

Exercise Four: Social prescribing (done during module 7 or 8)

There is an emerging trend among physicians struggling to help chronically depressed or anxious patients. Social prescribing involves medical personnel advising patients to do social activities rather than take more medications. The physician literally writes a script that tells the patient to “Go to a movie with a friend” or “Say hello to your neighbor”. While it may seem odd to prescribe these everyday social activities, they are known to elevate mood without resorting to a pharmacological intervention.

For this exercise, you will have the opportunity to adapt this technique to your personal needs for social connections. Social prescribing is another tool used to enhance resilience by changing the world around us to make it possible for us to cope better with stressful life events.

For this activity, do the following:

- Think of a time in your life when you have felt down, or alone, or been frustrated and angry and felt unsupported.
- Recall if you felt any physical symptoms, like problems sleeping, lack of appetite, or sleeping and eating more than usual. Did you experience any other differences in your thoughts, or feelings that appeared to endure over time.
- Write yourself a ‘prescription’ for a socially supportive activity that you would like to do.
- If the activity requires resources (like transportation, or money to pay for tickets) or personal qualities (like the motivation to call someone, or the confidence to ask someone to go to a movie) then develop a plan to find these resources first.
- After you do the activity, ask yourself if the activity was done with the right “dosage”? Did you choose the right social support or activity to make yourself feel better?

