



WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT

Illness Management and Recovery (IMR) Groups

IMR is a structured psychosocial program developed by Kim Mueser and colleagues under SAMHSA's evidence-based practices initiative, helping people with serious mental illness build the knowledge, skills, and strategies to manage their illness and pursue personally meaningful recovery goals. It integrates several supported practices into one curriculum:

psychoeducation, medication adherence strategies, relapse-prevention planning, coping skills, and goal-setting. It's grounded in the recovery model, the view that people can lead fulfilling, self-determined lives even with ongoing symptoms, so the organizing purpose is the life you want, not just symptom control.

WHO IT'S FOR, AND WHO IT'S NOT

- A fit for those stable enough for structured weekly group learning.
- Acute episodes typically need stabilization before starting.
- Works best alongside ongoing psychiatric medication management.

What it's for

Serious mental illness: schizophrenia, schizoaffective, bipolar, severe depression.

For people with recovery goals they want to actively pursue.

Delivered most often in groups in community mental health settings.

WHAT TO EXPECT

1 9 to 10 modules over about 9 months, 45 to 60 minute sessions.

2 Each session: homework review, new content, practice, and a new assignment.

3 Conversational, not didactic; recovery goals are revisited throughout.

IMR improves recovery, functioning, and illness knowledge.

- A meta-analysis of 14 studies found IMR improved **personal recovery, global and social functioning, hope, and knowledge**, with more exposure tied to better outcomes.¹
- An overview of psychosocial interventions for schizophrenia found self-management programs like IMR support **functional outcomes and illness knowledge**.²

MAKING THE MOST OF IT

Goals drive it. The program is built around the life you want, not just symptoms.

Attendance matters. More exposure to IMR is linked to better outcomes.

Shared wisdom. Peers' coping strategies make the curriculum come alive.

QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE YOU JOIN

- 1 Does it follow the full IMR module curriculum?
- 2 Is there a peer specialist co-facilitating?
- 3 How is recovery goal-setting built into each session?

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If you're in crisis, call or text 988.

The Group Guide is a directory, not a clinic. This handout is general education, not medical or mental health advice. Listings are written by group leaders and are not endorsements. Confirm details, cost, and fit with any group you contact. Sources on page 2.



Sources

Illness Management and Recovery (IMR) Groups · references keyed to the numbers on page 1.

- 1 Goh, Y. S. S., Ow Yong, J. Q. Y., & Li, A. Z. Effectiveness of Illness Management and Recovery program on people with severe mental illnesses: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Frontiers in Psychiatry* (2023), 14, Article 1162288.
- 2 Solmi, M., Croatto, G., Piva, G., et al. Efficacy and acceptability of psychosocial interventions in schizophrenia: systematic overview and quality appraisal of the meta-analytic evidence. *Molecular Psychiatry* (2023), 28(1), 354–368.

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