

What to Pack for a Psychiatric Hospital Stay

Nobody hands you this list. These are the things I wish I'd known before the doors closed — what to bring, what they'll take, and what actually makes the days easier.

BRING THIS

- ☐ Slip-on shoes with no laces — laces get taken at the door
- ☐ Sweatpants and tops with no drawstrings or hoods
- ☐ A week of underwear and socks; laundry access is unpredictable
- ☐ A paperback book or two — the boredom is the hardest part
- ☐ A spiral-free notebook and a soft pen, for questions and notes
- ☐ Printed phone numbers — you may not have your phone
- ☐ Your insurance card and photo ID
- ☐ A written list of your medications and doses
- ☐ Glasses rather than contacts, if you have the option

THEY WILL TAKE THIS

- ☐ Shoelaces, belts, drawstrings, scarves
- ☐ Razors, tweezers, nail clippers, anything sharp
- ☐ Glass containers and anything in an aerosol can
- ☐ Mouthwash and hand sanitizer containing alcohol
- ☐ Phone chargers, headphones, anything with a cord
- ☐ Your phone, often — or access limited to set hours
- ☐ Jewelry and anything valuable

WORTH ASKING ON DAY ONE

- ☐ Am I here voluntarily or involuntarily? (These are very different.)
- ☐ What has to happen before I can be discharged?
- ☐ When are visiting hours, and who is allowed to come?
- ☐ When will I see the psychiatrist each day?
- ☐ Can someone bring me things? What is allowed in?

WHAT ACTUALLY HELPS

- ☐ Write your questions down — your time with the doctor is short
- ☐ Say yes to visitors even when you don't feel like it
- ☐ Go to the groups, even the ones that seem pointless
- ☐ Ask staff for the unit rules in writing if you can
- ☐ Be patient with the monotony; it is not a sign nothing is happening

This is one person's experience, not medical advice, and every facility is different. Ask staff directly about anything that matters to you.

From **Daybreak: Finding Light After a Bipolar Storm**

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