

HEALTHY HEARTS, HEALTHY RECOVERY TOOLKIT

A GUIDE FOR PEER RECOVERY GROUPS



WELCOME

You just downloaded the *Healthy Hearts, Healthy Recovery* Toolkit. Now what? First, thank you! The impact of heart disease among people living with serious mental illness is staggering. Your addition of a group session focused on heart health education, empowerment, and support can make an important difference.

You can use this toolkit a variety of ways. These are a few suggestions:

- Replace all or a part of a regularly scheduled support group meeting with a 45- or 30-minute session
- Hold a standalone heart health session, perhaps inviting a clinician to join you, or even holding the event at a local clinician's office
- Offer a session as part of a drop in center health month focus (like American Heart Month in February, Minority Health Month in April, Women's Health Month in May, Men's Health Month in June, or any other relevant awareness month)
- Provide the materials to peer specialists and invite them to use portions of it in their one on one sessions with the peers they are working with
- Hand out the participant materials at a health or wellness fair

As you look through this tool kit, you will find:

- Two peer support group session outlines: One that you can use to facilitate a 45-minute portion of a support group meeting, another you can use for a 30-minute portion of a meeting.
- Trainer notes: For the mini-lecture components of the session, offering an alternative to the full-page session outlines. Trainer notes should be printed one-sided so you can cut the pages and easily stay organized and on track!
- A shared story: From an individual with lived experience that you may find helpful to break the ice with peers.
- A participant handout: For participants to engage with the materials – support groups are not lectures, they are opportunities for people to explore their lives, think through issues, and get support. The worksheet handout helps guide this process.
- An infographic: For participants to take home. This can be used as encouragement to maintain heart healthy habits, and can be posted to a wall or refrigerator.
- A resource list: For participants to continue learning about the topic of heart health after the session ends.

Enjoy and let us know how it goes! Feel free to send your feedback, pictures, or testimonials to SAMHSA's Program to Achieve Wellness at paw@prainc.com.

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SESSION OUTLINE

HEALTHY HEARTS, HEALTHY RECOVERY



HEALTHY HEARTS, HEALTHY RECOVERY – SESSION OUTLINE

This outline is designed to help you run a support group session on heart health and serious mental illness, *Healthy Hearts, Healthy Recovery*, in an interactive way. The session uses a combination of short presentations followed by conversation starters and includes a simple worksheet to help the group share ideas, consider choices, and support each other in adding one or two heart healthy habits to their lives.

If your group runs for an hour or more, you may wish to use the 45-minute outline. It is designed to allow some limited time for general supportive sharing. The 30-minute outline allows for supportive sharing for groups that run for an hour or less. You will see on the outline how to compress the time for a 30-minute session, including what discussion questions you will need to eliminate. You know your group best: You will want to personalize and modify the session so it is right for your group's needs, cultural preferences, etc. If you usually start with round robin "how is everyone" time, you may wish to consider doing that at the end of the session so you are assured to finish the *Healthy Hearts, Healthy Recovery* session without running into time constraints. Again, you know your group best and will want to modify this outline to get the best outcomes for those in the group.

THE 45-MINUTE SESSION

A. INTRODUCTION

45-minute session: 5 minutes

30-minute session: 3 minutes

LEADER: Today, I thought we would have some conversation and do some thinking together about heart health. Heart disease and heart-related issues like COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, are very common for those of us living with a serious mental illness. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "people with depression are more likely to have other conditions that can lead to heart disease, including obesity and diabetes."¹ The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tell us that "Depression that lasts longer than a couple of weeks can lead to certain behaviors, such as abusing alcohol or not sleeping, that put heart health at risk. Depression also raises the levels of certain hormones and proteins in the body that can cause inflammation (swelling) and high blood pressure—leading causes of heart disease and stroke."²



Questions for the group

- Why do you think people living with depression are more likely to develop heart disease? (*Omit for 30-minute session*)
- Do you think it is the same for people living with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, anxiety, or those who misuse alcohol and prescription and non-prescription drugs?

LEADER: Well, according to the National Institute of Mental Health, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, among other serious mental illnesses, are also correlated with cardiovascular disease.”^{3,4}

According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, “Researchers have found that most drugs can have adverse cardiovascular effects, ranging from abnormal heart rate to heart attack. Injection drug use can also lead to cardiovascular problems such as collapsed veins and bacterial infections of the blood vessels and heart valves.”⁵

Not only that, the National Institute of Alcohol and Alcohol Abuse reports, “Drinking a lot over a long time or too much on a single occasion can damage the heart, causing problems including: Cardiomyopathy – stretching and drooping of heart muscle, Arrhythmias – irregular heartbeat, stroke, and high blood pressure.”⁶

This is an issue those of us living with a serious mental illness need to consider. Interestingly enough, another recent study revealed that about 20% of those with the highest heart health risk did not believe they needed to improve their health.⁷ But, we do!

Questions for the group

- Is heart disease something most of us living with a behavioral health issue consider and work on? Why or why not?

LEADER: The good news is that there are some very simple things we can do to start improving our heart health right away. We will look at that in a minute.

B. LIFE IMPACT OF HEART DISEASE

45-minute session: 10 minutes

30-minute session: 5 minutes

LEADER: Let’s take a minute and refresh our understanding of some of the risk factors for heart disease.

Question for the group (omit for 30-minute session)

- Who remembers one or two risk factors for heart disease? Maybe something you’ve seen in a TV commercial, or in a magazine ad, or read in an article?

LEADER: Great. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, tell us there are three ways to think about risk factors for heart disease: Conditions, Behaviors, and Characteristics.⁸



Conditions that increase our risk for heart disease include:

- High blood pressure (or hypertension)
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes

Behaviors that increase our risk for heart disease include:

- Unhealthy diets
- Physical inactivity
- Obesity
- Too much alcohol
- Tobacco use

Characteristics that increase our risk include:

- Family history (if others in your extended family have a history of heart disease, you may have inherited a likelihood as well)
- Age (your risk for heart disease increases, as you get older)
- Gender (heart disease was the number one killer of both men and women in 2013, but women experience less recognizable symptoms)⁹
- Race or ethnicity (in 2013, heart disease was the leading cause of death in the United States for non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks, and American Indians; for Hispanics, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, heart disease is second only to cancer as a cause of death)¹⁰

Questions for the group

- Take a minute and look at the top left box on the *My Heart, My Health Worksheet*, circle or put a check mark next to risk factors you may have for heart disease.
- Did anyone come up with No Risk Factors?
- If you did identify one or more risk factors, think about or share some ways you may be able to reduce your risk for heart disease.
- Which area – conditions, behavior, or characteristics – do you think can we work on the most to improve our heart health?

OPTIONAL EXERCISE

LEADER: Let me share a story of a fellow consumer who lives with both a behavioral health issue and a heart health issue (Read *A Story of Resilience: John's Self-Care Journey* and ask questions).

LEADER: Heart disease has a huge impact on our ability to live our lives fully. According to the Million Hearts campaign, “Heart disease and stroke can be fatal, but they can also lead to serious illness, disability, and lower quality of life. Suffering a stroke may lead to significant disability, such as paralysis, speech difficulties, and



emotional problems. Following a heart attack, individuals frequently suffer fatigue and depression, and they may find it more difficult to engage in physical activities.”¹¹

Questions for the group

- Take a minute and answer the questions in box two on your *My Heart, My Health Worksheet*. *(For the 30-minute session instruct them to only answer the second question)*
- What are some of your thoughts about each of these questions?
 - What are some of the ways heart disease could get in the way of your recovery and achieving your hopes and dreams? *(Omit this question for the 30-minute session)*
 - What are some things you can achieve by improving your heart health?

C. SMALL STEPS TOWARD HEART HEALTH

45-minute session: 15 minutes

30-minute session: 10 minutes

LEADER: We have looked at some of the data, thought about risk factors for heart disease, and considered some ways it can get in the way of achieving recovery. Let’s turn to some of the simple things we can all do to build our heart health.

Questions for the group

Let’s brainstorm for a minute. What are some things we can do to build our heart health? *(Omit this for 30-minute session)*

LEADER: Great ideas. Let’s get more specific about those strategies, and I’ll also share a couple of new ideas we haven’t mentioned yet. I have four strategies I want to share. There are a million more we could talk about, but these are pretty simple and are things we can all work on.

1. EASY EXERCISES

Exercise is something many people love, but for some of us, exercise may seem more like punishment. There are actually several things we can all do to add more exercise to our lives without joining a gym. For example:

- Keep a list of quick activities, like squats or stretches, that you can do during commercial breaks so you can be active while watching TV
 - For more ideas about exercises to do during commercials check out the website for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at hhs.gov (<https://www.hhs.gov/fitness/be-active/ways-to-be-active/index.html>)
- Start your day with a morning stretch or end your day with calming yoga
- Wash the car
- Do yard work or clean up a few areas in your neighborhood



- Plant and care for a vegetable garden (then cook the vegetables for healthy meals!)
- Add more steps to your laundry routine by taking one small bag at a time from your bedroom(s) to the laundry or from your car to the laundromat
- Put on a favorite CD/stream a favorite music play list; close the curtains and dance to your favorite songs

2. SIMPLE SUBSTITUTIONS

Dieting may feel overwhelming, but you can start by making some same substitutions, for example:

- Switch out soda for sparkling water
- Use a low fat/low carb flour tortilla instead of bread for three lunches a week
- Place one-half teaspoon of salt in a baggie and use only that salt for the day to start limiting your salt consumption
- Switch one bagel for two mini bagels and use low fat cream cheese
- Switch out ground turkey for ground beef in hamburgers; or make a 50 /50 mix
- Put your lunch meat on a salad instead of on bread and use low-fat dressing a few times a week
- Switch out chips for Jicama sticks, celery sticks, or snap peas with barbeque sauce or low fat ranch dressing a few times a week

3. WALKING WONDERS

There are easy ways to increase your daily steps. If you use a wheelchair or have other limitations, you can still engage in some of these ideas, exercising your arms and torso. The goal is to increase your heart rate and sustain that increase for a period of time.

- Walk the dog with the whole family; if you do not have a dog, consider volunteering to walk dogs at a local shelter
- Listen to a podcast, audio book, or the news while you walk instead of sitting on the couch reading or watching the news
- Instead of calling friends, take a walk together to catch up; or, put in a headset and earbuds and talk with your friends while you walk
- Park your car as far away as possible so you have to walk a longer distance from your destination; even better, walk or cycle to run errands in your community
- Walk up and down the field/court while watching your child(ren) play sports
- Get off the bus or subway one stop early and walk the rest of the way
- Replace a coffee break with an outdoor walk—or take the coffee with you on your walk
- Choose the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator



4. REWARD CONTRACTS

Some people like to work toward a goal and reward themselves when reaching the goal.

- Reward yourself with a vacation after stopping smoking for three months; save money for the trip by calculating how much you spend on smoking each day and put that same amount in a piggy bank every day
- Reward yourself with a favorite food (in moderation!) after walking the dog and doing simple exercises for a week
- Reward yourself with a diet soda after drinking water all day instead of soda

Questions for the group

- What other strategies would you add to support a healthy heart?

C. MAKING IT PERSONAL

45-minute session: 10 minutes

30-minute session: 5 minutes

LEADER: Let's make this personal. Take a few minutes and fill in box four on your handout

Questions for the group

- What strategies do you think you can incorporate into your own life?
- What strategies are you going to begin implementing next week?
- How can we support you?

D. CONCLUSION

45-minute session: 5 minutes

30-minute session: 2 minutes

LEADER: Great, we've taken a look at how people living with serious mental illness can better manage our own heart health. We've looked at some of the risks and some of the ways heart issues can get in the way of our recovery. We've explored some easy-to-try strategies that we can start this week; and we each picked one or two things that we will do to start living a healthier lifestyle. Very importantly, we've agreed to help and support each other.

Any last comments or thoughts? (*Omit this for the 30-minute session*) Thanks for coming today/tonight. Before we wrap up, (share any group news and business here).

THE 30-MINUTE SESSION



1. Topic Introduction (5 minutes): Facts and Prevalence of heart disease and co-occurring behavioral health issues presentation
 - Groups questions to build engagement in the topic
2. Life Impact of Heart Disease (10 minutes)
 - Symptoms and illness progression presentation
 - Real consumer story
 - Group questions and handout to begin personalizing the issue
 - Each participant identifies two or three they can achieve by improving heart health
3. Strategies for change (10 minutes)
 - Leader overviews some of the ideas of on the hand out and invites participants to read the rest including easy exercise, simple substitutions, walking wonders, reward contracts
 - Group adds additional strategies
4. Making it personal (5 minutes)
 - Leader invites group members to identify which strategies might work for them and that they can incorporate into their own lives
 - Participants write down what one, two, or three things they will implement the next week, one or two peers share their chosen strategy
 - Group members are invited to support each other



ENDNOTES

1. [CDC: Heart Health and Depression: What Men Need to Know](#)
2. [Ibid.](#)
3. [Ibid.](#)
4. [NIH: Increase Health Risk Linked to First-episode Psychosis](#)
5. [NIH: Health Consequences of Drug Misuse](#)
6. [NIH: Alcohol's Effects on the Body](#)
7. [American Heart Association: Study: Nearly 20 Percent with High Heart Attack Risk Don't Think They Need to Improve their Health](#)
8. [CDC: Heart Disease Risk Factors](#)
9. [Go Red for Women: Gender and Heart Disease](#)
10. [CDC: Heart Disease Facts](#)
11. [Million Hearts: Costs & Consequences](#)

TRAINER NOTES

HEALTHY HEARTS, HEALTHY RECOVERY



HEALTHY HEARTS, HEALTHY RECOVERY – TRAINER NOTES

As the leader for the support group, you might find it easier to use these trainer notes instead of a multi-page hand out as you lead the group.

CARD 1: INTRODUCTION

(5 minutes for 45-minute session) (3 minutes for the 30-minute session)

- Today, I thought we would have some conversation and do some thinking together about heart health
- Heart disease and heart-related issues like COPD, or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, are very common for those of us living with a serious mental illness
- According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), “People with depression are more likely to have other conditions that can lead to heart disease, including obesity and diabetes.” The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tell us that “Depression that lasts longer than a couple of weeks can lead to certain behaviors, such as abusing alcohol or not sleeping, that put heart health at risk. Depression also raises the levels of certain hormones and proteins in the body that can cause inflammation (swelling) and high blood pressure—leading causes of heart disease and stroke.”

Questions for the group:

- Why do you think people living with depression are more likely to develop heart disease? (*Omit for 30-minute session*)
- Do you think it is the same for people living with schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, anxiety, or those who misuse alcohol and prescription and non-prescription drugs?

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CARD 2: INTRODUCTION, PART 2

- According to the [National Institute of Mental Health](#), bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, among other serious mental illnesses, are also correlated with [cardiovascular disease](#). According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, “Researchers have found that most drugs can have adverse cardiovascular effects, ranging from abnormal heart rate to heart attack. Injection drug use can also lead to cardiovascular problems such as collapsed veins and bacterial infections of the blood vessels and heart valves.”
- According to the National Institute of Alcohol and Alcohol Abuse, “Drinking a lot over a long time or too much on a single occasion can damage the heart, causing problems including: Cardiomyopathy – Stretching and drooping of heart muscle, Arrhythmias – Irregular heartbeat, Stroke, and High blood pressure.”
- This is an issue those of us living with a serious mental illness need to consider. Interestingly enough, another recent study revealed that about 20% of those with the highest heart health risk did not believe they needed to improve their health. But, we do!



Questions for the group

- Is heart disease something most of us living with a behavioral health issue consider and work on? Why or why not?

The good news is that there are some very simple things we can do to start improving our heart health right away. We will look at that in a minute.

CARD 3: LIFE IMPACT OF HEART DISEASE

(10 minutes for the 45-minute session) (5 minutes for the 30-minute session)



- Let's take a minute and refresh our understanding of some of the risk factors for heart disease

Question for the group (Omit for 30-minute session)

- Who remembers one or two risk factors for heart disease? Maybe something you've seen in a TV commercial, saw in a magazine ad, or read in an article?
- Great. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, tell us there are three ways to think about risk factors: Conditions, Behaviors, and Characteristics.
 - **Conditions** that increase our risk for heart disease include: high blood pressure (hypertension), high cholesterol, and diabetes.
 - **Behaviors** that increase our risk for heart disease include: unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, obesity, too much alcohol, and tobacco use.
 - **Characteristics** that increase our risk include: Family history (if others in your extended family have a history of heart disease, you may have inherited a likelihood as well). Age (your risk for heart disease increases, as you get older). Gender (heart disease was the number one killer of both men and women in 2013 but women experience less recognizable symptoms). Race or ethnicity (In 2013, heart disease was the leading cause of death in the United States for non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks, and American Indians; for Hispanics, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, heart disease is second only to cancer as a cause of death).

Question for the group:

- Take a minute and look at the top right box on the hand out, circle or put a check mark next to risk factors you may have for heart disease.
- Did anyone come up with No Risk Factors?

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CARD 4: LIFE IMPACT OF HEART DISEASE, PART 2



Question for the group:

- If you did identify one or more risk factors, think about or share some ways you may be able to reduce your risk for heart disease.
- Which area – conditions, behavior, or characteristics – can we work on the most to improve our heart health?

Optional: Let me share a story of a fellow consumer who lives with both a behavioral health issue and a heart health issue. (Read story and ask questions)

- Heart disease has a huge impact on our ability to live our lives fully. According to the Million Hearts campaign, "Heart disease and stroke can be fatal, but they can also lead to serious illness, disability, and lower quality of life. Suffering a stroke may lead to significant disability, such as paralysis, speech difficulties, and emotional problems. Following a heart attack, individuals frequently suffer fatigue and depression, and they may find it more difficult to engage in physical activities."

Question for the group:

- Take a minute and answer the questions in box two on your handout. (For the 30 minute session instruct them to only answer the second question)
- So what are some of your thoughts about each of these questions?
 - What are some of the ways heart disease could get in the way of your recovery and achieving your hopes and dreams? *(Omit this question for the 30-minute session)*
 - What are some things you can achieve by improving your heart health?

CARD 5: SMALL STEPS TOWARD HEART HEALTH

(15 minutes for the 45-minute session) (10 minutes for the 30-minute session)



- We have looked at some of the data, thought about risk factors for heart disease and considered some ways it can get in the way of achieving recovery. Let's turn to some of the simple things we can all do to build our heart health.

Question for the group:

- Let's brainstorm for a minute. What are some things we can do to build our heart health? *(Omit this for 30-minute session)*
- Great ideas. Let's get more specific about those strategies, and I'll also share a couple of new ideas we haven't mentioned yet. I have four strategies I want to share. There are a million more we could talk about, but these are pretty simple and are things we can all work on.

EASY EXERCISES

Exercise is something many people love but for some of us, exercise may seem more like punishment. There are actually several things we can all do to add more exercise to our lives without joining a gym. For example:

- Keep a list of quick activities, like squats or stretches, near the remote so that you can be active during commercial breaks when watching TV.
 - For more ideas about exercises to do during commercials check out the website for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services at [hhs.gov](https://www.hhs.gov)
- Start your day with a morning stretch or end your day with calming yoga
- Wash the car

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CARD 6: SMALL STEPS TOWARD HEART HEALTH, PART 2



EASY EXERCISES, CONT.

- Do yard work or clean up a few areas in your neighborhood
- Plant and care for a vegetable garden (then cook the vegetables for healthy meals)
- Add more steps to your laundry routine by taking one small bag at a time from your bedroom(s) to the laundry or from your car to the laundromat
- Put on a favorite CD/stream a favorite music play list; close the curtains, and dance to your favorite songs

SIMPLE SUBSTITUTIONS

Dieting may feel overwhelming, but you can start by making some same substitutions, for example:

- Switch out soda for sparkling water
- Use a low fat/low carb flour tortilla instead of bread for three lunches a week
- Place one-half teaspoon of salt in a baggie and use only that salt for the day to start limiting your salt consumption
- Switch one bagel for two mini bagels and use low fat cream cheese
- Switch out ground turkey for ground beef in hamburgers; or make a 50 /50 mix
- Put your lunch meat on a salad instead of on bread and use low-fat dressing a few times a week
- Switch out chips for Jicama sticks, celery sticks, or snap peas with barbeque sauce or low fat ranch dressing a few times a week

CARD 7: SMALL STEPS TOWARD HEART HEALTH, PART 3



WALKING WONDERS

There are some easy ways to increase your daily steps. If you use a wheel chair or have other limitations, you can still engage in some of these ideas, exercising your arms and torso. The goal is to increase your heart rate and sustain that increase for a period of time.

- Walk the dog with the whole family; if you do not have a dog, consider volunteering to walk dogs at a local shelter
- Listen to a podcast, audio book, or the news while you walk instead of sitting on the couch reading or watching the news
- Instead of calling friends, take a walk together to catch up; or, put in a headset and earbuds and talk with your friends while you walk
- Park your car as far away as possible so you have to walk a longer distance from your destination; even better, walk or cycle to run errands in your community
- Walk up and down the field/court while watching your child(ren) play sports
- Get off the bus or subway one stop early and walk the rest of the way
- Replace a coffee break with an outdoor walk—or take the coffee with you on your walk
- Choose the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator

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CARD 8: SMALL STEPS TOWARD HEART HEALTH, PART 4



REWARD CONTRACTS

Some people like to work toward a goal and reward themselves when reaching the goal.

- Reward yourself with a vacation after stopping smoking for three months; save money for the trip by calculating how much you spend on smoking each day and put that same amount in a piggy bank every day
- Reward yourself with a favorite food (in moderation!) after walking the dog and doing simple exercises for a week
- Reward yourself with a diet soda after drinking water all day instead of soda

Questions for the group

- What other strategies would you add to support a healthy heart?

CARD 9: MAKING IT PERSONAL & CONCLUSION

(10 minutes for 45-minute session)

(5 minutes for 30-minute session)



MAKING IT PERSONAL

- Let's make this personal. Take a few minutes and fill in box four on your handout

Questions for the group:

- What strategies do you think you can incorporate into your own life?
- What strategies are you going to begin implementing next week?
- How can we support you?

CONCLUSION

(5 minutes for 45-minute session)

(2 minutes for 30-minute session)

- Great, we've taken a look at how people living with serious mental illness can better manage our own heart health
- We've looked at some of the risks and some of the ways heart issues can get in the way of our recovery
- We've explored some easy-to-try strategies that we can start this week; and we each picked one or two things that we will do to start living a healthier lifestyle
- Very importantly, we've agreed to help and support each other
- Any last comments or thoughts? *(Omit this for the 30-minute session)*
- Thanks for coming today/tonight!

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CARD 10: LINKS

- Card 1
 - CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/features/mens-health-month/index.html>
- Card 2
 - NIMH: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/bipolar-disorder/index.shtml>
 - Cardiovascular disease: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/news/science-news/2014/increased-health-risks-linked-to-first-episode-psychosis.shtml>
- Card 5
 - Exercise: <https://www.hhs.gov/fitness/be-active/ways-to-be-active/index.html>



PARTICIPANT HANDOUT
HEALTHY HEARTS, HEALTHY RECOVERY



HEALTHY HEARTS, HEALTHY RECOVERY HAND OUT

ONE: OVERVIEW OF HEART DISEASE

Approximately 1.5 million heart attacks and strokes occur every year in the U.S.¹

More than 800,000 people in the U.S. die from cardiovascular disease each year—that's 1 in every 3 deaths, and about 160,000 of them occur in people under age 65.²

Heart disease kills roughly the same number people in the U.S. each year as cancer, lower respiratory diseases (including pneumonia), and accidents combined.³

“People with depression are more likely to have other conditions that can lead to heart disease, including obesity and diabetes.”⁴

NIMH reports that similar connections between heart disease and serious mental illness exist for diagnoses like bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.”^{5,6}

Researchers have found that most drugs (used by individuals with substance use disorders) can have adverse cardiovascular effects, ranging from abnormal heart rate to heart attack. Injection drug use can also lead to cardiovascular problems such as collapsed veins and bacterial infections of the blood vessels and heart valves.”⁷

And according to the National Institute of Alcohol and Alcohol Abuse, “Drinking a lot over a long time or too much on a single occasion can damage the heart, causing problems including: cardiomyopathy – stretching and drooping of heart muscle, arrhythmias – irregular heartbeat, stroke, and high blood pressure.”⁸

TWO: RISK FACTORS FOR HEART DISEASE

The CDC tells us there are three ways to think about risk factors for heart disease:

Conditions that increase our risk for heart disease include high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes.

Behaviors that increase our risk for heart disease includes: unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, obesity, too much alcohol, and tobacco use.

Characteristics that increase our risk include: Family history (if others in your extended family have a history of heart disease, you may have inherited a likelihood as well). Age (Your risk for heart disease increases, as you get older). Gender (Heart disease was the number one killer of both men and women in 2013, but women experience less recognizable symptoms).⁹ Race or ethnicity (In 2013, heart disease was the leading cause of death in the United States for non-Hispanic whites, non-Hispanic blacks, and American Indians; for Hispanics, and Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, heart disease is second only to cancer as a cause of death).¹⁰

QUESTIONS

- What are some of the ways heart disease could get in the way of your recovery and achieving your hopes and dreams?
- What are some things you can achieve by improving your heart health?

THREE: STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT HEART HEALTH

EASY EXERCISES

- Keep a list of quick activities, like squats or stretches, near the remote so that you can be active during commercial breaks when watching TV
- Start your day with a morning stretch or end your day with calming yoga
- Put on a favorite CD/stream a favorite music play list; close the curtains and dance to your favorite songs

SIMPLE SUBSTITUTIONS

- Switch out soda for sparkling water half the time
- Use a low fat/low carb flour tortilla instead of bread for three lunches a week
- Place one-half teaspoon of salt in a baggie and use only that salt for the day to start limiting your salt consumption
- Switch out chips for Jicama sticks, celery sticks, or snap peas with barbeque sauce or low fat ranch dressing a few times a week

WALKING WONDERS

If you use a wheelchair or have other limitations, you can still engage in some of these ideas, exercising your arms and torso.)

- Walk the dog with the whole family. If you do not have a dog, consider volunteering to walk dogs at a local shelter.
- Listen to a podcast, book, or the news while you walk instead of sitting on the couch reading or watching the news
- Instead of calling friends, take a walk together to catch up

REWARD CONTRACTS

Some people like to work toward a goal and reward themselves when reaching the goal

- Reward yourself with a vacation after stopping smoking for three months; save money for the trip by calculating how much you spend on smoking each day and put that same amount in a piggy bank every day
- Reward yourself with a favorite food (in moderation!) after walking the dog and doing simple exercises for a week
- Reward yourself with one diet soda after drinking water all day instead of soda

FOUR: HEART HEALTH COMMITMENTS

It's time to make a commitment to support your heart. What one or two things are you willing to start right now?

- 1.
- 2.

I commit to doing these strategies to help me meet my recovery and heart health goals:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I will seek support from:

- 1.
- 2.

REFERENCES

1. Million Hearts - Costs & Consequences: <https://millionhearts.hhs.gov/learn-prevent/cost-consequences.html>
2. [Ibid.](#)
3. [Ibid.](#)
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Heart Health and Depression: What Men Need to Know: <https://www.cdc.gov/features/mens-health-month/index.html>
5. National Institute of Mental Health - Bipolar Disorder: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/bipolar-disorder/index.shtml>
6. National Institute of Mental Health - Increased Health Risks Linked to First-episode Psychosis: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/news/science-news/2014/increased-health-risks-linked-to-first-episode-psychosis.shtml>
7. National Institute on Drug Abuse - Health Consequences of Drug Misuse: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/health-consequences-drug-misuse/cardiovascular-effects>
8. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism - Alcohol's Effects on the Body: <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/alcohols-effects-body>
9. American Heart Association - Gender and Heart Disease: <https://www.goredforwomen.org/know-your-risk/find-out-your-risk/gender-heart-disease/>
10. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - Heart Disease Risk Factors: https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/risk_factors.htm

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- CDC - Heart Disease: <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/>
- CDC - Heart Age Predictor Using BMI: <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/cardiovascular-disease/heartage.html>
- Check. Change. Control. Calculator: <https://cccccalculator.ccctracker.com/>
- HHS - Ways to Be Active: <https://www.hhs.gov/fitness/be-active/ways-to-be-active/index.html>
- HHS - How to Eat Healthy: <https://www.hhs.gov/fitness/eat-healthy/how-to-eat-healthy/index.html>
- SAMHSA - Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator, Peer Support: <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/locator/link-focPeer>
- SAMHSA - Making and Keeping Friends: A Self-Help Guide: <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/SMA-3716>
- Heart MD Institute - The Healing Power of Laughter <https://heartmdinstitute.com/stress-relief/healing-power-laughter/>
- Hindawi - The Use of Humor in Serious Mental Illness: A Review: <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/ecam/2011/342837/>
- Million Hearts - ABCs of Heart Health: https://millionhearts.hhs.gov/files/4_Steps_Forward_English.PDF
- Million Hearts - Personal Stories: <https://millionhearts.hhs.gov/news-media/media/videos.html>

SHARED STORY

HEALTHY HEARTS, HEALTHY RECOVERY



A STORY OF RESILIENCE: JOHN'S SELF-CARE JOURNEY

*(Note this is a story of a real consumer and peer specialist.
We have changed the names of the people involved based on their request.)*

John lives in a rural part of the country. He has struggled with depression all of his life. He discovered several years ago that he lives with high blood pressure, but he has a hard time remembering to take his medication. Besides, John did not want to become a “pill popper like his mother.” Because of this, he does not like the idea of taking medication to manage his blood pressure.

John went to his doctor's office because he was experiencing dizziness, shortness of breath, and was feeling weak and tired. His blood pressure was 140-160/280; and he was in need of immediate medical assistance. Normal blood pressure is 120/80 or below.

In addition to the cardiac care John received, he was introduced to William, a certified peer specialist. William shared stories involving similar feelings about medication during his own recovery journey. John felt like William really understood his experiences, and he felt more hopeful knowing that William had overcome similar issues.

Together, John and William discussed the things John wanted to do to work on his depression and his heart issues. John decided his first goals would include getting up every day, taking a shower, and feeding then walking his dog. Walking his dog gave him energy and was good for his heart.

Next, John and William considered things John used to do before his depression and his heart issues overwhelmed him. John shared his past interest in taking walks, fishing, and helping out in the neighborhood. William and John talked about specific ways to add those things back into his life a little bit at a time.

John and William then discussed wellness tools and self-care. William shared a diabetic diet plan he was using and some other tools like mood calendars and Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP).

Together, John and William looked up several different kinds of diets, and John chose one he liked and thought he could follow to support his heart health. He also chose a few other tools that fit his wellness and self-care needs.

Three months after John and William started talking and supporting each other, John visited his primary care physician. John is now taking his blood pressure medication regularly, and is actively engaged in therapy and on antidepressants. John says peer support gave him the encouragement and hope that was needed to potentially save his life.

Group Questions

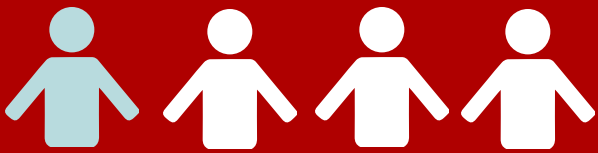
- What were some of the things that got in the way of John's heart health? Do any of these things sound familiar to you?
- What were some of the solutions John tried out in order to help him increase his heart health? What are your heart health ideas and strategies?

INFOGRAPHIC
HEALTHY HEARTS, HEALTHY RECOVERY



MY HEART HEALTH MATTERS

RESEARCH SAYS:



About 610,000 Americans die from heart disease each year. That's 1 in every 4 deaths.⁴



Individuals with schizophrenia have been reported to be three times as likely to experience sudden cardiac death compared to individuals from the general population¹



People with bipolar disorder have approximately two times greater risk of coronary heart disease²



People with depression have 50% greater risk of developing heart disease³

RISK

FACTORS

The risk of dying from heart disease is three times higher in people with serious mental illness under the age of 50, and twice as high for those between the ages of 50 and 75. Smoking, diabetes, high cholesterol, and obesity are all more common in people with serious mental illness.⁵

FACTORS THAT APPLY TO ME:

Check all that apply:



Excessive alcohol use



Diabetes



Overweight and obesity



Smoking



Physical Inactivity



Poor diet



RESOURCES

Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator: <http://bit.ly/2rMTtvY>

My Life Check: <http://bit.ly/2uKOD2V>

PALA+: <http://bit.ly/2uqx3BG>

Million Hearts: <http://bit.ly/2tRx3gX>

Nutrition Resources: <http://bit.ly/2tIGzTu>

Smokefree.gov: <http://bit.ly/1XwmOr9>

Guides for Physical Activity and Weight Management: <http://bit.ly/2sN20xV>

USDA Supertracker: <http://bit.ly/18zPmoZ>

Sleep and Sleep Disorders: <http://bit.ly/2jQbdoO>

Aim for a Healthy Weight: <http://bit.ly/2sqcBQd>

TAKE ACTION



I will discuss preventative health care with my doctor, dentist, and other health care providers



I will make a healthy shopping list and stick to it



I will increase my physical activity by at least 10 minutes each day



I will work with my mental health provider to choose and prepare for a quit date (for current smokers)



I will



I will



I will



REFERENCES

1. De Hert, M., Correll, C. U., Bobes, J., Cetkovich-Bakmas, M., Cohen, D., Asai, I., ... Leucht, S. (2011). Physical illness in patients with severe mental disorders. I. Prevalence, impact of medications and disparities in health care. *World Psychiatry*, 10(1), 52–77.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017). Heart disease facts. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>
5. Osborn, D.P.J., Haroon, S., Omar, R.Z., Holt, R.I.G., King, M., Larsen, J., ...Petersen, I. (2015). Cardiovascular risk prediction models for people with severe mental illness: Results from the Prediction and Management of Cardiovascular Risk in People With Severe Mental Illnesses (PRIMROSE) Research Program. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 72(2), 143–151. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2014.2133



HEALTHY HEARTS, HEALTHY RECOVERY: MY HEART HEALTH MATTERS

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Research says: About 610,000 Americans die from heart disease each year. That's 1 in every 4 deaths.⁴

RISK FACTORS

- The risk of dying from heart disease is three times higher in people with serious mental illness under the age of 50, and twice as high for those between the ages of 50 and 75. Smoking, diabetes, high cholesterol, and obesity are all more common in people with serious mental illness.⁵

FACTORS THAT APPLY TO ME

Check all that apply

- Excessive alcohol use
- Diabetes
- Overweight and obesity
- Smoking
- Physical inactivity
- Poor diet

-
- 1 De Hert, M., Correll, C. U., Bobes, J., Cetkovich-Bakmas, M., Cohen, D., Asai, I., ...Leucht, S. (2011). Physical illness in patients with severe mental disorders. I. Prevalence, impact of medications and disparities in health care. *World Psychiatry*, 10(1), 52–77.
 - 2 Ibid.
 - 3 Ibid.
 - 4 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2017). Heart disease facts. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>
 - 5 Osborn, D.P.J., Hardoon, S., Omar, R.Z., Holt, R.I.G., King, M., Larsen, J.,...Petersen, I. (2015). Cardiovascular risk prediction models for people with severe mental illness: Results from the Prediction and Management of Cardiovascular Risk in People With Severe Mental Illnesses (PRIMROSE) Research Program. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 72(2), 143–151. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2014.2133

TAKE ACTION

Check the actions you can incorporate into your life to improve heart health:

- I will discuss preventative health care with my doctor, dentist, and other health care providers
- I will make a healthy shopping list and stick to it
- I will increase my physical activity by at least 10 minutes each day
- I will work with my mental health provider to choose and prepare for a quit date (for current smokers)

What are three additional actions you can take to improve your heart health?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

RESOURCES

[SAMHSA's Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#)

[My Life Check](#)

[Presidential Active Lifestyle Award \(PALA+\)](#)

[Million Hearts](#)

[Nutrition Resources](#)

[Smokefree.gov](#)

[Guides for Physical Activity and Weight Management](#)

[USDA Supertracker](#)

[Sleep and Sleep Disorders](#)

[Aim for a Healthy Weight](#)

Healthy Hearts, Healthy Recovery: My Heart Health Matters was developed by SAMHSA's Program to Achieve Wellness. For more information, contact SAMHSA's Program to Achieve Wellness at paw@prainc.com or at 1.800.850.2523.

RESOURCES

HEALTHY HEARTS, HEALTHY RECOVERY



HEALTHY HEARTS, HEALTHY RECOVERY: RESOURCES

If you have more time, or your group wants to do more, here are a few ideas:

1. Use the videos on this site to spark more conversation:
<https://millionhearts.hhs.gov/news-media/media/videos.html>
2. Have participants fill out this form to understand their current level of cardiovascular health:
<https://ccccalculator.ccctracker.com/>
3. Discuss the ABCs of heart health:
https://millionhearts.hhs.gov/files/4_Steps_Forward_English.PDF
4. Have participants learn their heart age through this tool
<https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/cardiovascular-disease/heartage.html>
5. Learn the signs of a heart attack and what to do
https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/signs_symptoms.htm