

What is Recovery?

Patient Information Leaflet

Shining a light on the future



What is Recovery?

People can and do recover from even the most serious and long-term mental health problems. Recovery is a unique and individual experience and while there may be common themes and experiences, no two people's recovery journeys will be identical.

The Scottish Recovery Network, who have listened to many service users journeys of recovery, describe recovery as follows:

“Recovery is being able to live a meaningful and satisfying life, as defined by each person, in the presence or absence of symptoms. It is about having control over and input into your own life. Each individual's recovery, like his or her experience of the mental health problems or illness, is a unique and deeply personal process.”

In talking about recovery we know that it is not necessarily easy or straightforward. Many people describe the need to persevere and to find ways to maintain hope through the most trying times.

Key Themes of Recovery

While recovery is a unique and individual experience it is possible to identify key themes and ideas in relation to the experience. The following list, while not exhaustive, highlights some of the most commonly identified elements.

- **Recovery as a journey**

The recovery journey can have ups and downs and some people describe being in recovery rather than recovered to reflect this.

- **Hope, optimism and strengths**
 Hope is widely acknowledged as key to recovery. There can be no change without the belief that a better life is both possible and attainable. One way to realise a more hopeful approach is to find ways to focus on strengths.
- **More than recovery from illness**
 Some people describe being in recovery while still experiencing symptoms. For some it is about recovering a life and identity beyond the experience of mental ill health.
- **Control, choice and inclusion**
 Taking control can be hard but many people describe how it important it is to find a way to take an active and responsible role in their own recovery. Control is supported by the inclusion of people with experience of mental health issues in their communities. It is reduced by the experience of exclusion, stigma and discrimination.
- **Self management**
 One way to gain more control over recovery is to develop and use self management techniques. Your key nurse can help you with self management techniques.
- **Finding meaning and purpose**
 We all find meaning in very different ways. Some people may find spirituality important, while others may find meaning through employment or the development of stronger interpersonal or community links. Many people describe the importance of feeling valued and of contributing as active members of a community.
- **Relationships**
 Supportive relationships based on belief, trust and shared humanity help promote recovery.

References

- Narrative Research Project - 'Recovering Mental Health in Scotland' 2007, The Scottish Recovery Network



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