

appendix b: stages of recovery

Progression through stages is not fixed; stages are arbitrary divisions in a continuous journey. Stages can be experienced in various orders (e.g., may not go through them in the order they are listed, some may be skipped or revisited along the way).



	Early Signs	Crisis	Recuperation	Rebuilding	Life Beyond Illness
Experience of Ill Relative	Unusual or disturbing changes in thoughts and/or moods; possible substance use	Fear; frustration; confusion; helpless; anger, resistance to "anything wrong"; relief; overwhelmed; exhaustion; ashamed; pain of stigma	Feelings of helplessness; despair; isolation; dependent on others; angry; difficulty holding onto hope; loss of identity; low energy and motivation; challenge of managing symptoms/ side-effects; beginning to adjust to having a mental illness	Increased hopefulness; gradual acceptance of illness; awareness that "I am not my illness"; increased desire to be self-sufficient; lingering frustration & confusion; better understanding of illness & ways to stay well; overcoming stigma; active coping; strengthening relationships with others	Sense of well-being; self-identity; optimistic and hopeful outlook; increased self-confidence & sense of control over the mental illness; work through setbacks and disappointments
Needs of Ill Relative	Reassurance; trust; support in accessing help before symptoms get worse	Assessing mental health help; basic daily care; protection from harm; consistent love & assurance; low stimulation; undemanding scheduled activities; support with treatment plan	Assistance with needs; provision of safe & healthy environment; education about illness management; increased physical & cognitive stimulation; support to become more responsible for self & to renew interests and activities	Building empowerment & increased self-sufficiency; increased responsibility for personal decision making & mistakes; learning to set realistic expectations and manage stress; ongoing encouragement & belief in success of ill relative	Ongoing illness management & relapse prevention; supportive work/education environments; opportunities to socialize and contribute to their community

	Early Signs	Crisis	Recuperation	Rebuilding	Life Beyond Illness
Experience of Family	Confusion; worry; denial	Fear; shock; denial; lack of acceptance of diagnosis; resistance to change; confusion; guilt; grief; relief; overwhelmed; ashamed; pain of stigma	Increased understanding of illness; more optimistic about future; holder of hope; frustration with setbacks and time it can take to see improvements; frustration with mental health system	Encouraged by progress; improved coping strategies; overcoming stigma; ongoing "dance" between loss and hope; illness begins to take a "step back" in the family's life; renewed focus on having fun together	Healthy, interdependent relationships amongst all family members; confidence in managing the impact of the mental illness on their family
Needs of Family Caregivers/Members	Support in getting help for ill relative; understanding early signs of mental illness	Assessment of strengths/capabilities of family to provide care & supports needed; information about services & supports for ill relative and themselves; education about mental illness; practical support & recovery; compassion & empathy from professional care team	Maintaining focus on family needs as a whole; begin transitioning -- starting with small steps; collaboration & communication with care team; opportunities for respite or "time out"	Renewed focus on caregiver to ensure a balanced life; encouragement to work towards personal goals in life; support from other families when needed	Continued collaboration with mental health care team; support from other family members when needed; opportunities to advocate for other families & improvements in the mental health system
Treatment/Programs to Consider	Early intervention	Medication; hospitalization; treatment planning & discharge planning	Medication; ongoing mental health care; mental illness education; peer support; additional therapies or counselling; supported or independent living	Vocational training; peer-led support & educational groups; clubhouses	Supported education or work opportunities; social events; training to help others who are dealing with mental illness

