Finding a Mental Health Specialist:
- Ask your primary care provider to help you make your first appointment to avoid long wait times.
- Check the details of your mental health insurance coverage.
- If the first mental health specialist isn’t a good fit, look elsewhere for someone you connect with.

Making your First Appointment Count:
- Come prepared to talk about what you’re experiencing and how you’re feeling.
- You may be asked to fill out a questionnaire describing your mental health experience.
- Be upfront and specific about what you want addressed to help you feel better.
- Ask the mental health specialist to explain treatment options to you until you understand. Write down the plan so you know what you are supposed to do.

Making Sure Your Treatment Plan Works for You:
- Keep a wellness log and monitor your progress.
- Follow up and don’t be afraid to ask about changes to your treatment plan if things aren’t going well.
- Most therapies and medications take time to work, so stick with it and results will come. Your treatment plan may change. Be active in this process.

Living Well:
- Recognize that you have control over living well.
- Find a routine that works for you that includes a healthy diet, exercise and regular sleep patterns.
- Stay close to your support network. Engage family, friends, teammates and your faith community.
- Be realistic and mindful of your needs and take that into consideration in making life decisions.

Questions You May Want to Ask:
- I’m concerned about the way I feel. What is your plan for helping me feel better?
- Are there any safety concerns that I should know about with my condition or treatment plan?
- Do I have to take medication? What does it help with? What are the side effects?
- How will I know I’m getting better in a few days, weeks or months?
- How long will it take for me to feel better?

Getting Through It
- Stay away from drugs and alcohol. Peer pressure can make this hard, so find strategies to make it work, like carrying a cup at parties so people don’t ask if you need a drink.
- If you use alcohol or drugs, be honest and tell your doctor because it will likely affect your treatment plan.
- Do your best to stay positive. Surround yourself with positive messages, people and activities. This can rub off and help to improve the way you feel.

DON’T FORGET!
- Tips for managing your mental health while you wait for an appointment:
  - Surround yourself with family and friends.
  - Talk to a counselor, social worker, nurse or trusted adult.
  - Continue doing what you love: reading, writing, nature walks, creating art...

Navigating Your Insurance
- It helps to have a trusted health professional you can rely on to help with insurance issues.
- To ensure you are covered, review your benefits with your health insurance provider.
- To learn more about your rights, visit https://www.kff.org/ahcpr/

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