Beyond Stabilization Background

SMI Recovery Toolbox

For Individuals & Their Caregivers

Beyond Stabilization – Practical Tools for Hope, Stability, and Growth

> *This toolbox brings together key strategies from the Stress-Vulnerability Model, CBT for Psychosis (CBTp) principles, mindfulness, peer support wisdom, and real-world recovery practices. Use it as a living resource — revisit and update it regularly.*

Section 1: Foundations – Understanding the Journey

The Stress-Vulnerability Model (Core Framework)

Symptoms = Biological Vulnerability + Stress – Protective Factors

Protective Factors You Can Strengthen:

- Consistent medication (when helpful)
- Stress management & coping skills
- Supportive relationships (including peer networks)
- Sleep, nutrition, movement
- Meaningful daily structure
- Self-compassion and hope

Recovery Mindset

You are more than your diagnosis. Recovery means building a meaningful life with the illness, not waiting for it to disappear.

Section 2: Tools for Individuals with SMI

Daily Wellness Check-In

Sleep quality (0–10): _____

Stress level (0–10): _____

Mood/energy: _____

One small win I can aim for today:

_____

Early Warning Signs

(Personalize these)

- ☐ Sleep changes
- ☐ Increased isolation
- ☐ Racing thoughts / voices louder
- ☐ Irritability or low motivation
- ☐ Others: _____

My Hope Statement

“Even when things are difficult, I want to remember that…”

_____

_____

My Top Coping Tools Menu

Quick Relief (High Distress)

- ☐ 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding
- ☐ Box Breathing (4-4-4-4)
- ☐ Safe place visualization
- ☐ Hold ice cube or listen to music

Daily Maintenance

- ☐ Short walk or movement
- ☐ Journaling or gratitude list
- ☐ Peer support contact
- ☐ Pleasant activity (hobby, nature)

Advanced Skills (CBTp-Inspired)

- **Thought challenging:** “What evidence do I have? Is there another explanation?”
- **Behavioral experiment:** Test a fear in a small, safe way.
- **Leaves on a Stream:** Let thoughts pass by without holding on to them.
- **Compassion phrase:** “This is hard, and I’m doing my best.”

Mindfulness Practices for Psychosis

- Short breath awareness (1–5 minutes)
- Body scan (gentle version)
- Mindful activity (walking, eating, chores with full attention)
- Observe voices/thoughts without judgment

Section 3: Tools for Caregivers / Family Members

> *“I can support without fixing. I can love without carrying everything.”*

Key Ways to Help

- Listen without immediate advice

- Help reduce expressed emotion (criticism, hostility, over-involvement)
- Encourage (but not force) treatment and routines
- Support healthy boundaries for everyone
- Take care of your own well-being

Caregiver Self-Care Checklist

- ☐ My own sleep and meals
- ☐ Time for my own relationships/hobbies
- ☐ Peer or professional support for me
- ☐ Recognizing when I need a break

Communication Tips

- Use “I” statements (“I feel worried when…”)
- Offer choices rather than commands
- Celebrate small steps forward
- Know when to step back

When to Seek Extra Help

- Significant safety concerns
- Rapid worsening of symptoms
- Caregiver burnout or depression

Section 4: Shared Tools for Individual + Caregiver

Relapse Prevention / Wellness Plan

Triggers I Notice:

_____

Early Warning Signs:

_____

Action Plan *(who to call, what to do, medication check)*:

_____

_____

Strengths Inventory *(fill together or separately)*

My/Their strengths:

_____

Weekly Review Questions

(Great for family meetings or peer groups)

- What went well this week?
- What was challenging?
- What support would help next week?
- One thing we're grateful for: _____

Section 5: Resources & Next Steps

Immediate Supports

- Peer support networks (e.g., Beyond Stabilization groups)
- Crisis lines (988 in the US)
- Trusted treatment team

Longer-Term Growth

- CBTp-informed therapy
- Structured peer programs
- Vocational or educational support

- Wellness activities (exercise groups, art, mindfulness)

Reminder Cards (Keep visible)

"Progress is not linear — small steps count."

"We are stronger together."

"Today is a new day to try again."

How to Use This Toolbox

- Print and keep in an accessible place (binder, digital folder).
- Review monthly or after difficult periods.
- Update sections as you learn what works best for you.
- Bring pages to appointments or peer meetings.
- Share with trusted supporters.

Final Encouragement

Living with or supporting someone with SMI is challenging, but it is also filled with possibility. Many people move from crisis survival to meaningful, connected lives. You are not alone. Recovery is a team effort — and you already belong to that team.

Use these tools with compassion for yourself and each other. Healing and growth happen one day, one skill, and one connection at a time.