Going to an Inpatient Psychiatric Facility

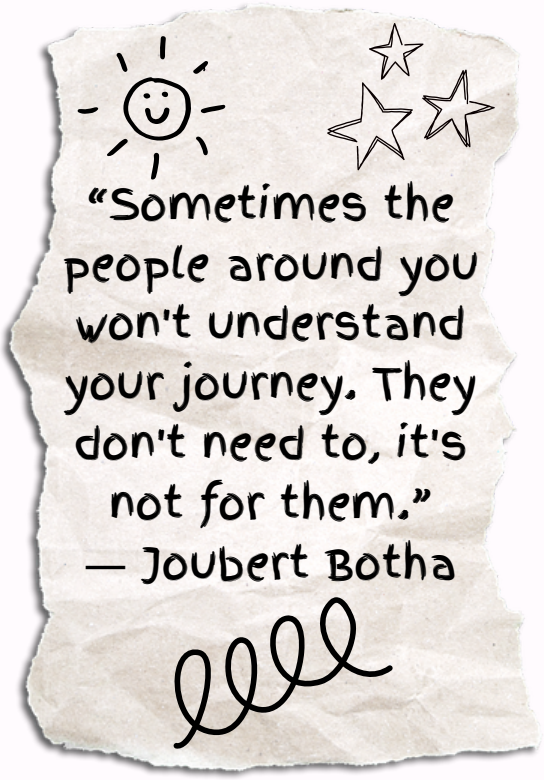
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What to Bring

- Comfortable clothes
- Slippers
- Basic hygiene items
- A list of medications you are prescribed
- A list of phone numbers of people you would like to contact while you are there
- A journal or sketchbook (soft cover, preferably, without spiral spine)

What *NOT* to Bring

- Clothes with strings/drawstrings, zippers, or hoods
- Belts or hats
- Shoes with laces or zippers
- Electronics (unless specifically allowed)
- Sharp objects or items that could be considered unsafe (razors, items with metal, pens, nail clippers, etc.)



What to Expect Upon Arrival

- Staff will check your belongings when you arrive and take note of everything you came in with.
- You will need to be searched before entering the community, which may include removing articles of clothing.
- You may not be able to keep all your belongings in your room, so they will be stored somewhere else until you need them (ex. hygiene products).
- You'll get a schedule that includes meals, meetings, school time, and group activities.
- You'll likely share a room and follow rules like set wake/sleep times, medication times, and mealtimes.
- You'll meet doctors, nurses, therapists, floor staff, and case managers.

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Understanding the Rules

- Rules help keep everyone safe, even if they feel strict.
- Ask staff if you don't understand a rule or if you need help adjusting. It can feel jarring at first, but you will get used to it.
- Participation in groups and check-ins is important to your progress and will help determine how soon you will be discharged.

It is okay to be scared.

Walking into a locked psych unit can feel like entering a whole different world. The locked doors, the alarms, and the rules can all feel confusing, cold, or sometimes even like you're being punished. You're not weak for feeling that way. It's normal.

You might see or hear hard things.

Some of your peers may be having a hard time. You may hear yelling, crying, pacing, banging, and other sounds. That can be really scary, especially if you've never seen it before. Try to remember: everyone is there for a reason, and the staff are trained to keep people safe.

You might not know what is going on.

Sometimes staff won't explain everything right away, or you might hear terms you don't understand (ex. "eloping", which means running away). You are allowed to ask questions. You can ask, "Can you tell me what's happening?" or "Can you explain what that means?"

What can help in scary moments?

- Use your coping skills.
- Take deep breaths. Count 4 in, hold 4, out 4.
- Focus on what you can control: your hygiene, making your bed, getting better, etc.
- Write, draw, or listen to music (if allowed). These are safe ways to express what's inside you.
- Ask for a quiet space or a break if things feel too intense.
- Advocate for yourself if something doesn't feel right. You can request to speak with a human rights officer.
- It's okay to cry, laugh, be quiet, or feel unsure.

Before Discharge

- Start thinking about goals for when you leave.
- You'll work with a team to build a discharge plan.
- Ask questions so you understand the next steps.
- Consider getting a peer mentor.

PPAL
Parent/Professional Advocacy League, Inc.
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