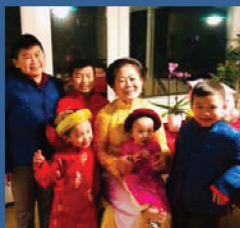


Supporting through Recovery - A Resource Book for Family Members and Caregivers



English

This booklet is the product of “Supporting through Recovery,” an Asian Pacific Islander Underserved Cultural Community (API UsCC) project. This project was funded by the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health through the Mental Health Services Act (Prop 63) and implemented by Rocco Cheng & Associates.

This booklet is designed to provide information and support for family members and caregivers with loved ones in recovery from mental health conditions. It is available in six languages: English, Chinese, Khmer, Korean, Tagalog, and Vietnamese.

【 Acknowledgements 】

We wish to express our gratitude towards the 88 individuals who participated in our interviews and focus groups, for candidly sharing their hardships and triumphs of living with loved ones overcoming mental health conditions. These individuals included family members, caregivers, and service providers (peer professionals, case managers, clinicians, nurses, and physicians).

【About Mental Health Conditions】

*“[Having a] mental health condition is not
their fault.... [It’s] nobody’s fault.”*
Korean parent

According to a national study, about one in four Americans will experience at least one mental health condition in their lifetime. Therefore, it is not uncommon for us or our loved ones to experience mental health conditions. Nevertheless, it can be hard to pinpoint the causes of mental health conditions. Biological factors, genes, chemical imbalance, social environmental factors, alcohol and drug abuse, extreme stress, or a combination of these factors, may all contribute to mental health difficulties.

Having a mental health condition is not a sign of weakness; rather it reflects the biological condition and social environment that individuals experience. Mental health conditions may also be a result of negative events that people experience.

People are more likely to develop mental health conditions when encountering situations such as:

- Extreme stress, resulting from war experiences, difficult immigration and adjustment processes, academic pressures, and/or identity crises
- Life events: Major illnesses, loss of loved ones/pets, unemployment, relocation/migration, major accidents, natural disasters, or a prolonged pandemic such as COVID-19
- Severe relational or family conflicts
- Abusive situations: domestic violence, intimate partner violence, dating violence, bullying, racism, or discrimination

Mental health conditions are not temporary feelings, such as having a bad day. Rather, they are persistent experiences that affect our behaviors, feelings, and thoughts for weeks or longer.

We will use “mental health conditions” throughout this booklet because traditional terms

like “mental illnesses” or “nervous breakdown” have more negative connotations.

“We went to a bookstore and [got] online and were asking what mental illness is. And I didn't know... I had to take a look at the dictionary.”

Japanese mother

“It's persistent, it doesn't give up.”

Filipino male family member



【Signs and Symptoms】

Some signs and symptoms of mental health conditions that may show up include:

- Sudden, drastic changes in eating, sleeping, or grooming habits
- Severe mood swings
- Feeling irritable or getting agitated easily

- Often arguing/fighting with others
- Intense feeling of helplessness or hopelessness
- Often worrying or getting nervous
- Becoming socially withdrawn/isolated
- Difficulty focusing/concentrating
- Thinking of hurting oneself/others
- Hearing/seeing things that are not present and others in your culture do not see.

The table below lists common symptoms for a few familiar mental health conditions. It is important to know that the information provided is for reference only and should NOT be used for diagnosis or labeling purposes.

Mental Health Condition	COMMON SYMPTOMS
Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Heart palpitations * Muscle tension * Difficulty controlling feelings of worry * Difficulty concentrating * Tiring easily * Sleep problems

Depression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Persistent sad mood * Feeling hopeless/guilty/worthless * Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies * Low energy/moving slowly * Appetite/weight change * Difficulty concentrating * Sleep problems * Thoughts of death or suicide
Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Recurring, intrusive distressing memories of traumatic event * Flashbacks - reliving the traumatic event as if it were happening again * Nightmares related to the traumatic event * Being easily startled or frightened * Hyper-vigilant - being on guard for danger * Depressive symptoms - feeling sad, guilty, hopeless

Psychotic Disorders (e.g., Schizophrenia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Suspiciousness * Withdrawal from family and friends * Delusions - beliefs that differ from reality, such as having special powers, or being controlled by others * Hallucinations- seeing/hearing things that are not present or part of the culture * Lack of self-care or hygiene
Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Unable to sit still, constantly fidgeting * Unable to focus on tasks in many different situations/places * Unable to wait their turn * Excessive physical movement, excessive talking * Acting without thinking * Being disorganized and forgetful * Hard time paying attention to details and making careless mistakes * Becoming easily distracted, daydreaming a lot

【 Treatment 】

“I don’t know who to ask regarding benefits and doctors.” Japanese NAMI member

Recovery from a mental health condition can be a long and lonely journey. Common challenges include finding resources and service providers who are culturally and linguistically responsive to the needs of individuals.

Traditionally, treatment was based on the medical model and focused primarily on symptom reduction or elimination. However, the social recovery model, a holistic, person-centered approach, has been gaining ground in recent years and is quickly becoming the standard of care. This treatment approach focuses on improving one’s health, sense of purpose, and ability to function at home and in one’s community (school, work, recreational).

According to SAMHSA, *recovery is:*

“... a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.”

Search for appropriate help



It is important to search for professional help to get accurate information and proper assistance, instead of carrying the burden by oneself. Help can come from clinical staff who provide specialized care for people with mental health conditions. The help can also come from peers or family advocates with similar “lived experiences” (i.e., people who have experienced mental health condition or family members with experience caring for

their loved ones with mental health conditions). Peers and family members are often some of the most understanding and helpful sources of support as they have been through a similar journey and can help lead the way to recovery.

“So, without involving family member, it's not going to work well.”

Japanese family member

It is helpful to have family members actively involved in the treatment process: finding appropriate care, learning about the condition being treated, and supporting the treatment plan and goals. However, it is important to know that family members, including parents, may not have the right to receive information or offer input regarding the treatment without written permission from the individual with the mental health condition.

“They will hear your plan, but they're not telling you what you do. They help you see how to solve your problem.”

Vietnamese staff describing therapy

Treatment options:

- **Psychotherapy** (Talk Therapy): Meeting with a therapist to learn more about managing the challenges of the mental health condition, and changing behaviors, thoughts, and feelings. Therapy may be provided for individuals with mental health conditions, families, or in a group setting.

- **Case management:** Provides support for locating and coordinating resources and/or services that help manage a person's needs such as: benefits (e.g., MediCal), housing, transportation (e.g., bus tokens), employment, social relationships, and community participation.

- **Wellness programs:** Offer support, activities and/or groups that promote recovery from persistent, serious conditions and support positive peer relationships as well as opportunities for individuals to connect with others.

Not all agencies are equipped with a Wellness Program. Some Wellness Programs may be open to all of the community and free of charge. They can be led by professional staff or peers.

Peers are individuals with lived experiences of mental health conditions or substance use. They are advanced on the path of recovery and are actively managing their conditions. They can also be family members or loved ones of individuals with mental health conditions.

Activities in a Wellness Program may include:

- Basic job skill training (e.g., resume prep.)
- Communal meals and celebrations
- Group outings (movies, shopping, etc.)
- Music, drama, arts, and crafts groups
- Mindfulness/meditation workshops
- Stretching and exercising
- Computer lab and digital workshops

- SMART Recovery Groups (for individuals experiencing both substance use and mental health challenges)



- **Medication:** often prescribed by psychiatrists (medical doctors) to help manage symptoms. Many individuals and family members are concerned about side effects of medication. It is important to know:

- Different types of medication may produce different side-effects.
- Not everyone will have the same side effects. The severity of the side-effect differs from individual to individual. Most people will not experience severe side-effects.
- Individual's physiology and metabolism may greatly impact how the medication is tolerated.
- It is vital to share your concerns or encourage the person with a mental health condition to speak up and report any side-effects to the doctor who prescribed it. The doctor may be able to change the dose or switch to a different medicine with lesser side-effects.

Some of the common medication side-effects include:

- Drowsiness, fatigue
- Significant changes in appetite and/or weight
- Sleep disturbances
- Upset stomach
- Dry mouth
- Nausea
- Dizziness, headache

- Stiffness and shakiness
- Restlessness
- Higher risk of diabetes
- Sudden change in blood pressure
- Involuntary movements to the jaw, lips, and tongue

Housing and employment opportunities:

***“It’s hard to find a safe and relaxing place
[for him] to live.”***

Japanese father of adult son

Many family members experience challenges in assisting loved ones with maintaining stable housing and employment. A lot of energy and resources are required to find housing and employment that meet the person’s individual needs.

For example, it may hard to find housing facilities that provide staff and services that meet cultural and language needs. Residents of housing facilities may feel more at home when Asian foods are available. For example, rice, noodles, and stir fry

vegetables may be more appetizing than pizza, hamburger, or mashed potatoes.

Gainful employment can be the most empowering contributor to recovery from mental health conditions. However, it continues to be a major challenge for many individuals living with mental health conditions. Many employers or organizations may not have the right information or experience working with and creating a safe and supportive environment for individuals with mental health conditions to ensure their success at work. Partially due to stigma and misinformation, it can be hard for individuals with lived experience to find job opportunities. Available jobs may not be the jobs individuals living with mental health conditions expect based on their prior education or training. It is important to be open to a variety of volunteer and paid job opportunities. Any job can help provide training, sense of purpose, and socialization.

In California, the 2020 Peer Support Specialist Certification Bill (SB-803) expanded opportunities to hire people with mental health conditions.

Services to assist with finding and keeping employment are available, such as: job skills training; advocacy for workplace accommodations; and social skills training, e.g., appropriate lunchroom conversation, dress codes, or addressing supervisors. Individuals and family members can inquire about these programs at the clinics where they receive services.

Below are a couple more resources on Housing and Employment:

- Los Angeles County Housing Resources <https://dmh.lacounty.gov/our-services/housing/>
- Homelessness assistance
- Shelter Plus Care application
- Affordable housing list(Section 8)
- Special needs housing list

- Emergency housing information
- California Department of Rehabilitation
Employment and Education Resources

<https://www.dor.ca.gov/>

- Supportive employment opportunities
- Funding to assist with school supplies
and/or tuition

**Please note: To access some of these housing or employment services, individuals may need to be connected with a mental health agency and have a mental health diagnosis. Mental health agencies may also have separate in-house resources available to support housing and employment needs.*

【Common Myths & Stigma Associated with Mental Health Conditions】



Myth: No cure means doomed for life.

One of the most common myths is that serious and persisting mental health conditions never improve. In fact, complete recovery is possible for many individuals with mental health conditions. When complete recovery is not possible, treatments can focus on symptom management, strengthening one's

*“Mental health conditions are treatable,
even if they are not curable.”
Japanese Mother*

ability/skills, and enhancing quality of life. Regaining functioning and sense of purpose is achievable and focusing on these goals can be more productive than thinking only about a cure.

Myth: Mental health conditions are contagious. Although people who share similar genetic makeup and family upbringing may have a higher chance of developing

similar conditions, many other factors influence who experiences mental health conditions. Unlike the common cold, mental health conditions cannot be caught from others!

Myth: Spirit possession. Throughout history, mental health conditions were sometimes attributed to spirit possession. Mental health conditions cannot be easily attributed to a single definitive cause; they may come from a combination of factors. Exploring a variety of explanations may lead to more effective treatment with greater potential for recovery than focusing only on spirit possessions.

Myth: Individuals with mental health conditions cannot care for themselves or lead purposeful, meaningful lives. Mental health conditions are diverse and affect people very differently. With support, most individuals are able to make decisions, manage their finances, work, and lead

meaningful lives. Individuals may fall in love, have intimate relationships, marry, and have families.

Myth: People with mental health conditions are dangerous. Individuals living with mental health conditions are no more violent or dangerous than people without mental health conditions. In fact, most major crimes are conducted by people without an identifiable mental health condition and those with mental health conditions are more often the victim of violence rather than the criminal.

Myth: People with mental health conditions cannot work (or cannot work full-time). There are many examples of leaders in various careers doing well even when having mental health conditions. With reasonable accommodations in work environments that are flexible and helpful, individuals with mental health conditions do work, with many people able to work full

time. An example of these accommodations is to make checking in and out times flexible. Thus, people can report to work later and check out later if they have difficulty in the morning due to sleep disturbance or medication side effects.

Stigma. Individuals with mental health conditions are often treated differently and unfairly due to stigma. Stigma refers to negative and often untrue beliefs about individuals who are viewed as different, such as those with mental health conditions. It comes with labeling people as broken, “crazy”, or weak, looking down on people, or excluding people unreasonably from appropriate housing or social and employment opportunities.

Stigma may be caused by the belief in family or personal karma. According to some cultural or spiritual beliefs, mental health conditions are caused by personal or

family “karma,” including the bad things people did in this life or during a past life. While people do not talk about having medical problems, such as having diabetes, because of bad karma, they often associate mental health conditions with bad karma accumulated from the past. Stigma may also occur among people believing that mental health conditions come from people not practicing their religion well enough, such as not praying enough.

Stigma may be experienced by the entire extended family of a person with a mental health condition. Family members may be reluctant to allow their loved one to participate in community activities for fear of harm to the family’s reputation and livelihood. Stigma is a big reason why people delay seeking help. Many people avoid professional help for fear of being judged. However, this delay may worsen the mental health condition and make it much harder to manage.

Stigma may also lead to early drop out during treatment because individuals do not want others to know that they or their family members are experiencing any mental health conditions or are in treatment. It is important not to stop treatment due to the pressure of stigma.



【Self-Care】

Importance of Self-Care. Caring for someone living with mental health conditions can be a long journey. There will be lots of hardships and stress. Thus, it is very important to ensure caregivers allocate

time and energy for self-care so they will be more effective in caring for their loved ones.

Ways to care for self:

- Set realistic expectations. It is important to focus on treatable symptoms and support instead of looking for a “total cure.”

Remember, having a mental health condition is only one part of a whole person.

- Recovery is an individual journey. Each person may take a different route and require a different pace to recover. What helps one person may not work the same for another. Therefore, it is important not to compare one individual with another one.

- Set small goals. It is important to break the recovery journey down into small achievable goals. Remember to celebrate when your loved ones complete these small goals. Celebrating accomplishments adds more encouragement, motivation, and hope in the recovery process.

- Find support and resources. As recovery can be a lonely journey, having support from others and finding needed resources will make it easier than trying to deal with the situation by oneself.

The internationally renowned program WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) suggests that individuals apply “wellness tools” daily to help maintain their wellbeing. Wellness tools are:

- Free or relatively inexpensive
- Easily accessible
- Making individuals feel good when they do it AND making them feel good **after** they do it

Here are some common wellness tools:

- Drink plenty of water
- Eat healthy and balanced meals/snacks
- Maintain good personal hygiene

- Exercise often (three times a week for at least 30 minutes): walking, jogging, stretching
- Do Tai-chi or Qi Gong
- Listen to pleasing or calming music
- Read inspirational books
- Avoid staying up late and get plenty of sleep
- Garden
- Participate in cultural events or rituals
- Celebrate holidays or important days with family or friends
- Use technology to maintain contact with family or friends (phone calls, communication apps in smart phones)
- Volunteer
- Practice mindfulness, yoga, or meditate,
- Pray or chant
- Practice gratitude
- Focus on what we can change, what we have control over

It is also important to maintain healthy boundaries with family and friends, so caregivers have time and space for their own wellness and recovery. It is not selfish to use wellness tools. Self-care is necessary to be able to provide ongoing support and assistance, especially when supporting individuals living with mental health conditions with challenging situations.

Resilience. While it is challenging to care for individuals with mental health conditions, it is important to not lose sight of the strengths they (and you) have in dealing with these conditions. There are many factors that protect individuals, families, and communities from negative outcomes. Some of these include having a strong social network and cultural identity. It is helpful to strengthen these protective factors while supporting individuals with mental health conditions. In other words, it is beneficial to look for strengths and magnify them instead of focusing on limitations.

Social support. Another important area of self-care is to find social support. Many clinics have peer support specialists who have gone through a similar process of recovery for their own mental health condition. Since peers have similar recovery experiences, they are able to understand the hardships that individuals and family members are going through. Peers often share experiences and resources that help address the needs of individuals or family members.

Families can also benefit from support groups that help address hardships and share resources for family members. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental health conditions. In most clinics, there are support group opportunities for family members and local NAMI affiliates may have groups for Asian family members

that provide additional support by addressing cultural and language needs.

***“We are lucky to find other people with similar experiences. We feel our experiences are validated and supported.”
Chinese parents***

It is important to develop a social support network as recovery can be a difficult and lonely journey. WRAP recommends that one should have at least five supporters who can assist and support efforts to maintain wellness. These supporters respect your needs and help support your wellness goals. They help relieve your stress when you are in active crisis, including assisting with everyday tasks such as meal preparation, laundry, or pet care.



【Hope】

Mental health conditions can lead to many hardships in life; however, they do not need to define one's entire life. It is possible to get well, and stay well, for an extensive period of time, by relying on active planning and following a Wellness Plan.

“It’s so important not to give up your hope!” Vietnamese mother

Many people learn to live with their mental health conditions and continue to fulfill their life goals, including working in various professions. They achieve this by learning to manage their mental health conditions, avoiding unnecessary stress or factors that may worsen the condition, and developing their strengths and support system to maintain their wellbeing. People with mental health conditions can achieve a well-balanced life and make significant contributions to society.

Symptom management and developing wellness in various parts of one's life can provide a sense of hope in one's recovery journey. People with mental health conditions can focus their energy on recovery actions instead of worrying about the limitations of the condition.

Mental health conditions can also lead to transformation and spiritual growth. It takes active planning, honest reflection, learning,

and consistent efforts to bring about transformation and growth. One family member shared the following statement:

“Without my son, we can’t open up, or grow spiritually. If I have an ordinary son, I will just live an ordinary life.”

Japanese Mother

【LA County Community Resources】

NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness)

(213) 386-3615; <https://www.namiglac.org/>

Hotlines: Finding services and seeking support

LA County 24/7 Mental Health Helpline:
1-800-854-7771

LA County Information Line: 211

Suicide prevention lifeline:

1-800-273- TALK(8255)

Crisis TEXT LINE: 741741

LA County Mental Health Community Clinics:

Arcadia Mental Health Center

330 Live Oak Ave, Arcadia, CA 91006

(626) 254-1400

Bengali, Cantonese, Farsi, Hindi, Japanese,
Korean, Mandarin, Portuguese, Taiwanese

Coastal API Family MHC

14112 South Kingsley Dr., Gardena, CA

90249

(310) 217-7312

Cantonese, Khmer, Korean, Mandarin,
Vietnamese

Long Beach AP Family Mental Health

4510 East Pacific Coast Hwy., Ste 600 Long
Beach, CA 90804

(562) 346-1100

Cantonese, Japanese, Khmer, Mandarin,
Samoan, Tagalog, Taiwanese, Vietnamese

Resources in the San Gabriel Valley:

APFC (Asian Pacific Family Center) - Rosemead

9353 Valley Blvd, Ste. C, Rosemead,
CA 91770

(626) 287.2988

www.pacificclinics.org

Chinese and Vietnamese Family groups;
Chinese (Cantonese, Chiu Chow, Mandarin,
Taiwanese, Toisan), Japanese, Khmer, Korean,
Vietnamese

APFC - Rowland Heights

18300 E. Gale Ave., City of Industry, CA
91748

(626) 839.0300

www.pacificclinics.org

Korean, Cantonese, Mandarin

AYC (Asian Youth Center)

100 West Clary Ave., San Gabriel, CA
91776

(626) 309.0622

www.asianyouthcenter.org

Cantonese, Mandarin

Resources in the Downtown and Mid-Town area:

APAIT (Asian Pacific AIDS Intervention Team)

3055 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 300, Los Angeles,
CA 90010

(213) 375.3830

www.apaitonline.org

Cantonese, Korean, Mandarin, Tagalog

APCTC (Asian Pacific Counseling and Treatment Centers)

520 S La Fayette Park Pl., #300, Los
Angeles, CA 90057

(213) 252.2100

www.apctc.org

Korean Family Group; Chinese (Cantonese,
Chiu Chow, Mandarin, Taiwanese), Japanese,
Khmer, Korean, Laotian, Tagalog, Thai,
Vietnamese

CSC (Chinatown Service Center)

767 N. Hill Street, Suite 400, Los Angeles,
CA 90012

(213) 808.1700

www.cscla.org

Cantonese, Chiu Chow, Mandarin, Toisan,
Vietnamese

KYCC (Koreatown Youth and Community Center)

3727 W. 6th Street, Suite 300, L.A., 90020

(213) 365.7400

www.kyccla.org

Korean

KFAM (Korean American Family Services)

3727 West 6th Street, Suite 320, Los Angeles, CA 90020

(213) 389.6755

www.kfamla.org

Korean

LTSC (Little Tokyo Service Center)

231 E 3rd St., Los Angeles, CA

(213) 473.3030

www.ltsc.org

Japanese, Mandarin

SIPA (Search to Involve Pilipino Americans)

3200 W Temple St, Los Angeles, CA 90026

(213) 382.1819

www.esipa.org

Tagalog

Asian American Advancing Justice

1145 Wilshire Blvd. Los Angeles, CA

90017

(213) 971.7500

www.advancingjustice-la.org

Multiple Asian Languages

Resources on the Westside:**PACS (Pacific Asian Counseling Services)**

8616 La Tijera Blvd., Ste. 200, Los Angeles,
CA 90045

(310) 337.1550

www.pacsla.org

Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, Taiwanese),
Japanese, Korean, Khmer, Tagalog, Thai,
Samoan, Vietnamese

Resources in the Long Beach area:**CAA (Cambodian Association of
American)**

2390 Pacific Ave, Long Beach, CA 90806

(562) 9881863

www.cambodianusa.com

Khmer, Laotian

**PACS (Pacific Asian Counseling Services)
- Long Beach**

3530 Atlantic Ave., Ste. 210 Long Beach,
CA 90807

(562) 424-1886

www.pacsla.org

Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, Taiwanese),
Japanese, Korean, Khmer, Tagalog, Thai,
Samoan, Vietnamese

UCC (United Cambodian Community)

2201 E. Anaheim St. Suite 200, Long
Beach, CA 90804

(562) 433.2490

www.ucclb.org

Khmer, Laotian

Child Net Youth and Family Services, Inc.

5150 E Pacific Coast Hwy., #100

Long Beach, CA, 90804.

Tel: 562 490 7722

www.childnet.net

Reddy Urgent Care

123 Atlantic Ave,

Long Beach, CA, 90802

562-726-1383

www.reddyuc.com

Resources in the Artesia area:

SAAHAS for Cause

13337 South St., #158, Cerritos, CA 90703

(562) 526.2508

www.saahasforcause.org

Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu

SAHARA: South Asian Helpline and Referral Agency

17100 Pioneer Blvd., Suite 260, Artesia, CA 90701

(562) 402.4132

www.saharacares.org

Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu

SAN (South Asian Network)

18173 Pioneer Blvd., Suite I, Artesia, CA 90701

(562) 403.0488

www.southasiannetwork.org

Bengali, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
**DEPARTMENT OF
MENTAL HEALTH**
hope. recovery. wellbeing.



WELLNESS • RECOVERY • RESILIENCE



ROCCO CHENG & ASSOCIATES

*This project was funded by the Los Angeles County
Department of Mental Health and the Mental Health
Services Act (Prop. 63) and
implemented by Rocco Cheng & Associates.*