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**Depression and Bipolar  
Support Alliance**

*Building Your Way to Wellness* was created by the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, the nation's leading patient-led organization focused on improving the lives of people living with mood disorders through hope, help, education, and support. [www.DBSAlliance.org](http://www.DBSAlliance.org)

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## Building Your Way to Wellness



# Building Your Way to Wellness

What does wellness look like to you? Treating your symptoms is the first step in treating a mental health condition. But wellness means returning to a life that you care about. This booklet will help you explore and identify your mental health goals. Deciding what wellness means to you, and setting goals to achieve it, puts you in charge and gives you a clear picture of what you’re working for every day.

## Setting Goals

When you don’t feel well, it can be hard to think about the things you hope for, or care about, and to set goals. But it’s so important. Writing down your goals lays the foundation for a wellness plan that works for you.

## Time for Thinking

This booklet will help you set goals and come up with action steps to help you reach them. But before you begin, it’s important to take time to think about what matters to you the most so you can see a future where you will be well. Imagine that anything is possible. Don’t worry about what might get in your way at this point. Just create a picture of your best life.

Some good questions to start with are:

What interests me? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What would I like to do more of? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What brings me joy? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are my hopes and dreams? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What or who do I care about the most? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What or who makes me want to take action? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

If it’s hard to answer these questions right now because you don’t feel well, answer how you think you would have before you felt ill.

Putting What’s Most Important First

Now, use your answers to come up with one or more goals that are tied to what you care about the most. Often, these goals are tied to family, work, life purpose, health, religion/spirit, home, relationships, and/or education.

Examples:

- 1. **Goal:** I want to spend more, and happier, time with my family.
- 2. **Goal:** I want to keep and do well at my job. I like the people I work with and I need money to keep my home and support my family.
- 3. **Goal:** I have always wanted to see the Grand Canyon. I want to be able to work extra hours and save money so I can take my family to see the Grand Canyon.

YOUR WELLNESS GOALS:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

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Next, pick the ONE goal that is MOST important to you—your TOP goal—and think of two or three things that will help you to reach your goal.

Examples:

**TOP GOAL:** I want to spend more, and happier, time with my family.  
I can do this if I:

- 1. **Helper:** Have more energy to spend time with them.
- 2. **Helper:** Am in a better mood and more patient with them.
- 3. **Helper:** Lose weight and smoke less so I can do more with them.

**TOP GOAL:** I want to keep my job. I can do this if I:

- 1. **Helper:** Feel well and awake in the mornings so I get to work on time.
- 2. **Helper:** Am more cheerful so I get along better with the people I work with.
- 3. **Helper:** Am more focused and less forgetful so I can do better work.

YOUR SUCCESS PLANS:

My TOP Wellness Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

These things will help me reach my TOP goal:

• **Helper:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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• **Helper:** \_\_\_\_\_

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• **Helper:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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**Planning for Success**

Be sure to spend time thinking about your TOP goal and things that will help you to reach it. They will play a big role in finding a treatment plan that works for you.

Now, it’s time to think about your strengths and the resources or people in your life that will help you succeed.

**What do I have going for me that will help me reach my goal?**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Who will support me?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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**What resources will I need?** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**What problems might come up and how can I deal with them?**

LIKELY PROBLEM	HOW I WILL DEAL WITH IT

**Actions for Success**

Take a closer look at each of the things you wrote down under your success plan that will help you reach your top goal—your helpers. Then think about how the strengths, support, resources, and problems you listed will influence them. For each helper, write a list of 2 to 4 action steps you can take to bring you closer to your goal.

Remember, some action steps will include other people—like your doctors or family—and some you will do by yourself. Next, figure out how long it will take you to do each step. Some steps will be harder and take more time. Some will be easier and take less time. Even if you think you can, try not to do everything all at once.

**Examples:**  
**SUCCESS PLAN HELPER:** It would help me to feel well and awake in the mornings so I get to work on time. I can:  
1. **Action:** Talk to my doctor about medicines that will not make me too sick or sleepy so I can get to work on time. (Time: 3 months)

- 2. **Action:** Create and follow a sleep plan to get more, and better, sleep.  
(Time: 6 months)
- 3. **Action:** Invite a co-worker to walk with me at lunch. This will help me make friends, reduce stress, and increase my energy.  
(Time: 9 months)
- 4. **Action:** Take the train to work instead of driving. The trip is faster and will give me more time to sleep or get ready. (Time: 12 months)

YOUR ACTION STEPS:

▶ **Success Plan Helper:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

• **Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

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TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

• **Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

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TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

• **Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

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TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

• **Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

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TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

▶ **Success Plan Helper:** \_\_\_\_\_

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• **Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

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TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

• **Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

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TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

• **Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

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TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

• **Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

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TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

▶ **Success Plan Helper:** \_\_\_\_\_

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• **Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

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TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

• **Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

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TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

• **Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

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TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

• **Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

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TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

• **Action:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

TIME: \_\_\_\_\_

## GOAL ►

*I want to keep and  
do well at my job. I like  
the people I work with. I need  
the income to keep my home and  
support my family.*

### Building Your Wellness Goal Framework

The Wellness Goal Framework is a tool to remind you of what you're working for every day. Hang it in your home where you will see it each morning, keep a copy in your purse or wallet, and/or share it with your doctor or a trusted family member or friend. An example is provided.

ACTION STEPS LONG (8-12 months)	Take the train to work to give me more time to sleep or get ready.	Do a slow breathing exercise during a mid-morning break to relax.	Set phone and calendar reminders about important tasks.
ACTION STEPS MIDDLE (5-7 months)	Walk with co-worker at lunch so I have more energy.	Reduce caffeine and sugar intake.	Organize and clean my office.
ACTION STEPS SHORT (2-4 months)	Test medication change. Follow sleep plan.	Follow my sleep plan.	Build planning time into my mornings at work or on the train to help me focus on my most important tasks. Test medication change.
ACTION STEPS NOW (0-1 months)	Speak with my doctor about medications that make me less sleepy. Create sleep plan.	Write a list of what I am thankful for each night.	Talk with doctor about medications that make me less tired and distracted.
SUCCESS HELPERS	Feel well and awake in the mornings so I get to work on time.	Be more cheerful so I get along better with the people I work with.	Be more focused and less forgetful so I can do better work.

Example

WELLNESS GOAL FRAMEWORK



Working with Your Doctor

It's important to share your Wellness Goal Framework with your doctor(s). Tell your doctor you want your treatment plan to be built around your TOP Wellness goal, not just reducing symptoms. Your doctor can help you find the treatments and/or medications that work best for you. Ask for help. Your doctor might have ideas about more, or other, steps. You can choose to use them or not.

Examples for when and how to talk to your doctor about your plan.

- Call or email your doctor. Tell him/her you want to review your new wellness goals at your next visit. If you can send an email, you may want to attach your Wellness Goal Framework to the email so your doctor can look at it before your visit.
- Review your Framework, or this entire booklet, with your doctor at your next visit. Get his/her input.
- Tell your doctor that apart from a crisis, reaching your TOP Wellness Goal is what is most important to you and ask your doctor if they will help you reach it. Your ability to agree and work together on this goal will play a big part in your success.
- Bring your Framework with you on each visit. Let your doctor know the progress you've made.
- Ask your doctor for more ideas if you are having a hard time with your plan.
- If your doctor is not willing to help you with your goals, you may need to make a change.

Getting More Support

Sharing your goals with people you trust can be a big help. They may offer support to help you with an action step or just be a friendly voice to cheer you on. Asking trusted family, friends, or co-workers can make things easier for you.

Besides any people you're already asking to help you with one of your action steps, are there others you can ask for help? If so, who and how could they help?

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Support for the Long Haul

Many of the plans you have will take time and may not be easy. At times, you may feel bad about how long it's taking to reach your goal.

Answer:

I will take care of myself now, while working to create the future I want, by .....

.....

.....

I will keep myself focused on what I want to create, not how hard a task may be, by .....

.....

.....

I will remember to be easy on myself. I will work to enjoy life by .....

.....

.....

You CAN Do This!

You, and your life, are constantly changing. That means your Wellness Goal Framework might need to change, too. That's normal. But before you make changes, think about any lessons you've learned from problems you've had—and be sure to celebrate your successes too!

If you are having a hard time following your plan, check to make sure it's broken into small enough steps.

Remember, a race begins with a single step. Each step you take brings you closer to your goal. Each completed step is a win that should be celebrated!