it easier to deal with.

Cognitive restructuring

Cognitive restructuring is a process that involves using positive affirmations such as "I am worthwhile" to replace the often irrational and inaccurate beliefs of "I am worthless". This can also be linked to challenging negative thoughts and using guided imagery, (which can involve imagining yourself being in a different place or handling a situation in a different or more appropriate way).

Rewarding yourself

When you have avoided negative behaviours or used new coping skills - reward yourself. What you do does not matter as long as it is something which you enjoy. This can be something as simple as a trip to the cinema or reading your favourite book.

Diet

Paying attention to your diet can help you to improve your overall mood and may also help to reduce mood swings. A high sugar diet can often cause or exacerbate anxiety. Try to eat well balanced meals at set times so that you are providing your body with the correct nutrition at the right times. Additionally, by having your meals at set times, you are establishing a schedule for your body to work to. Stimulants such as caffeine, sugar etc can often exacerbate anxiety and can lead to the development of physical feelings of anxiety such as a racing heart rate etc.

Maintaining a healthy, balanced diet can also provide you with the added strength you need to successfully deal with stressful situations. Focussing on your diet will also help you to cope with any secondary stress symptoms which can include; loss of sleep, lack of appetite.

It may also help eliminate problems such as sexual difficulties and breathing irregularities.

Exercise

When we get anxious, adrenaline rushes through our bodies to prepare us to either flight or fight the feared object/situation. This causes the physical effects of anxiety such as feeling shaky, light headed etc. By undertaking regular activities such as walking, going to the gym, running, swimming etc you can burn off the adrenaline which will reduce the physical symptoms of anxiety.

Handling day to day problems / feelings as they happen

Handle any feelings and problems when they occur. This way pressure and stress (which can lead to anxiety) will not build up. The stress you are already feeling will only become worse if you put off dealing with any problems.

Distraction / refocusing techniques

One of the most powerful coping skills a person can have is an ability to refocus their attention. This is due to the fact that when you are feeling anxious your whole attention is focused on anxious thoughts. Focusing your attention away from your anxious thoughts will distract you. An exercise you can do in order to refocus your attention can be something as simple as completing a word or number puzzle or even just counting objects that are in the room. Sometimes people may need to do activities that require a bit more concentration (for example, some people find exercises such as counting backwards from 100 in groups of three is useful) as it is often the case that the more mentally challenging an activity is, the quicker you will be able to reduce your anxiety.

Positive thinking / self talk

This includes putting together positive affirmations. Make sure they are personal with the use of 'I', 'Me' and 'My'. Ensure they are believable and realistic. Try to make them short and easy to remember. The more often you repeat these affirmations the more likely positive thinking will become your routine way of thinking. Try listing the positive thoughts and behaviours that prevent you from feeling anxious and practice implementing these every day.

Now you have identified and practiced the positive behaviours and thoughts you already experience on a regular basis, ensure you maintain these as they are often great for boosting your confidence and they help banish anxiety!

New Farm Clinic Day Programs

A wide range of psychological group therapy options are available at New Farm Clinic after discharge. These evidence-based programs are facilitated by registered psychologists and are designed to provide support after discharge as well as the development of skills to manage any on-going symptoms, facilitate recovery, prevent relapse of symptoms and/or address any underlying or secondary issues.

Please talk to your psychiatrist or an Allied Health member of staff to determine the best therapy option for you ph: (07) 3254 9132.

Brochures detailing each of our programs are available on the units or in reception.

New Farm Clinic Community Outreach Service

The Community Outreach Service's primary goal is to facilitate recovery. Providing a continuum of care you can now, as an admitted patient to New Farm Clinic, be treated in a non hospital based service.

The outreach service assists in minimising the effects of illness and as a result reduces the length and frequency of hospital based admissions.

Outreach clinicians support the patient, family members and carers to manage and improve overall quality of life.

The team includes experienced mental health clinicians and operates Monday to Friday 8:00 am to 4:30 pm.

Referral process

To attend any of the programs offered at New Farm Clinic, it is necessary to be under the care of a psychiatrist with admitting privileges to the hospital. The contact telephone number for our Patient Services Manager is (07) 3254 9133 and fax is (07) 3358 4781.

Community Support

Crisis Contacts

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Logan Hospital | 3299 8899 |
| Mater Public Hospital | 3840 8111 |
| QE II Jubilee Hospital | 3275 6111 |
| Prince Charles Hospital | 3350 8111 |
| Princess Alexandra Hospital | 3240 2111 |
| Royal Brisbane Hospital | 3636 8111 |
| The Park Centre for Mental Health | 3271 8222 |
| Lifeline 24 hour free call | 13 11 14 |
| Salvo Care Line 24 hour | 3831 9016 |
| Sexual Assault Helpline | 1800 010 120 |
| Sexual Assault & Rape (Brisbane) | 3636 5206 |
| DV Connect-Women's Crisis | 1800 811 811 |
| Parent Line | 1300 301 300 |
| Domestic Violence | 1800 811 811 |
| SANE | 1800 688 382 |
| Kids Help Line | 1800 55 1800 |

Support Groups

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Brisbane Grief & Bereavement Support Centre | 3865 8644 |
| Brisbane Rape & Incest Survivors Support Ctre | 3391 2573 |
| Child Safety | 3235 9999 |
| Salvation Army Counselling Service | 3349 5046 |
| Kinnections – Woolloongabba | 3435 4300 |
| Relationships Australia | 1300 364 277 |
| Domestic Violence Resource Centre | 3217 2544 |
| Social Anxiety Australia - Paddington | 04098 98828 |
| Panic Anxiety Disorders – Stafford Heights | 3353 4851 |
| GROW | 3395 3417 |

Crisis Accommodation

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Brisbane Homelessness Centre | 3036 4444 |
| St Vincent De Paul Homeless Men's Hostel | 3846 1466 |
| Pindari Women's Hostel | 3832 6073 |
| Women's House (domestic violence)–Woolloongabba | 3391 0005 |
| Anglican Women's Hostel (crisis & short term) | 3358 4444 |
| Hebron House – Kelvin Grove (youth) | 3356 6824 |

Other Accommodation

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Boarding House Project Assn Inc – Fortitude Valley | 3257 1864 |
| Cotlew Manor – Ashmore | 5597 2651 |
| Richmond Fellowship – Clayfield (long-term) | 3257 7988 |
| Grow House | 3395 3417 |
| Othila's Young Women's Hostel – Stones Corner | 3847 9633 |
| Windsor Lodge – Windsor | 3857 8628 |
| Silky Oaks – Manly | 3906 8800 |
| Sherwood Neighbourhood Centre – Sherwood | 3379 8316 |
| Karakan House (supported accommodation) | 3299 1898 |
| Gracemere Ladys - (women only) | 3262 8031 |
| Richmond Fellowship – Clayfield | 3257 7988 |

Independent Living Accommodation

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Department of Housing – Fortitude Valley | 3872 0320 |
| Brisbane Housing Company | 3307 3000 |
| Micha Projects | 3036 4444 |
| Sunny Cove | 1800 867 368 |
| Oxford Crest – Eagleby | 3807 9844 |

Social & Recreational Activities

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Stepping Stone Clubhouse – Cooparoo | 3847 1058 |
| Nundah House – Nundah | 3260 5657 |
| Access Arts – New Farm | 384405897 |
| Newfarm Community Options – New Farm | 3254 1041 |
| Catholic Psychiatric Pastoral Care – Fortitude Valley | 3252 5461 |
| Schizophrenia Fellowship of Qld – Fortitude Valley | 3358 4424 |
| Bayside Initiative Group | 3822 1422 |
| Mozart – Ipswich | 3832 6031 |
| GROW Qld – Holland Park | 3394 4344 |
| Newfarm Neighbourhood Centre – New Farm | 3358 5600 |
| Jacaranda Club House – Ipswich | 3812 9771 |

For Relatives, Friends & Carers (Brisbane)

| | |
|--|--------------|
| ARAFMI – New Farm | 3254 1881 |
| (Assn for Relatives & Friends of People with Mental Illness) | |
| Alzheimer's Association – Woolloowin | 3857 4043 |
| Dementia Helpline | 1800 639 331 |
| Eating Disorders Association – Woolloongabba | 3891 3660 |
| ISIS – Yeronga (Women with Eating Disorders) | 3848 3377 |

Home Assistance

| | |
|--|--------------|
| Spiritus Care (St Lukes Nursing Service) | 1300 785 853 |
| Ozcare Mental Health Program – Windsor | 3109 2500 |
| Ozcare Mental Health Program – Southport | 5583 7860 |
| Veterans Home Care | 133 254 |
| Blue Care Intake Unit | 3772 21740 |

Legal

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Legal Aid Qld | 1300 651 188 |
| Caxton Legal Service – New Farm | 3254 1811 |
| Family Court of Australia | 3248 2200 |
| Adult Guardian – Brisbane City | 1300 653 187 |
| Public Trustee – Brisbane City | 1300 360 044 |

Disability Employment Services (Brisbane)

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| Stepping Stone Club House - Coorparoo | 3847 1058 |
| Commonwealth Rehabilitation Services | 1800 624 824 |
| Help Enterprises | 3260 6411 |
| The NEPS Centre | 3252 7422 |
| Red Cross | 3620 7000 |

Internet Web Sites

Sane Australia – www.sane.org

Mental Health Information Centre - www.mja.com.au/public/mentalhealth

Lifeline - www.lifeline.org.au

Depression & Bipolar Disorder www.blackdoginstitute.org.au

Beyond Blue – www.beyondblue.org.au

Eating Disorders Association Queensland – www.eda.org.au

National Youth Mental Health Foundation – www.headspace.org.au

My Relapse Prevention Plan:

1. My Diagnosis is:

2. Three symptoms (warning signs) I experience with my illness are:

a.

b.

c.

3. Stressful events that endangered my mental health and put me in crisis:

.....

.....

.....

4. What can I do to avoid stressful events in the future:

.....

.....

.....

5. Current stressors in my life are:

.....

.....

.....

6. Three ways that I can do to reduce my stress are:

a.

b.

c.

7. Three of my positive qualities are:

a.

b.

c.

8. Supportive friends/family member that I call on a regular basis:

Name: Phone number:.....

Name: Phone number:.....

9. A daily community/leisure/healing activity I will engage in is:

.....
.....
.....

10. An activity I will definitely avoid is:

.....
.....
.....

11. Three steps I will take to prevent relapse:

- a.
- b.
- c.

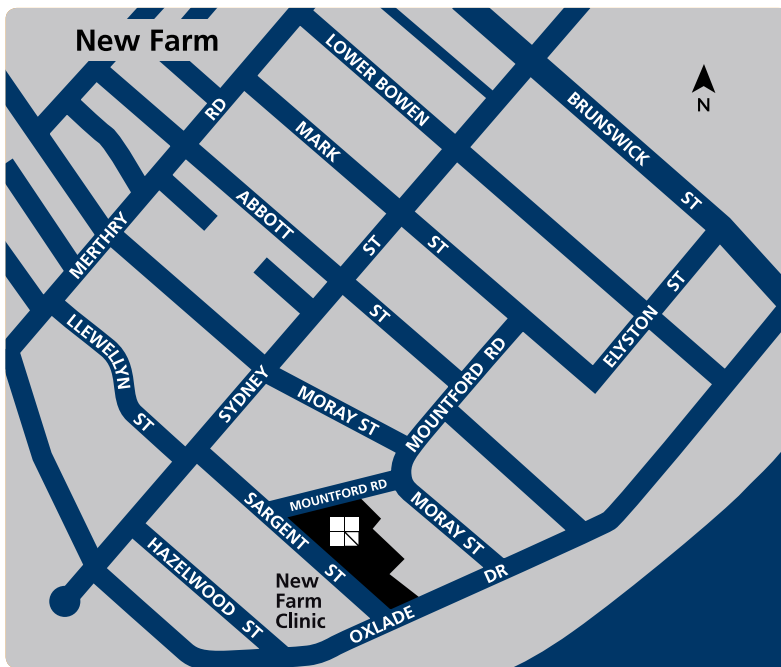
12. If I begin to relapse (when symptoms/warning signs return or get worse) I will:

.....
.....
.....

13. 3. My backup (emergency) plan is:

.....
.....
.....





People caring for people

New Farm Clinic

22 Sargent St, New Farm, BRISBANE 4005

Ph: 07 3254 9100 | Fax: 07 33584781

Email: enquiries.nfc@ramsayhealth.com.au

www.newfarmclinic.com.au