BRAINS, PAIN & PURPOSE

A PRACTICAL BPP WORKBOOK

Healthcare Self Advocacy

Organize your health story, prepare for conversations, and keep track of decisions and next steps.

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Start with the page you need

You do not have to complete everything. Use this workbook for a new concern, an ongoing condition, or a difficult healthcare experience. Bring the relevant pages to your visit.

Understand my health story Pages 2 to 4

Prepare and communicate Pages 5 and 6

Discuss options and access Pages 7 and 8

Coordinate and follow through Pages 9 and 10

Review progress and see an example Pages 11 and 12

Name or initials

Date started

What I want this workbook to help me do

Type into the fields in a compatible PDF reader, or print and write. Save a copy after completing it. Reprint or duplicate tracking pages as needed. Keep completed pages private; do not share personal health details in public comments.

For personal organization and education only. This workbook does not diagnose conditions, recommend treatments, replace professional care, or provide emergency support. Use it to support conversations with your care team.

My Health Snapshot

Choose the details that matter for the concern you are addressing. An existing health summary can replace this page.

Health conditions or past experiences relevant to this concern

Allergies or past reactions Include what happened

Important procedures, tests, or family history I want to discuss

What a typical day looks like and where I am struggling

Support I may need Language, accessibility, reminders, or a trusted person

What helps me cope and what I want the care team to know about me

My Symptom Tracker

Record what you notice without trying to diagnose it. Repeat this page for another symptom or week.

Symptom or concern I am tracking

For each entry, note when it happened, how long it lasted, any possible context, and its effect on daily life. You may describe intensity in words; a number is optional.

Entry 1 Date and time	What happened, duration, context, and impact

Entry 2 Date and time	What happened, duration, context, and impact

Entry 3 Date and time	What happened, duration, context, and impact

What I want to ask about these observations

KEEP ONE CURRENT LIST

Medicines and Supplements

List prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and supplements. Copy information from labels or your existing list.

For each entry, include the name, dose, when you take it, and any question or concern. Ask your clinician or pharmacist about changes rather than using this page to change treatment yourself.

Item 1 Name, dose, schedule, and my question

Item 2 Name, dose, schedule, and my question

Item 3 Name, dose, schedule, and my question

Item 4 Name, dose, schedule, and my question

Pharmacy and contact information

Questions about instructions, side effects, refills, or affordability

My Appointment Plan

Put your most important concern first. A focused summary can help when appointment time is limited.

Provider, appointment date, and reason for visit

The main issue I want to address

My short summary What is happening, since when, and its daily impact

My three most important questions

What I hope to understand or accomplish

What I will bring or arrange before the visit

Examples: relevant results, a current medicine list, symptom notes, insurance information, an interpreter, or a support person.

FIND WORDS THAT FIT

Speaking Up During Care

Choose a phrase, adapt it to your voice, and practice it before the visit if that helps.

Explain the impact

"This is affecting my ability to _____. I would like us to discuss that."

Ask for the reasoning

"What makes this explanation most likely? What else are you considering?"

Clarify a disagreement

"I understand your recommendation. My concern is _____. Can we talk through it?"

Address feeling unheard

"I do not feel that I have explained the impact clearly. May I try again?"

Ask about further evaluation

"If this continues, when should we reassess? Would another opinion or referral help?"

Use the remaining time

"What can we address today, and how do we arrange follow-up for the rest?"

The phrase I want to practice

What would help me feel able to ask questions

Compare My Care Options

Complete this with information from your care team. If a detail is unclear, write a question rather than guessing.

The decision we are discussing

Option A Expected benefits, risks, effort, cost, and unanswered questions

Option B Expected benefits, risks, effort, cost, and unanswered questions

Other options or what monitoring without a change would involve

What matters most to me in this decision

Our decision or what I still need before deciding

Costs and Access

Use this page to organize calls and questions about a medicine, test, referral, or other recommended service.

Service or item I am trying to access

The barrier Cost, coverage, authorization, scheduling, transportation, or other

Questions to ask: Is this covered under my plan? What might I owe? Is authorization needed, and who submits it? If it is not approved, what reason was given and what process or deadline applies? Confirm details with the insurer and care team.

Call record Date, organization, person, phone number, and reference number

What I was told and what written information I need

Next action, who owns it, and the deadline

If cost is a barrier, ask the care team about appropriate alternatives or available assistance. Coverage and costs vary. Keep copies of messages, bills, and decisions; do not assume a quoted amount guarantees the final bill.

KEEP CARE CONNECTED

My Care Coordination Map

Track who is responsible for each part of your plan, especially when more than one office is involved.

Care contact 1 Name, role, office, and phone or portal

What this person or office is handling

Care contact 2 Name, role, office, and phone or portal

What this person or office is handling

Care contact 3 Name, role, office, and phone or portal

What this person or office is handling

Information that needs to move between offices and who will send it

Referral or scheduling task Current status and next contact

Before you leave a call, ask who will take the next step and when you should check back. Do not assume one office has received another office's records.

My Follow Through Plan

Use this during the visit or afterward. Ask your care team to clarify anything that does not make sense.

The agreed plan and what is still uncertain

My actions and deadlines

Care team actions and expected timing

How and when I will get results Who to contact if I do not hear back

Follow-up appointment and care team contact

The care team says to call or seek urgent help if

Try this before leaving: "Let me repeat the plan in my own words. Did I understand it correctly?" Ask for written instructions when helpful.

My Weekly Check In

Review your notes before a follow-up visit. Progress can include clarity, better support, or completing an important task.

Week or date range

What felt easier or improved

What is still difficult or has changed

What I completed and what is still waiting

Questions or barriers I need to bring back to the care team

One manageable next step and when I will take it

Keep a copy of the pages that help tell your story. Bring changes or unresolved concerns to your care team rather than relying on the workbook to interpret them.

A FICTIONAL COMPLETED EXAMPLE

Putting It Into Practice

This example shows how to organize a concern. It is not a diagnosis or a treatment recommendation.

My concern

"I have felt unusually tired for about three weeks. I am having trouble finishing work and have stopped taking my usual walks."

My observations

"I noticed it on four days this week. I am not sure what makes it better or worse. I will bring notes about sleep and daily impact."

My questions

"What might explain this? Is any evaluation appropriate? What should I watch for, and when should we follow up?"

My communication phrase

"My biggest concern is how this affects my day. Can we discuss that before the visit ends?"

My access question

"Before scheduling a recommended test, I want to confirm coverage, authorization requirements, and possible cost."

My follow-through note

"I will use the care team's written instructions to record next steps. Before leaving, I will confirm how results will arrive and who to contact."

Explore the Brains, Pain & Purpose blog and podcast at brainspainpurpose.com for conversations about mental health, invisible illness, and finding purpose through difficult seasons.