



Using Your Voice

TIPS for talking with your mental health service provider

Using your voice means speaking up and saying what is important to you. Using your voice is an important part of recovery.

- **PREPARE** before you see your provider. Write things down. What do you want to talk about? What questions do you have? What do you want to accomplish during the appointment? What are your goals for yourself and your treatment and services?
- **TELL** providers what is most important to you. Answer their questions honestly. This helps them understand and respect what is important to you.
- **LISTEN** to others. Friends, family, peers, and providers may have information or ideas that are helpful to you.
- **ASK** for explanations or more information.
 - Ask questions to get the information you need.
 - When a provider makes a recommendation always ask them to explain WHY they think this recommendation is right for you. What are the benefits? What are the costs?
 - Keep asking questions until you are comfortable that you understand the information or recommendation.
- **REMEMBER** what was said. Some people find it helpful to write down what the provider says or to make a voice recording of the conversation. Other people like having someone with them when they talk to their provider. You can also ask the provider for written instructions.
- **TALK** with your provider about where you agree and disagree with his or her opinions and recommendations. See if you can find options that fit your preferences and also respect what the provider can and cannot do.
- **FOLLOW UP**
 - If you say you will do something, do it. If you cannot follow up as promised, be honest and explain why.
 - If your provider says he or she will do something, expect your provider to do it. If he or she cannot follow up as promised, you deserve an honest explanation.
 - If you have new questions, call or email your provider.
 - If things get worse, call or email your provider.

For more information:

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: <http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer>
Medline Plus Health Topics, "Talking to your Doctor": <http://medlineplus.gov>
Health Finder, "Talking to your Doctor": <http://www.healthfinder.gov>