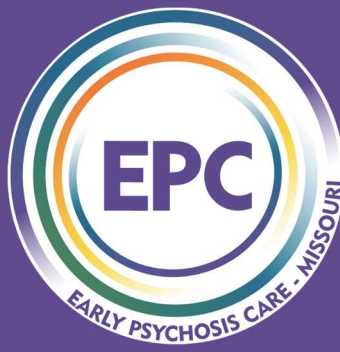




 YAC@epcmisouri.org

Wednesday, June 4, 2025

 Benton Hall, One University Dr
Suite B207
St. Louis, MO 63121

Dear youth-involved professional,

We're writing to inform you about the Early Psychosis Care Center's **Youth Advisory Council (YAC)**. The YAC is a group of youth and young adults **aged 15-35 with personal lived experience with psychosis**. It helps our center create more effective, targeted, and responsive services, while also engaging youth, building community, reducing stigma, and elevating the voices of lived experience.

The group's mission statement is as follows: **The EPC YAC is working to reduce stigma about psychosis by sharing resources, raising awareness, and providing fact-based education in order to improve young people's access to care.** We do so through monthly meetings, attending events, and creating actionable, accessible resources about psychosis.

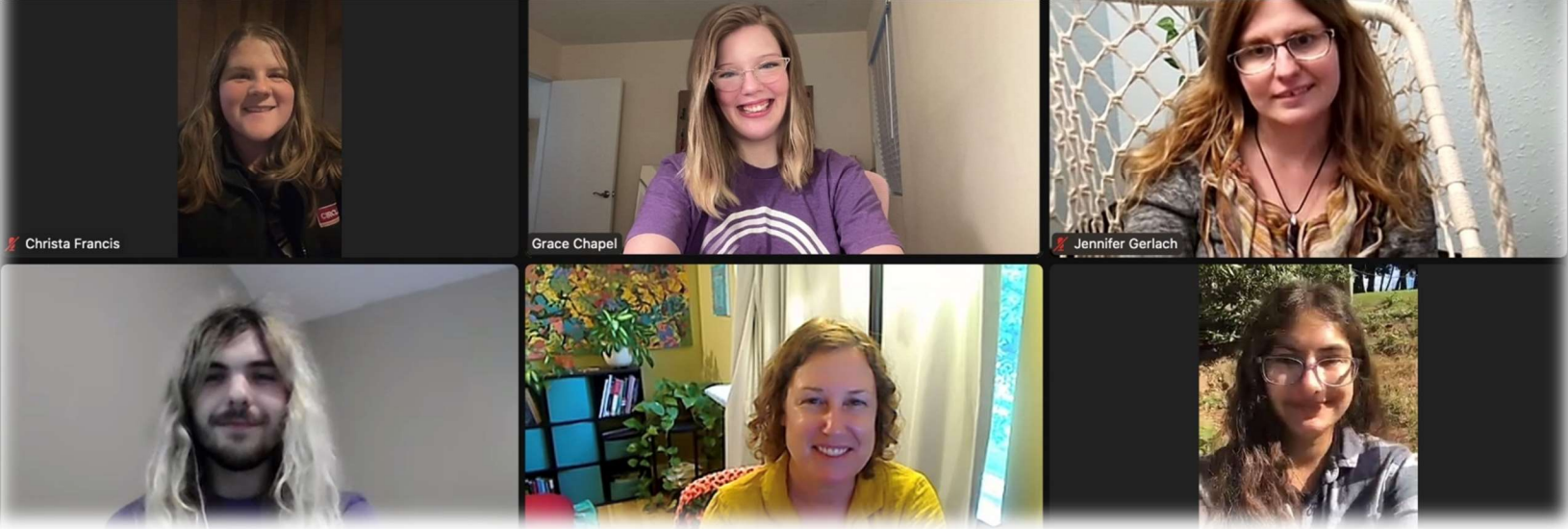
These materials are intended to serve youth, professionals, and families. These include a **trauma informed storytelling tip sheet** to help individuals with lived experience tell their stories in a safe, supported way, videos sharing their lived experiences, a **toolkit for middle, high school, and college-level educators** to help them understand the crucial role they play in identifying and supporting students who experience psychosis, a **family gathering language guide** to help families ask questions and show support about their loved ones' experiences with psychosis in a kind and sensitive way, a **brochure for employers about rights and responsibilities surrounding workplace accommodations** which youth can use as a conversation starter and self-advocacy tool, and a **goal-setting workbook** for recently diagnosed young adults to design a life they love despite their psychosis. We also have a **collection of wellness tools** coming soon.

YAC Members should be between the ages of 15-35 and have personal lived experience with psychosis. Meetings are held in the evenings to accommodate for members who work during the day. We meet on the **second Monday of each month from 6-7PM CST**, and sessions include brief icebreakers, youth-targeted mental health resources, and collaborative development of new projects. If you know of any youth or young adults who may be interested, we encourage you to send them our way! Below is a link to an interest survey. Those who complete the survey will receive an email from our team with more information, including a link for the Zoom meeting. If you or potential members have any questions, please **contact us at yac@epcmisouri.org**.

Survey Link: https://umsl.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_dpd8LG9bQzRU7Hw

Thank you for your time! We look forward to this opportunity to build a community and develop psychosis care in Missouri to be the best it can be.

Identify • Treat • Recover



Join our Youth Advisory Council!

We are looking for youth & young adults ages 15-35 with personal lived experience with psychosis. Influence change, empower others, and build connections!



[www.epcmissouri.org/
youth-advisory-council/](http://www.epcmissouri.org/youth-advisory-council/)

The EPC YAC is working to reduce stigma about psychosis by sharing resources, raising awareness, and providing fact-based education in order to improve young people's access to care.

Virtual meetings are held on the second Monday of every month from 6-7pm CST



Navigating the Holidays with Mental Health in Mind: A Guide to Compassionate Connections

Instead of...	Try...	Explanation	Example
Asking questions about milestones, achievements, or stressful topics such as school or work	Asking about lower-stakes topics, such as hobbies and interests	Mental health difficulties can interfere with your loved ones' ability to achieve goals on the "expected" timeline. It can be saddening or frustrating to be reminded of this.	"Have you read any good books lately?" "What have you been doing for fun lately?" "Do you still play soccer?" "Did you see the new Marvel movie?"
Providing unsolicited advice about managing mental health conditions	Asking what has helped your loved one, or how you can provide support	Your loved one's care team is best qualified to provide treatment recommendations	"Is there anything that's been making life a little easier or harder for you lately?" "I know you've been going through a difficult time. Please let me know if there's anything I can do."
Lingering on mental health topics or asking invasive questions about symptoms, experiences, and treatments for psychosis	Asking about other topics, such as what your loved one is looking forward to in the new year	Many people prefer to focus on meaningful connections and positive topics during holiday gatherings, rather than discussing their mental health challenges.	"Do you have any new years resolutions?" "I have a trip coming up that I'm really excited about. Do you like to travel?"
Centering yourself or your own experiences when discussing a loved one's mental health condition	Active listening and giving your loved one space to bring up the topic in their own time	Active listening means focusing fully on the other person without interrupting, judging, or thinking about how to respond. This approach shows empathy and respect, making your loved one feel heard and understood. Giving them space to bring up sensitive topics at their own can reduce pressure, especially if they're not ready or comfortable discussing their mental health at the time.	"If there's anything you want to talk about, just know I'm here to listen—no pressure to share anything you're not ready to." "I don't want to push you to talk about anything you're not ready for. I'm just glad to be spending time with you. I'm here to listen if there's anything on your mind!"
Pejorative language	Supportive, person-first language	Person-first language means putting the person before their diagnosis or condition—for example, saying "person with psychosis" rather than "psychotic person." This approach respects your loved one's humanity, acknowledging them as a whole person rather than defining them by their mental health.	"She's dealing with some mental health challenges." "He lives with schizophrenia." "He experiences delusions."



Navigating the Holidays with Mental Health in Mind: A Guide to Compassionate Connections

Instead of...	Try...	Explanation	Example
Outing loved ones' experiences and/or conditions without consent	Asking permission and allowing individuals to initiate discussions surrounding their own mental health	It's up to the individual who, when, and what they'd like to share. Mental health experiences can be very personal, and your loved one may not want everybody to know all the details.	"Your brother has been concerned about how you've been doing. Is it alright if I tell him what's been going on?" "I'm not comfortable talking about her time in the hospital. If you have questions, I think it would be best to ask her about it yourself."
Strict adherence to rules and traditions	Accommodate mental-health-based needs (e.g. leaving the table, being overwhelmed by many conversations at once)	Taking a moment to re-center can be helpful to allow your loved one to fully enjoy spending time with everyone	"It looks like you're a little stressed out, do you want to take a break from everything for a few minutes?" "It's really hectic in here—I'm going to the kitchen for a cup of coffee and a few minutes of quiet, do you wanna join me?"
Rehashing or making fun of individuals with mental health symptom related anecdotes	Tell other stories	Nobody likes to feel like the butt of the joke—rehashing stories related to your loved ones' mental health experiences can be hurtful.	"Remember what a nice time we had at the amusement park last summer?" "When you were a kid, you used to love going to the park with your cousins."
Pushing alcohol consumption	Take no for an answer, provide alternative (but festive) beverage options	Often, mental health medications can be dangerous when combined with alcohol. Also, some individuals' mental health is poorly affected by any substance consumption, and abstaining is the best option for their recovery.	"Would you like a drink? We have alcoholic drinks over here and nonalcoholic choices over here." "We're making pumpkin spice mocktails, do you want one?"
Insisting on attendance at family gatherings	Be flexible and accommodating with your loved one's capacity to attend gatherings	Not everyone has the capacity to engage in all expected traditions but it's important to engage them in what they're able to join in on	"We'd love to have you but understand if you're not able to make it." "Even if you're not able to join us at the big reunion, if you have time before you leave town your aunt and I would love to have lunch with you, just the three of us"

Psychosis Does Not Have to Be Limiting

Vincent van Gogh

Despite experiencing episodes of psychosis, Vincent van Gogh created revolutionary art filled with emotion and brilliance. His struggles didn't define him, and his creativity and impact continue to inspire the world.



Selena Gomez

Selena Gomez has experienced bipolar disorder-related psychosis but has thrived as an actress, singer, and business owner. She has been named Billboard's Woman of the Year, and her beauty company is valued at over \$2 billion.



John Nash

John Nash, a brilliant mathematician, lived with schizophrenia and made groundbreaking contributions to his field. In 1994, he won a Nobel Prize, proving that mental illness does not define one's potential.



Where Can I Learn More?

Early Psychosis Care Center

<https://epcmissouri.org>

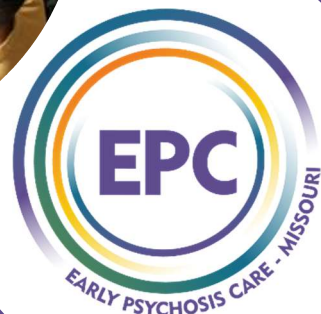
US Department of Labor

<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep>



**EARLY
PSYCHOSIS
CARE**
MISSOURI

Navigating Psychosis in the Workplace



What is Psychosis?

Psychosis is when a person has trouble distinguishing what's real and what's not. They might experience things which others don't see or hear. People experiencing psychosis may appear confused, agitated, or have difficulty communicating coherently.

If you see someone who appears to be experiencing a mental health crisis, avoid trying to "snap them out of it". Instead, stay calm, be supportive, and use clear, simple language. Seek medical help if needed and ensure a safe environment.

What are my responsibilities as an employer?

Employees with mental health conditions may face challenges at work, but reasonable accommodations can help them succeed. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), most employers must provide adjustments that enable qualified employees to perform essential job functions.

Many accommodations are low-cost and benefit both employees and businesses by improving productivity and retention. Not all employees need accommodations, but for those who do, the process should be individualized, and it is best to work with your employee to determine what will best help them accomplish their job duties.



What are some ways to accommodate psychosis at work?

Scheduling: part-time hours, adjustments in start/end times, make up of missed time.

Leave: flexible use of vacation/sick time, additional leave for treatment or recovery.

Breaks: more frequent breaks, greater flexibility in scheduling breaks.

Distractions: reduction and/or removal of distractions in the work area.

Job Duties: modification/removal of nonessential duties, division of large assignments into smaller tasks, additional assistance and/or time for new tasks.

Management: positive reinforcement, more frequent meetings to help prioritize tasks, open communication with supervisors regarding performance and expectations.

Communication: recording meetings and trainings, written instructions, typed meeting minutes, strategies to deal with problems before they arise, education of all employees about their rights, relevant training for all employees.

Myth vs. Fact

Myth

People with psychosis are crazy.

People with psychosis are dangerous.

People with psychosis can't lead normal lives.

Fact

People who experience psychosis aren't crazy.

Crazy is a pejorative term and shouldn't be used to describe people experiencing mental health difficulties.

People who experience psychosis are unlikely to deliberately harm others.

In fact, those who experience psychosis are more likely to be victims of violence.

Many people who experience psychosis lead normal and productive lives.

With the right support, they can manage their symptoms and pursue fulfilling careers. It's important to recognize and support their capabilities, rather than focusing solely on the challenges they face.





**Not an End,
But a Beginning**

**Thriving After a First
Episode of Psychosis**



A Workbook for Youth and Young Adults



Not an End, But a Beginning:

Thriving After a First Episode of Psychosis

A Workbook for Youth and Young Adults



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Setting Goals in All Areas of Life
What Are SMART Goals?
Create Your Own SMART Goals
Build Your Team
Make a Plan
Troubleshooting
Reflect Back
More Resources

Introduction

Experiencing psychosis for the first time can feel overwhelming. You might be wondering about many things. *What does this mean for my future? Will I still be able to do the things I love? Can I reach my goals?*

The truth is, a psychosis diagnosis doesn't mean your life is over. Many people who experience psychosis go on to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives—pursuing careers, education, relationships, and hobbies that bring them joy. Some choose to speak openly about their experiences, while others focus on their passions without making their psychosis a central part of their identity. Here are a few examples of people who have experienced psychosis and continued to live full, meaningful lives.

Brian Wilson

Brian Wilson, cofounder of The Beach Boys, was one of the most innovative songwriters of the 20th century. At the height of his success, he began experiencing psychosis, which made life and work difficult. But with the right support, he returned to writing and performing music.

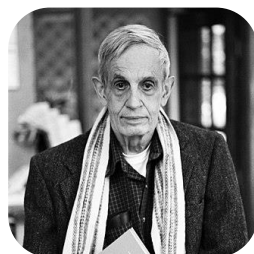


Elyn Saks, JD, PhD, LLD

Elyn Saks was told schizophrenia would keep her from living independently—but she proved otherwise. She went on to earn degrees from Vanderbilt, Oxford, and Yale, eventually becoming a Professor of Psychology, Psychiatry, and the Behavioral Sciences at the USC School of Law.

Lionel Aldridge

Lionel Aldridge was a professional football player who won multiple championships with the Green Bay Packers. He developed schizophrenia in his 30s and faced significant challenges, but he was able to find stability and later worked as a sports broadcaster and mental health advocate.



John Nash

John Nash was a brilliant mathematician who, despite experiencing symptoms of schizophrenia which disrupted his personal and professional life, went on to win a Nobel Prize in Economics for his groundbreaking work in game theory. His experiences with schizophrenia were depicted in the 2001 film *A Beautiful Mind*.

Someone Like You

You don't have to be a famous professor, athlete, or writer to live a fulfilling life. However you define happiness and success, your future is still yours to shape, whether that's by having close relationships, a job you enjoy, pursuing creative interests, or simply finding peace in your day-to-day life.



Setting Goals in All Areas of Life

Setting goals can help you plan out and move toward the life you want—whether that means pursuing education, building relationships, taking care of your health, or exploring new interests. Goals don't have to be big or overwhelming; baby steps in the right direction can make a meaningful difference. Below are different areas of life where you might set goals, along with examples to help you get started.

Recreation

Enjoying life isn't just about responsibilities—it's also about having fun, exploring interests, and expressing yourself. Recreation can bring joy, relaxation, and creativity into your life.

- Reconnect with a hobby you used to love, like drawing, writing, or playing music
- Try a new activity, like photography, cooking, or crafting
- Visit a museum, art exhibit, or live performance
- Join a social or hobby-based group to meet people with similar interests
- Purchase supplies for a creative project you've been wanting to start
- Spend time outside doing something active, like hiking or biking

Relationships

Relationships can bring support, joy, and connection. Whether you're looking to build new friendships, reconnect with family, or strengthen existing relationships, there are many ways to foster meaningful connections.

- Make a new friend by joining a club or group that interests you
- Plan a family game or movie night
- Call or text a family member once a week to stay in touch
- Attend a local event, like a book club, volunteer day, or community class
- Reconnect with a friend you lost contact with during a difficult time
- Practice setting healthy boundaries in relationships

Education

Education can open doors, but success looks different for everyone. Whether you're looking to continue your studies, return to school, or learn new skills, there are many ways to grow academically.

- Improve your grades in a subject that challenges you
- Apply to college, trade school, or a certification program
- Re-enroll in school if you previously had to step away
- Earn your GED or high school diploma
- Seek tutoring or academic support
- Study for the SAT, ACT, or another entrance exam
- Take an online course to learn something new

Vocation

Having a job or career you enjoy can provide independence, confidence, and stability. Whether you're looking for work, hoping to grow in your current job, or exploring new opportunities, setting goals can help you move forward.

- Find a part-time or full-time job that suits your interests and skills
- Self-advocate for accommodations at work that support your success
- Apply for an internship or volunteer opportunity
- Increase your work hours if you feel ready
- Learn a new skill that can help with career advancement

Physical Health

Taking care of your body can help you feel better physically and mentally. You don't need to overhaul your routine overnight—small, manageable changes can make a difference.

- Schedule a doctor, dentist, or vision appointment
- Refill a prescription at the pharmacy
- Exercise once or twice a week in a way that feels enjoyable, like walking, stretching, or dancing
- Add an additional serving of fruits or vegetables to your daily meals
- Stick to a regular bedtime or sleep routine to feel more rested
- Drink enough water throughout the day

Mental Health

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health. Setting mental health goals can help you get the most out of your care.

- Identify coping strategies that help you manage stress or difficult emotions
- Practice self-compassion and challenge negative self-talk
- Keep a journal to track your thoughts and feelings
- Build a daily routine that provides structure and stability
- Try a relaxation technique like deep breathing or mindfulness
- Reach out for support when you need it, whether from a professional or a trusted person in your life
- Create a crisis plan or recovery maintenance plan

Finances

Financial stability can reduce stress and give you more independence. Whether you're just starting to manage money or looking to build better habits, financial goals can help you feel more secure.

- Create a simple budget to track your income and expenses
- Open a savings account and set a small savings goal
- Apply for a credit card and learn how to use it responsibly
- Pay off a small debt or set up a plan to do so over time
- Research different financial aid options for school or training programs
- Learn about credit scores and how to build good credit

Spirituality

For many people, spirituality or mindfulness practices provide comfort, meaning, and a sense of connection. This can take many forms, and it's about finding what feels meaningful to you.

- Attend a religious or spiritual gathering in your community if that aligns with your beliefs
- Keep a gratitude or prayer journal to reflect on your thoughts
- Spend time in nature, whether on a walk or just sitting outside
- Try a guided meditation or breathing exercise
- Read a spiritual or philosophical book that interests you
- Join a group that shares your values or beliefs

“People with goals succeed because they know where they're going.”

What Are SMART Goals?

Setting goals is an important step in building the life you want, but not all goals are created equal. A well-defined goal gives you a clear direction and helps you stay motivated. One way to make goals more achievable is to use the SMART framework, which ensures your goals are:

S

Specific

Clearly define what you intend to accomplish

M

Measurable

Measure your progress and success

A

Achievable

Be realistic about your needs and capacities

R

Relevant

Ensure alignment with your values and other goals

T

Time-Bound

Create a deadline or timeline to stay on track

Here's an Example:

Vague Goal:

I want to get healthier.

SMART Goal:

I will exercise for 20 minutes, three times a week, for the next month.

Specific

The goal clearly defines what is being done—exercising—and specifies the duration and frequency. It's not just about getting healthier; it's about a concrete action.

Measurable

This goal can be tracked and measured. You can count the number of times you exercise each week and track the total minutes to ensure you're meeting your goal.

Achievable

The goal is realistic. It's not too ambitious (like aiming to exercise for two hours daily). Exercising for 20 minutes three times a week is a manageable amount of physical activity for most people.

Relevant

This goal supports the broader objective of improving your health, which can positively impact other areas of your life, such as energy, mood, and overall well-being. Because it is manageable, you can balance it with goals in multiple areas of your life without requiring an excessive or unbalanced time commitment.

Time-Bound

The goal has a clear deadline: for the next month. This creates focus and allows for a review after the month to determine if the goal was achieved and whether it needs to be adjusted moving forward.

Create Your Own SMART Goals

Now it's your turn. You can use the template below to set a SMART goal for each of the domains of your life. You can start small and set more goals after you achieve these ones. Perhaps not all of these domains are priorities for you right now—make this tool your own and set goals for the areas which are most important to you.

Recreation

My Goal...			
Is it...	Consider...		
☐ Specific	Is this goal clear about what you'd like to achieve? Circle one.	Yes	No
☐ Measurable	How will you measure your success? How will you know if you were successful or not?		
☐ Achievable	Do you believe this goal is reasonable to accomplish?		
☐ Relevant	Why is this goal important to you? How does it fit in with your other goals?		
☐ Time-Bound	What is the timeline for this goal? When do you want to have achieved it?		

Relationships

My Goal...			
Is it...	Consider...		
☐ Specific	Is this goal clear about what you'd like to achieve? Circle one.	Yes	No
☐ Measurable	How will you measure your success? How will you know if you were successful or not?		
☐ Achievable	Do you believe this goal is reasonable to accomplish?		
☐ Relevant	Why is this goal important to you? How does it fit in with your other goals?		
☐ Time-Bound	What is the timeline for this goal? When do you want to have achieved it?		

Create Your Own SMART Goals

Recreation

My Goal...

Is it...

Consider...

☐

Specific

Is this goal clear about what you'd like to achieve? Circle one.

Yes

No

☐

Measurable

How will you measure your success? How will you know if you were successful or not?

☐

Achievable

Do you believe this goal is reasonable to accomplish?

☐

Relevant

Why is this goal important to you? How does it fit in with your other goals?

☐

Time-Bound

What is the timeline for this goal? When do you want to have achieved it?

Vocation

My Goal...

Is it...

Consider...

☐

Specific

Is this goal clear about what you'd like to achieve? Circle one.

Yes

No

☐

Measurable

How will you measure your success? How will you know if you were successful or not?

☐

Achievable

Do you believe this goal is reasonable to accomplish?

☐

Relevant

Why is this goal important to you? How does it fit in with your other goals?

☐

Time-Bound

What is the timeline for this goal? When do you want to have achieved it?

Create Your Own SMART Goals

Physical Health

My Goal...			
Is it...	Consider...		
☐ Specific	Is this goal clear about what you'd like to achieve? Circle one.	Yes	No
☐ Measurable	How will you measure your success? How will you know if you were successful or not?		
☐ Achievable	Do you believe this goal is reasonable to accomplish?		
☐ Relevant	Why is this goal important to you? How does it fit in with your other goals?		
☐ Time-Bound	What is the timeline for this goal? When do you want to have achieved it?		

Mental Health

My Goal...			
Is it...	Consider...		
☐ Specific	Is this goal clear about what you'd like to achieve? Circle one.	Yes	No
☐ Measurable	How will you measure your success? How will you know if you were successful or not?		
☐ Achievable	Do you believe this goal is reasonable to accomplish?		
☐ Relevant	Why is this goal important to you? How does it fit in with your other goals?		
☐ Time-Bound	What is the timeline for this goal? When do you want to have achieved it?		

Create Your Own SMART Goals

Finances

My Goal...

Is it...	Consider...		
☐ Specific	Is this goal clear about what you'd like to achieve? Circle one.	Yes	No
☐ Measurable	How will you measure your success? How will you know if you were successful or not?		
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Spirituality

My Goal...

Is it...	Consider...		
☐ Specific	Is this goal clear about what you'd like to achieve? Circle one.	Yes	No
☐ Measurable	How will you measure your success? How will you know if you were successful or not?		
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☐ Relevant	Why is this goal important to you? How does it fit in with your other goals?		
☐ Time-Bound	What is the timeline for this goal? When do you want to have achieved it?		

Build Your Team

Reaching your goals doesn't mean you have to do everything alone. Having the right support can make the process easier and help you stay motivated, and asking others for help is the best way to get that support. This doesn't mean losing your independence—rather, it means having guidance, encouragement, and resources when needed.

People You Already Know

You likely already know people who can help you in different areas of your life, even if you haven't asked them for support before. Think about who you naturally go to when you need advice, encouragement, or information. Also, consider people you don't talk to often but might have useful experience. Some types of supportive people you might include on your support team are:

- Family and friends
 - Peers
 - Mentors
 - Educators
- Employers
 - Mental health and medical professionals
 - Community resources
 - Faith leaders

Domain	Who could support you?	Why would they be a good supporter?
Recreation		
Relationships		
Education		
Vocation		
Physical Health		
Mental Health		
Finances		
Spirituality		

Build Your Team

People You Don't Know Yet

Maybe you don't already know someone who can help with a specific goal. That's okay! There are many ways to find the right people and resources. You can start by asking your support network if they know anyone who could help, or you can do some research on your own. Below are some ideas for where to connect with people who can support your goals.

Recreation

- Community centers
- Hobby clubs
- Extracurriculars or adult education classes
- Parks and recreation programs
- Fun events

Relationships

- Support groups
- Social meetups
- Faith-based groups
- LGBTQ+ centers
- Academic or professional organizations
- Networking events

Education

- School counselors
- Academic advisors
- Tutoring programs
- GED prep programs
- College admissions offices
- Local community colleges

Vocation

- Job resource centers or employment agencies
- Career advisors
- Career fairs
- Local libraries
- Small businesses
- Internship programs

Physical Health

- Doctors
- Wellness coaches
- Health clinics
- Community wellness programs
- Fitness groups
- Dieticians

Mental Health

- Therapists
- Peer support specialists
- Mental health nonprofits
- Online support tools and communities

Finances

- Financial literacy programs
- Nonprofit organizations
- Credit unions
- Financial advisors
- Government assistance programs

Spirituality

- Faith-based organizations
- Meditation or mindfulness groups
- Philosophy discussion groups
- Nature retreats

Build Your Team

Narrow Down Your List

Not everyone in your life will be the right person to help with every goal, and that's okay! The following questions can help you determine if someone is a good person to ask for support with a specific goal. If the answer to most of these questions is yes, this might be a good person to ask! If not, don't worry—there are ways to find someone who can help.

- **Do they have experience or knowledge about what I'm trying to do?** For instance, if your goal is to apply to college, a teacher, school counselor, or someone who has been through the process might be helpful.
- **Are they someone who is supportive and encouraging?** A helpful person should be someone who believes in you and makes you feel capable, not someone who discourages you.
- **Are they reliable and available to help?** A person might want to help but may not have the time or ability. If they aren't available, that's okay—you can look for someone else.

Asking for Help

Once you've identified someone who might be able to support you, the next step is reaching out. Asking for help can feel intimidating, especially if you're not used to it. But most people are happy to offer advice, guidance, or encouragement when asked. The key is to be clear about what kind of help you need and to communicate in a way that feels comfortable to you. Here are some different ways to ask for help depending on your situation.

- **Casual Approach:** *"Hey [Name], I'm trying to [goal], and I know you have experience with this. Do you have any advice?"*
- **Direct Ask:** *"I'm working on [goal] and could really use some support. Would you be willing to help me figure out my next steps?"*
- **Connecting to Resources:** *"I want to [goal], but I don't know where to start. Do you know anyone I could talk to or any resources I could check out?"*
- **Practical Help:** *"I need to [task, like practice for an interview or build a budget]. Would you be willing to help me with that?"*
- **Asking for Accountability:** *"I'm trying to stay on track with [goal]. Can I check in with you once a week to let you know how it's going?"*
- **Requesting Feedback:** *"I put together [project, application, plan]. Could you take a look and let me know if you have any suggestions?"*
- **Seeking Personal Experiences:** *"I know you've [done something similar]. What was your experience like? Any advice?"*
- **Asking for Encouragement:** *"I'm feeling nervous about [goal/task]. Can you remind me why I can do this?"*

"Asking for help is the first step toward overcoming what you thought was impossible."

Maintaining Your Support Team

Asking for help is just the first step—sticking to your goals and maintaining your support network is just as important. Here are some ways to keep yourself accountable and strengthen the connections you've built along the way.

Check in with supporters

Regularly updating the people who are helping you shows that you value their time and effort, as well as keeps you accountable for your goals. It also helps you and your support team reflect on your progress and make adjustments if needed.

Celebrate wins

Reaching milestones, no matter how small, is important! Keeping your supporters in the loop when you succeed helps build motivation and strengthens your connection with them.

Gratitude

Expressing gratitude to the people who support you helps maintain positive relationships and encourages them to continue being part of your journey. You can do this with a simple "thank you" in person, over text, or by email—or if someone really went out of their way to help you, a handwritten note can really show your appreciation. It might look something like this: "Dear [Name], I wanted to say thank you for [specific thing they helped with]. Your support really made a difference, and I appreciate you taking the time to help me out."

Building long term connections

Keeping in touch with people who have helped you—whether a mentor, a friend, or a professional contact—can lead to lasting support and future opportunities.

- Check in occasionally, even if you don't need help at the moment
- Offer to help them in return—relationships are about give and take
- Pay it forward by supporting someone else when you're in a position to help



Make a Plan

Why is a plan important?

A goal without a plan can feel overwhelming or out of reach. That's why making a plan is an important step toward success. Your SMART goals have laid the foundation and now it's time to figure out the how. A solid plan helps you:

Stay Focused

It's easier to work toward something when you know the next steps



Reduce Stress

Breaking a goal into smaller steps makes it feel less intimidating



Adapt as Needed

If things don't go as planned, structure makes it easier to adjust



Key Considerations for Your Plan

Before jumping in, take a moment to think through what will make your plan realistic and effective. Asking yourself these questions in advance can help prevent roadblocks later.

What resources will you need?

Consider what materials, information, or time commitments are necessary for your goal.

- Do you need any supplies? (e.g., running shoes for an exercise goal, a planner for organizing tasks)
- Do you need information? (e.g., research on college applications, steps to open a savings account)
- How much time will this take? (Will you need to adjust your schedule to fit this in?)

Who do you need to talk to?

Some goals require outside help or advice. Think about:

- Who can offer guidance? (e.g., a mentor, teacher, therapist, job coach)
- How will you contact them? (e.g., email, phone call, setting up an appointment)

What skills will be involved?

Some goals require new skills or habits. Consider:

- Do you already have the skills you need?
- If not, how can you develop them? (e.g., taking a class, practicing, asking someone for help)

Accountability

Accountability means having someone or something to remind you to stay on track. It helps you stick to your plan and follow through with your goals. Some ways to build accountability are:

- **Set a Timeline:** Decide on a reasonable timeframe and set deadlines for each step.
- **Check in With a Support Person:** Ask somebody to check in on your progress regularly.
- **Write it Down:** Keep a record to track your progress, questions, and challenges you run into.
- **Reward Yourself:** Celebrate progress, even small wins!

"Failing to plan is planning to fail"

Breaking Your Goal into Steps

Once you have an idea of what you'll need, break your goal down into tiny, clear steps. Identify the first small step you have to take, and then think about what would come next. Keep going until you have a full plan. Sometimes a big goal can be overwhelming, and manageable steps can help you feel confident in your ability to keep moving forward.

Each step should be small enough that you know exactly what to do next. There's no such thing as "too small". If you need, they can be as little as...

- 1.) Open laptop
- 2.) Open email inbox
- 3.) Click 'New Message'



If you get stuck, consider talking it over with someone from your support team!

For Example

If your goal is to apply to a certification program at a local trade school, your plan might look like this:

1. **Draft a list** of questions I have about the application process
2. **Research** online to see if I can answer any of them myself
3. **Discover** the name of the admissions officer at my chosen school if I still have questions
4. **Draft an email** with my questions
5. **Ask a mentor** to review my email and provide feedback
6. **Revise the email** based on their suggestions
7. **Send the email** to the admissions officer
8. **Determine my next steps** with my support team based on the response I receive

Make a Plan

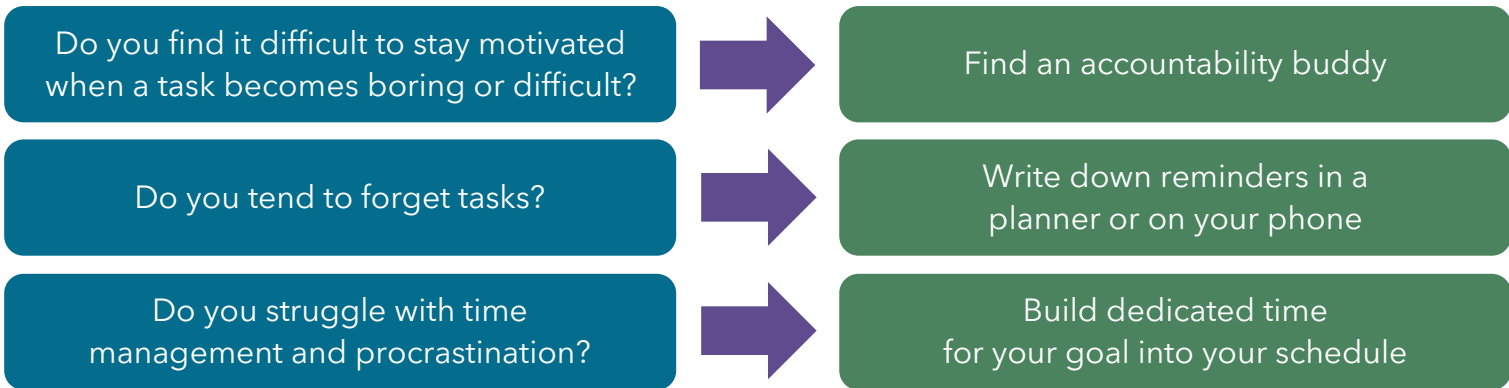
Recognizing Your Strengths

Before you dive in, it's helpful to take stock of the strengths you already have. Recognizing your skills, past successes, and the people and resources you can rely on reminds you that you're not starting from scratch. You already have a foundation to build on. Understanding your strengths can boost your confidence and help you navigate challenges as you run into them.

What strengths do you already have? <i>Are you determined and willing to work hard? Are you organized and good at planning? Do you bounce back from setbacks well?</i>	
What experiences can you draw from? <i>Even if this goal is new, you've probably faced challenges before. What skills, habits, or strategies have helped you succeed?</i>	
Who do you know who can support you? <i>Think about your support team—whether it's friends, family, a therapist, a mentor, or a teacher.</i>	
What resources are available to you? <i>This could be books, websites, materials and supplies, programs, or people who can guide you.</i>	

Getting Ahead of Challenges

Challenges are a part of life, and you're likely to run into a few while progressing toward your goals. Instead of letting them stop you, think ahead about ways to get around them, and build this into your plan. Instead of thinking about "flaws" or "weaknesses," this is about recognizing obstacles in advance so you can be prepared. Once you identify a challenge, think of ways to work around it. For example...



What obstacles could make this difficult?		How will you get around them?	
What help will you need?		Who will help you?	
What resources do you need access to?		How will you get them?	

Troubleshooting

Even with the best plans, difficulties can come up along the way. Instead of giving up when something doesn't go as expected, troubleshooting helps you adjust your approach so you can keep moving forward. Some obstacles might be small, like forgetting to do a task, or bigger, like realizing you need more support than you thought. Either way, making a plan to work around the issue will help you stay on track. If you need help with troubleshooting, don't hesitate to reach out to your support team! We all run into trouble sometimes, and there's no shame in asking for assistance.

Identify the Problem

When you hit a roadblock, take a moment to pause and reflect. Instead of getting frustrated, ask:

- **What exactly is the problem?** *Be as specific as possible.*
- **When did this issue start?** *Did something change that made it harder?*
- **What's making this difficult?** *Are there outside barriers (time, money, resources) or personal challenges (motivation, stress, energy levels) involved?*
- **Have I faced a similar challenge before?** *What worked (or didn't work) last time?*

For Example

You planned to practice playing piano three times a week, but you keep skipping your sessions. Instead of saying, "I'm just bad at sticking to things," try breaking it down. Are you too tired after work? Do you forget? Are you not enjoying playing piano?

Modify the Goal if Needed

Sometimes, the issue isn't that you're failing—it's that your goal needs to be tweaked. Here are some ways to modify your goal if you run into difficulties:

- **Start Smaller:** If your goal feels overwhelming, break it down into an even smaller first step.
 - Example: Instead of "Apply to 10 jobs this week," start with "Revise my resume today."
- **Try a New Approach:** If the first method isn't working, consider other ways to reach your goal.
 - Example: If you joined a soccer team to make friends but realized you don't enjoy it, try a book club or a volunteer group instead.
- **Change the Timeline:** Maybe your original timeframe was ambitious, and you need to scale back.
 - Example: Instead of "Save \$500 in one month," try "Save \$500 in three months."
- **Focus on Progress, Not Perfection:** Even if you don't fully meet your goal, any progress is valuable. Reframe setbacks as learning experiences instead of failures.
 - Example: If your goal was to cook dinner five nights a week but you only managed three, that's still a big step forward!

Consider Whether You Want to Stick to This Goal

Sometimes, as you work toward a goal, you realize it no longer fits your needs or priorities. That's okay! This isn't about giving up—it's about making sure your goals align with what you truly want. Ask yourself:

- Why did this goal matter to me in the first place? Does it still matter now?
- Am I pursuing this goal for myself, or because I feel like I "should"?
- Is there a different way I could meet the same need?

Why Reflection Matters

Reaching the end of a goal, whether you succeeded exactly as planned or had to adjust along the way, is a valuable opportunity to learn. Reflection helps you recognize your progress, celebrate your efforts, and figure out what worked (and what didn't). It's not about judging yourself; it's about understanding your journey and using what you've learned to keep moving forward.

Determining Whether You Succeeded

Before you decide if your goal was a success, take a moment to define what that looks like for you. Maybe you set a goal to find a part-time job, but you haven't landed one yet. However, you improved your resume, applied to multiple places, and gained confidence in job interviews. Even if you didn't fully reach your original goal, you still learned and grew.

Did you reach your goal as you originally planned? If not, did you make partial progress that you're proud of?

Did you achieve something valuable—even if it wasn't what you originally expected?

If you didn't succeed at your original goal, what obstacles got in your way? Were these obstacles within your control, or outside your control?

"Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars."

Reflect Back

Feelings

Now that you’ve reached the finish line, you might consider how you feel about what you did or did not accomplish. You might also think about how you feel about the experience of working towards this goal. For instance, maybe you set a goal to start running to improve your health and found out that you hated it, but you’re proud of yourself for your discipline in sticking to it, or for trying something new.

How do you feel about this goal, now that it’s over?

Cost/Benefit Analysis

You might ask yourself what benefits you gained from working on this goal, what it cost you, and whether these were expected or unexpected. Maybe you joined a running group to make friends and found yourself sleeping better after your runs, or maybe it got in the way of your ability to spend time with your family. Either way, this information can help you make better choices for your needs next time.

What benefits did you get out of the experience of working toward this goal?

What did this experience cost you (in terms of effort, time, resources, etc.)?

What Was Helpful in the Process of Working on Your Goal?

Recognizing what supported your success will help you build on those strengths for future goals. For instance, perhaps you found that having a weekly check-in with a friend kept you accountable, so next time you may build more check-ins into your plan.

Who helped you?	What resources came in handy?	What skills did you use or develop?

Lessons Learned

Every goal—even the ones we don't fully complete—teaches us something. This might be about the domain (such as building better financial literacy), yourself (maybe you discovered a love for cooking), and/or goal-setting in general (for example, if you struggled with motivation because your goal was too vague, next time you'll know to make it more specific and time-bound).

**What did you learn about
the domain you set your goal in?**

**What did you learn about
yourself?**

**What did you learn about
setting and achieving goals?**

**What would you do differently
next time?**

Reflect Back

Balance

Life is about more than just achieving goals—it’s also about balance. As you reflect on your goal, you can consider how it fit in with the other parts of your life.

How did this goal fit in with your other goals, priorities, and/or responsibilities?

If it didn’t fit in well, what changes could you make to improve this balance?

Persistence

If you’re still excited about this goal, stick with it! If not, that’s okay too—you can shift your focus to something else that feels more right for you now.

Is this experience one you’d like to stick to and/or repeat? Why or why not?

Set a New Goal

Reflection isn’t just about looking back. It’s also about what comes next. Now that you’ve learned from this experience, what’s your next goal?

My Goal...			
Is it...	Consider...		
☐ Specific	Is this goal clear about what you’d like to achieve? Circle one.	Yes	No
☐ Measurable	How will you measure your success? How will you know if you were successful or not?		
☐ Achievable	Do you believe this goal is reasonable to accomplish?		
☐ Relevant	Why is this goal important to you? How does it fit in with your other goals?		
☐ Time-Bound	What is the timeline for this goal? When do you want to have achieved it?		

More Resources

Receiving a diagnosis of psychosis can feel overwhelming, but you are not alone. Many people have walked this path before and found support, stability, and fulfillment in their lives. This workbook has provided tools to help you set goals, advocate for yourself, and navigate your journey. However, no one does it all on their own—there are many organizations, communities, and resources available to help. Below are some places where you can find support, education, and connection as you continue moving forward.

Missouri Early Psychosis Care Center

www.epcmissouri.org

Missouri Early Psychosis Care (EPC) is dedicated to improving the lives of young people experiencing psychosis. EPC connects individuals and families to specialized early intervention services, ensuring that people experiencing first-episode psychosis get the best possible care. If you're looking for guidance on treatment options, understanding your diagnosis, or accessing support in Missouri, EPC is a great place to start.

EPC Youth Advisory Council (YAC)

www.epcmissouri.org/youth-advisory-council

The EPC Youth Advisory Council (YAC) is a group of young people with lived experience of psychosis who work to reduce stigma, raise awareness, and improve access to care. This workbook was created by YAC to help others who are newly diagnosed. If you're looking to connect with peers, share your experiences, or advocate for better mental health care, consider getting involved with YAC.

LifeLaunch

www.lifelaunchmo.org

LifeLaunch is a free online resource hub which helps young people in Missouri build the skills they need to navigate adulthood. Their programs provide support with education, employment, independent living, and overall well-being, empowering youth like you to achieve your goals and thrive in your community.

Strong 365

www.strong365.org

Strong 365 provides peer support, resources, and guidance for young people experiencing early psychosis. Their goal is to reduce stigma, encourage hope, and connect individuals to the right care as early as possible. They also offer an online peer chat service where you can talk to someone who understands what you're going through.

Students With Psychosis

www.studentswithpsychosis.org

This global nonprofit provides peer support, community events, leadership opportunities, and advocacy programs for students and young adults with psychosis.

More Resources

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Young Adult Programs

www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults

NAMI offers education, peer support, and advocacy for individuals with mental health conditions. Their NAMI On Campus program helps college students build supportive communities, and their peer support groups can help you connect with others who share similar experiences.

Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance

www.szaction.org

The Schizophrenia & Psychosis Action Alliance is dedicated to improving outcomes for people affected by psychosis through advocacy, education, and support. They offer peer-led programs, research initiatives, and policy efforts to drive change and ensure better access to care.

Hearing Voices Network USA

www.hearingvoicesusa.org

If you experience voices, visions, or other unusual perceptions, this network offers support groups and resources to help you explore your experiences in a non-judgmental, peer-led environment.

HeadsUP

www.headsup-pa.org

HeadsUP is a Pennsylvania-based initiative that empowers young people experiencing psychosis through education, peer support, and advocacy. They provide resources to help individuals and families understand psychosis and connect with compassionate, recovery-focused care.



About This Workbook

With the right support, tools, and mindset, you can take steps toward the future you want. This resource is designed to help you explore your hopes and dreams and take charge of your journey. It will assist you in setting goals for different areas of your life—like education, work, friendships, health, and recreation—and give you practical tools to advocate for yourself along the way. Your life is yours to shape. This is a chance to think about what you want and create a plan that helps you get there.

About the Youth Advisory Council (YAC)

This workbook was created by the EPC Youth Advisory Council, a group of young people, ages 15-35, who have personal lived experience with psychosis. As advocates, creators, and change-makers, we use our lived experience to engage youth, build community, reduce stigma, and elevate the voices of lived experience by sharing resources, raising awareness, and providing fact-based education in order to improve young people's access to care.

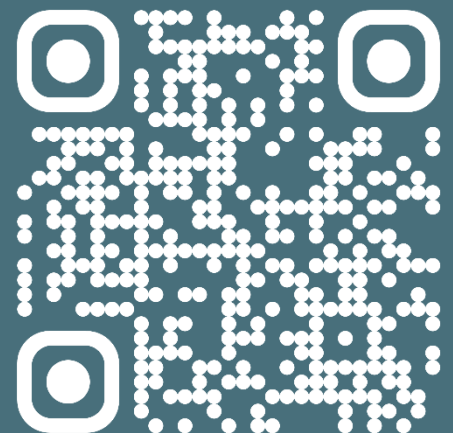
About the Early Psychosis Care Center

The Missouri EPC Center is a statewide initiative working to improve outcomes for young people experiencing psychosis. It is a collaboration between the Missouri Department of Mental Health, the Missouri Institute of Mental Health, and the Missouri Behavioral Health Council. Our mission is to promote early identification, treatment, and recovery for first episode psychosis (FEP). We support youth, families, and service providers by offering training, sharing resources, and helping to build care systems which are compassionate, effective, and centered on hope.



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