

# What should I do BEFORE my hearing?



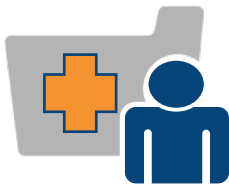
## **Make a list & see your doctor.**

Make a list of all the health conditions you have and see a healthcare professional for each of them. All impairments will be presented to the judge as part of your case. If you do not see a healthcare provider for a particular impairment and are NOT receiving treatment for that impairment, the judge may not think that impairment significantly affects you.



## **Think about your mental health.**

Not being able to return to work can be hard. Sometimes, individuals who go through the SSDI process can feel overwhelmed, anxious, or even depressed. If you are experiencing any of these feelings, consider talking to a mental healthcare professional. They can help you, and often help with your relationships with others. Your primary care physician can assist you in finding the right mental healthcare support. Mental health visits and treatments will be shared with the judge. If you are struggling with mental health issues, but do not seek medical support, and are NOT receiving treatment, the judge may not believe that mental healthcare issues affect your case.



## **Follow the medical advice given by your healthcare professionals.**

Judges want to know claimants are following their doctor's guidance for treatment. Judges understand the need for second opinions, but ignoring a doctor's advice will likely concern judge. If the treatment is not helping or you have a concern about your treatment, be proactive and speak with your healthcare provider to see if there are adjustments that could improve your quality of life.



## **Try to relax.**

Judges and court dates can feel intimidating – we understand. But remember, judges tend to be nice to the claimants, and we will be there in the hearing room with you to help answer the harder questions and advocate for you.

# What should I do DURING my hearing?

**Hello!**

## Be kind to the judge.

That sounds simple, right? Being at the hearing and in front of the judge can be stressful for some people. Take a deep breath and try to relax – we understand and are there to support you! If you are more relaxed, it will be easier to interact with the judge. Think about it this way. The judges have guidelines and rules they must follow but, like us, they are people too. Being kind, attentive, and appreciative of the judge's time can't hurt and can maybe improve the chances your claim will be approved.



## Arrive very early.

Plan on being at the hearing office an hour before the hearing. Getting pulled over, traffic, or car trouble can happen at any time. Being late can negatively affect your case.



## Try to stay calm.

If you need to, take a deep breath and do your best to stay calm. The judges will try to understand the facts of your case, but they aren't trying to pry into your personal life. Again, remember your attorney is will be there to support you.

## Answer only the questions that you are asked.



Judges will ask you questions about the things they NEED to know to rule on your claim. But they are also very busy and do not have a lot of extra time. Think about following these simple steps every time someone asks you a question: (1) listen to the question, (2) take a second to think about what they're asking, and (3) answer only that specific question. If we need more detail, the judge or your attorney will ask you. If you follow these steps, the hearing will be shorter and the judge can focus on the facts that matter to your case.

## Take your medication as you normally would.



Sometimes, medications can affect your ability to communicate. It's ok because the judge is looking to see what you might, or might not, be able to do during a workday. So, if you take a medication every day, you should take it normally for the hearing. If there are any issues with communication, we will be there to support you.

## Dress nicely, but comfortably.



First impressions are incredibly important, so you can dress up a little if you want. A collared shirt is a good idea but there is no need to wear a suit or a dress. It's important that you feel comfortable during the hearing.