



**Your Recovery Workbook:
Finding Your Way
to Manage Illness**

(Including stories of managing diabetes)

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YOUR RECOVERY WORKBOOK: FINDING YOUR WAY TO MANAGE ILLNESS

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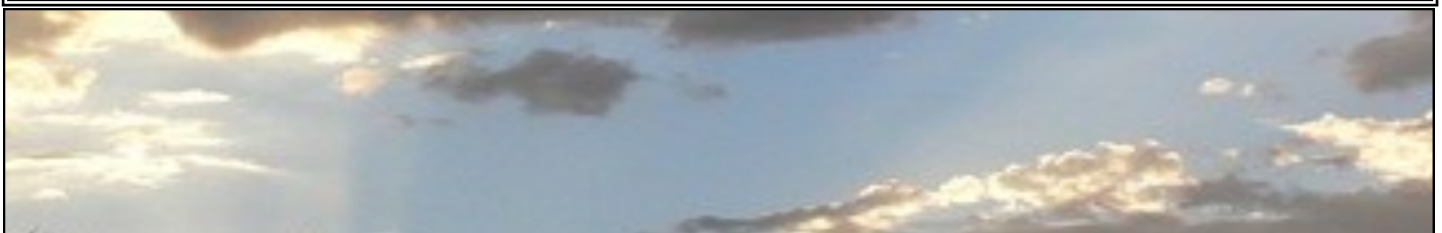
With thanks to Eve Watson for providing excellent resources for the Drama Triangle pages.

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A Recovery Story: A young man found out that he had diabetes. He felt overwhelmed, confused, and worried that life would never be the same again. He felt hopeless and powerless until he read more about diabetes and talked to his healthcare team about it. He went to the clinic for diabetes education and chose to make some diet and exercise changes that would help control his illness. He thought, “This doesn’t have to get me down. My life will be different, but it can still be good.” His whole family started eating healthier and they didn’t keep sweets or junk food in the house. His diabetes didn’t seem like a disability anymore. He was grateful to find out about the illness before having more serious problems from it. He accepted the fact that he would need to **care for himself**, instead of expecting other people to make sure he followed the treatment plan. Then, he was able to recover with only a few “bumps in the road” as he learned to manage his illness.



1. INTRODUCTION



- We want you to be in charge of your life and to be the manager of your health.
- You are a unique person with a strong mind, body and spirit. Your vision for the future should express who you are, based on your strengths and experiences.
- This workbook explores Recovery Steps, a framework to help you move toward hope, problem-solving, empowerment, healthy relationships, and coping as you learn to manage a serious illness.
- The diabetes stories are fictional. The steps to recovery would be similar for any serious illness, but treatments wouldn't be the same.
- See how family drama can affect your health and healing. Avoid thinking of yourself as a victim.
- Find out how to live well with your illness instead of fighting it. Think about your own situation and needs. Prepare for a journey of healing and change.
- Take an active role that includes setting goals, planning ahead, learning about your illness, and using a variety of treatments for a healthy recovery.
- Use coping skills along with other treatments. As you learn to relax, your mind and body can be healthier.
- Talk to your doctor, provider, or healthcare team about any questions you have.

*“ EVERY DEFEAT, EVERY HEARTBREAK, EVERY LOSS,
CONTAINS ITS OWN SEED, ITS OWN LESSON ON HOW
TO IMPROVE YOUR PERFORMANCE THE NEXT TIME.”*

- OG MANDINO

2. UNDERSTAND WHAT RECOVERY IS



What is recovery? *(Mark the statements below that you agree with)*

- A journey of healing and change toward a meaningful life
- Striving to achieve your full potential
- Using community resources and finding a treatment plan that works for you
- When your illness stops getting in the way of your life
- What does recovery mean to you? _____

Do you believe that recovery is possible for you? Why or why not? _____

Do people on your healthcare team believe that your recovery is possible? _____

Do friends or family members believe your recovery is possible? Why or why not? _____

Who has the biggest impact on whether or not your recovery is possible? _____

Sometimes, health problems are not from treatment that doesn't work. A lack of improvement can be from other reasons. *(Mark the ones that may apply to you)*

- Believing that your illness can't be managed
- Not following your treatment plan
- A natural change in your illness
- Not understanding your medicines and how to use them
- Expecting an unrealistic amount of improvement in a short time
- Not telling your healthcare team your situation
- Not being aware of or attending to your own needs, mood and morale

It is important to communicate with your healthcare team so you have the support and guidance that you need. Treatment and medicines may need to be changed.

OUR GREATEST WEAKNESS LIES IN GIVING UP. THE MOST CERTAIN WAY TO SUCCEED IS ALWAYS TO TRY JUST ONE MORE TIME. - THOMAS EDISON

3. ACCEPT YOUR ILLNESS WITH HOPE



We want people with serious illnesses to be on a hopeful journey to recovery.

Angie Cenneno wrote, *“Hope is the space between symptoms and diagnosis, and between diagnosis and prognosis. It is the wrestling match between science and compassion; between body and spirit, between pain and relief. It is the dilemma between fearing to be alone and hungering for privacy. Hoping is waiting ... for the organism to heal and the spirit to rekindle.”*

“The hope for survival is not the only hope... Hoping is knowing someone is making an effort to help, that family is never far away, that the system cares... Hoping is being attended by people who understand caring makes a difference...”

“Hoping is being treated... as a person, by people who understand this could happen to them. It is knowing there are no secrets and being a partner on the treatment team. Hoping is being encouraged to do as much as possible for one's self. Hoping is trying again, moving against the odds, knowing everything that can be done is being done, knowing the caring will go on when the limits of science are reached.”

“The suffering humbles us. The hoping takes us forward. We come to understand that we are among many who become ill, among many who hurt and fear... the experiences for which we have no words. There is a knowing ... that emerges from deep within us, that speaks from another dimension of life.”

Modified from Cenneno, A. (1999). Hope and Illness. In Living with chronic illness: Redefining normal (2005). Retrieved from Autoimmune Support Group Website at http://aces_autoimmune.tripod.com/copingb.htm (... was added where words were omitted)

People may look back on times of illness as a journey of personal growth.

Painful learning experiences may be later described as “soul-making” experiences.

Day, A.L. (2001). The journal as a guide for the healing journey. Nursing Clinics of North America. 36, 131-142.

**“THE BEST AND MOST BEAUTIFUL THINGS IN THE
WORLD CANNOT BE SEEN OR TOUCHED. THEY MUST
BE FELT WITHIN THE HEART.” ~ HELEN KELLER**

4. MOVE TOWARD EMPOWERMENT



- Hope and healing are precious and hard to describe. They can lead to feeling more in control over what happens to you.
- Along with empowerment comes being responsible for self-care, managing your health, and being more independent.
- If you feel a lack of control, helplessness, or dependency because of your illness, it may feel like you are treated “like a child” by the healthcare system.
- In the past, this was accepted, but things are changing as people become more aware and empowered.
- Educate your family and friends. **Let them** be as involved as you want them to be.
- If you are trying to manage your illness, but it worsens, that doesn’t mean you failed. Some problems may be outside of your control.
- Be kind to yourself and restart your efforts to manage your illness.

Even unsuccessful efforts to change open up chances to explore other issues/barriers in your life. Many barriers are able to be changed, but **only by you**.

Turning “wanting to do something” into “doing something” boosts your self-confidence and hope.

Once change starts, the process is renewed and you begin to regain control.

Wallbridge, H.R., Furer, P. & Lionberg, C. (2008). Behavioral activation and rehabilitation. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing*, 46(3), 36-44.

You are not your illness. It is not your identity—It’s only a small part of you.

Work on making healthy lifestyle choices (*Circle ways you want to improve your health*)

Sleep better/Eat healthier	Exercise more	Avoid alcohol and drugs
Safe driving & activities	Control behavior/emotions	Other: _____

Talk to your healthcare team about your situation and needs. Don’t stop taking your medicine or therapy unless your provider is aware and is guiding the changes.

“FORGET PAST MISTAKES. FORGET FAILURES. FORGET ABOUT EVERYTHING EXCEPT WHAT YOU’RE GOING TO DO NOW—AND DO IT.” ~ WILLIAM DURANT

5. EXPLORE A DRAMA TRIANGLE

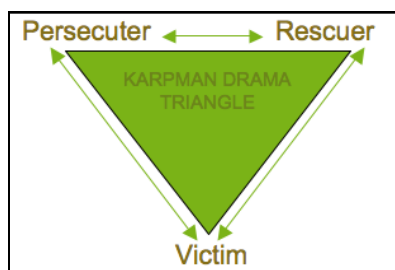


Empowerment and communication can be improved if we recognize when there is a “drama triangle” going on around us, fueling conflict. When we see it, we can respond openly and honestly, in a way that empowers instead of rescues.

- In a drama triangle (Karpman Triangle) there is a victim, persecutor, and rescuer.
- The victim fails to take responsibility for himself or keep his commitments.
- The rescuer says “You can’t do it. So, I will do it for you.” But, it is not as healthy to be responsible “for” others as it is to be responsible “to” others. This means keeping our commitments, telling the truth, and taking care of ourselves.
- When we try to take over or control someone else’s life it can be an insult to them. It can enable them to not be realistic about what needs to be done.
- When the person who is ill sees someone as a persecutor (always telling them what to do), that person eventually ends up as a “victim” in the family dynamics.
- The rescuer may also begin to feel like a victim when these unhealthy relationships cause drama.
- It is healthy to express support saying, “I trust that you can figure things out for yourself.” Or, offer to discuss options with them. Ask, “What do you need from me?” and choose to say, “Yes”, or “No. I’m sorry. That’s not my responsibility.”

Forrest, L. (2011). *Guiding principles for life beyond victim consciousness*. Conscious Living Media.

See **The Three Faces of Victim — An Overview of the Drama Triangle** and introduction videos at <http://www.lynnforrest.com/articles/2008/06/the-faces-of-victim/>



By Steven B. Karpman, M.D. - <http://www.karpmamatriangle.com/pdf/DramaTriangle.pdf>

A DRAMA STORY



- A young man who had diabetes lived near his parents. He checked his blood sugar (glucose) and took insulin, but he ate a lot of “junk food” and drank alcohol. He slept most of the day and often called in sick from his part-time evening job. He did not want to go to his healthcare provider, but he often went to the hospital when his blood sugar was dangerously high.
- After discharge, he was supposed to go to his regular healthcare provider to get his insulin adjusted, but he didn’t keep that appointment. He saw himself as the victim of a serious disease. He felt out of control and powerless. He went to his parents’ house to get food when his blood sugar was low.
- His mother (the rescuer) said “I will take care of it for you.” She also checked on her son and did his housework. She brought him food he requested from the store, mostly frozen pizza, soda, and cookies. She didn’t like bringing him food that was not good for him, but she did it anyway. She was getting tired of taking care of both households and was neglecting herself.
- His father (the persecutor) thought, “You can’t manage it.” He made sure his son took insulin and sat him at the table to eat when he was supposed to. The son felt insulted and resentful. The father felt more like he was being mean instead of showing he cared, but he felt responsible to avoid diabetic emergencies.
- They all became victims because of these unhealthy family relationships.
- His parents decided to express support saying, “I want you to come up with a plan to keep yourself healthy. Get your healthcare team involved. Then, you can have a fresh start with the right treatment and come up with your own recovery goals.”
- “Your life and health is your responsibility. **You can do more for yourself than we can do for you.** Tell us what you need from us, and we will help if we can.”
- “You can handle your life how you want to. But, we want you to be healthy. We decided to only bring you healthy food if we bring groceries. And, we won’t be coming over as often as we have been. We need to set our boundaries.”

TRIANGLE OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING



Instead of staying in the drama triangle, these responses can bring inner peace:

The victim is transformed into an observer

- Witnesses life as it happens without judging or blaming
- Accepts personal responsibility for what she/he feels, thinks, and does
- Lives in the moment rather than in the past or future
- Understands that what happens helps him/her learn
- Avoids being defensive or negative toward self or others
- Practices gratitude, thinking of things to be grateful for

The persecutor is transformed to an asserter (standing up for himself/herself)

- Is self-accepting, grounded in reality, and can risk admitting when wrong
- Doesn't take quick offense— Responds with calm, clear and loving firmness
- Expects peace and sanity while having positive thoughts
- Is sensitive, respectful, tactful, and assertive while not being afraid to tell the truth
- Knows his/her boundaries and respects the limits that other people have

The rescuer is transformed to a nurturer

- Focuses on taking care of himself/herself before taking care of others
- Respects the ability of others to seek their own goals (even if they don't approve)
- Allows them to accept the results of their own actions and behaviors
- Develops clear boundaries and detaches themselves in a healthy way, then trusting what happens
- Is honest with himself/herself, knowing their own agendas, motives, and beliefs

Forrest, L. (2011). *Guiding principles for life beyond victim consciousness*. Conscious Living Media. In unpublished handout prepared by Eve Watson.

When people encourage you to **be responsible for yourself**, it is healthier for you and for your whole family. It truly shows that they care about you and want to help you get out of the drama triangle. They may be as frustrated as you are.

People can give you support, but they can't make you healthy and responsible.

Your health and recovery depends on YOU and YOUR actions. Start by thinking about what is important to you. Then, set some reasonable goals.

6. SET GOALS



Long-term goals for the man in the story could be to have more energy, feel better, and avoid being in the hospital. By eating a variety of foods in a balanced diet, he could meet a short-term goal of lowering his blood sugar.

His healthcare team helped him develop specific goals, and he could see his progress with blood glucose checks and other lab tests.

- He ate meals/snacks at regular times and took medicine as prescribed.
- He decided to avoid drinking alcohol. He used essential oils and yoga to relax.
- He chose healthier foods by looking at labels and knowing the serving sizes.
- He reported his blood glucose readings to the healthcare team weekly so dosages could be changed quickly if needed.
- He was able to find a computer application (app) that made it easy to keep track of what he ate. That helped him to make healthier eating decisions.

He knew that managing blood glucose was much better than having wide swings. He wanted to avoid serious health problems that could come from uncontrolled diabetes. He took care of himself so he could do important things now and in the future.

What do you want for your future? What do you care about? Where do you want to be in life?

Break up long-term goals into small steps.

Write one of your goals here: _____

When do you want it done? _____

Write the first step here: _____

It is easier to make goals than to keep working on them. So, make sure there is a good reason that makes you want to do it. (Not to please someone else.) Base it on a deep feeling or one of your core values. Write the date when you met the goal above _____

Or, change your goal, so you **can** meet it. _____

CHOOSE CHANGE



Think about a bad habit or a problem you have:

How would you know if it is a problem for you? What would have to happen to know it is serious?

Have you tried to change this problem in the past?

Now, think about what could be different: _____

Why do you want to change right now? _____

What are the barriers **today** that keep you from changing? _____

What might help you overcome whatever holds you back? _____

What things (people, programs and behaviors) have helped you in the past?

What do you think you need to learn about so you can change?

Modified from Miller, W.R. & Rollnick, S. (1991). *Motivational interviewing: Preparing people to change addictive behavior*. New York: Guilford Press (p. 191-202).

When you see for yourself the differences between your current situation and your hopes for the future, you can see for yourself why change is needed. Believe that you can do it and that it is your responsibility. Find ways that work for you.

Bring a copy of this page and your goals page to the clinic to discuss with your healthcare team. Also, show them to family or friends. Let them help you.

YOUR LIFE IS NOT A SNAPSHOT. IT IS A FILMSTRIP.

YOUR BEST DAYS MAY STILL BE AHEAD OF YOU.

~DAVE RAMSEY

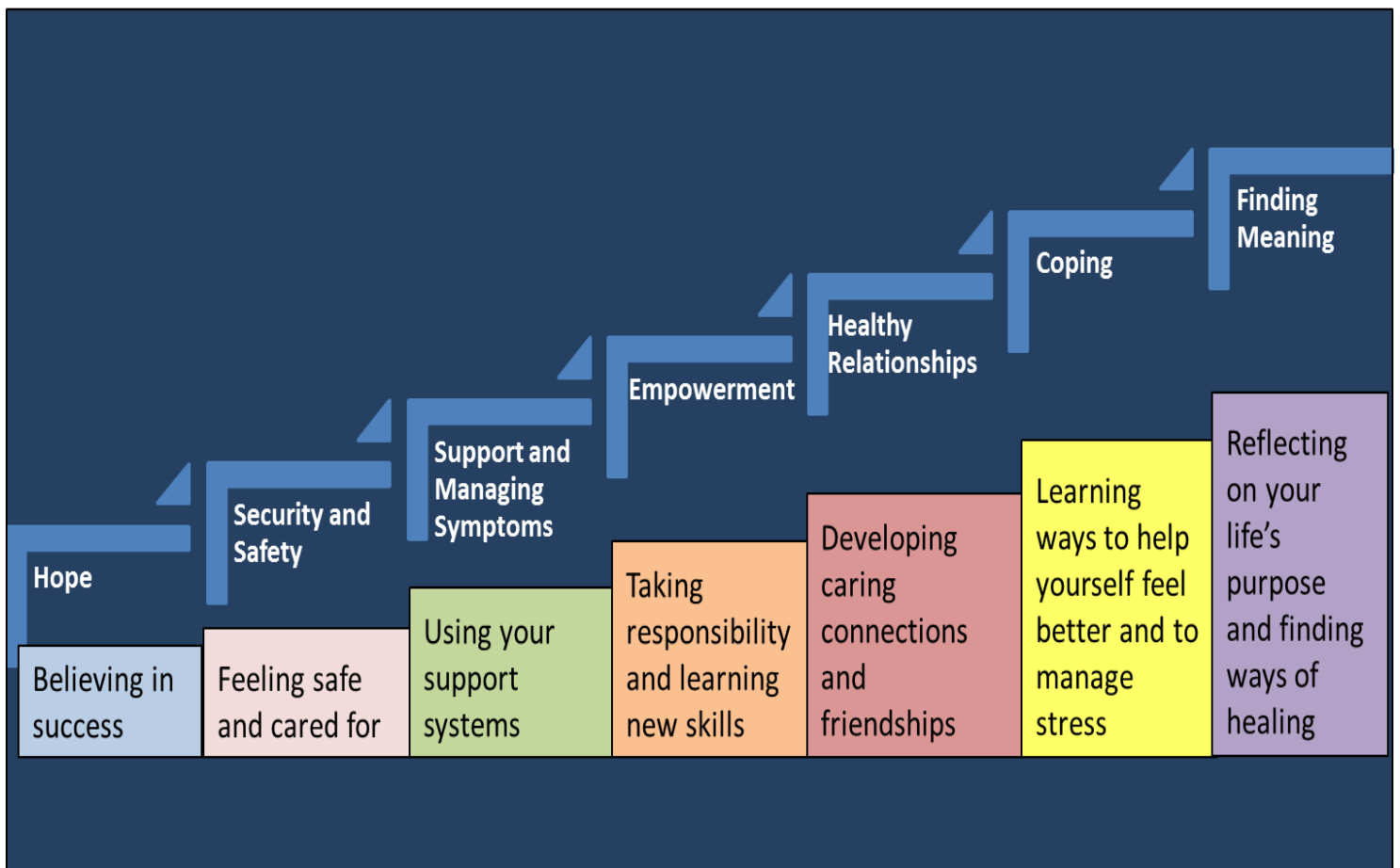
7. TAKE RECOVERY STEPS



Now let's look at the big picture. This **recovery model** is your framework for successful recovery:

Which of the following Recovery Steps do you want to focus on? _____

Which ones do you already feel strong in? _____



Developed by Mary Knutson (2008) and modified slightly from recovery model featured in Knutson, M.B., Newberry, S, & Schaper, H. (2013). Recovery Education: A tool for psychiatric nurses. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 20(10), p. 870-881.

Hope is an important first step in recovery. You can watch a narrated slideshow called **Finding Hope** at <http://www.healthvista.net/education-resources/recovery-resources/>. Scroll down to click on the video link on that page.

FIND YOUR WAY TO RECOVERY



Having ups and downs doesn't mean you have been doing something wrong. Sometimes on a journey there are changes along the way and bends in the road. It helps if you have the following keys to empowerment. *(Mark the ones you have already)*

Good attitude	Assertiveness	Autonomy
Belief in recovery	Flexibility to change	Courage
Growth and experience	Gratitude	Hopefulness
Learning	Positive thoughts	Responsibility
Rights	Respect	Self-determination
Self-esteem	Spirituality	Other:

Start journaling:

- Keeping a journal or a private diary can help prevent you from feeling “stuck” and provides a way to look back and understand what happened.
- Your journal is a tool to help you heal and tap into a deeper wisdom.

Day, A.L. (2001). The journal as a guide for the healing journey. *Nursing Clinics of North America*. 36, 131-142.

Write down something you are grateful for every day. It is a powerful way toward positive thinking. For fun, watch the video (3:24 minutes) **The Original Gratitude Dance!** at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R9z2ELaBVJY>.

Find your way through obstacles to reach RECOVERY. *(Mark those that apply to you)*

Having an addiction

Having a poor diet

Spending more than your income

Not following treatment

Keeping unhealthy relationships

Lacking hope

Not knowing what to do

Having other obstacles:

RECOVERY

EXPRESS YOURSELF



When you think of your recovery as a journey, think of how to **move towards a healthier path** than what you have been on.

Draw how you feel:

Draw how you want to feel:

8. EXPLORE MIND-BODY CONNECTIONS



When you are feeling stressed, anxious or upset, **your body responds** to the way you think, feel, and act. Your body tries to tell you that something isn't right. If you listen, you can learn to stay on the path toward recovery.

What are your physical signs when your emotional health is out of balance? Do you listen?

Improving emotional health can make your body's immune system stronger and add the energy you need to take care of yourself (be active, eat healthy foods, and follow your treatment plan). *How can you improve your physical and emotional health?*

Your family and healthcare team can't really know how you are feeling just by looking at you. You need to talk to them about feelings and problems. Express stress, sadness, frustration or anxiety instead of keeping them "bottled up" inside. Sometimes just talking to someone helps problems seem smaller. *Who can you talk to?* _____

Sometimes, people develop depression when they have a serious illness. Counseling and/or antidepressant medicine may be needed as you learn to manage your illness, but it may only be a short-term need. *What helps your mood?* _____

If someone you trust says you need to get more help, you should listen to them. If your illness gets worse, you may not see things as they really are.

Don't expect too much of yourself as you are recovering. **Be kind to yourself.**

Recovery takes time. Try to be patient. See <http://www.essentiallifefskills.net/patience.html> for more about this.

In life, there is always hope. But, sometimes you have to change what you are hoping for.

Explore your strengths and limitations on the next two pages. Successful recovery is possible as you focus on your strengths and move toward your goals.

FIND STRENGTHS—HOW YOU BEHAVE



Mark on the list below your values, skills and strengths:

- Ambitious (hard working, aspiring toward goals)
- Broad-minded (open-minded)
- Capable (competent, effective, skilled, able to do something well)
- Cheerful (lighthearted, joyful, having a good sense of humor)
- Clean (neat, tidy)
- Courageous (standing up for your beliefs)
- Forgiving (willing to pardon others)
- Helpful (working for the good of others)
- Honest (sincere, truthful)
- Imaginative (daring, creative)
- Independent (self-reliant, self-sufficient, able to stand on your own two feet)
- Intellectual (intelligent, smart, sensible, reflective)
- Logical (consistent, reasonable, well thought out, rational)
- Loving (affectionate, kind, tender)
- Obedient (dutiful, respectful)
- Polite (courteous, well-mannered)
- Responsible (dependable, reliable, in charge)
- Self-controlled (restrained, self-disciplined, having will power)

Which of your strengths are the most important to you? Why?

FIND STRENGTHS—HOW YOU LIVE



What do you have? (*Mark on the list below your values, skills and strengths as you live your life*)

- A comfortable life (prosperous, having what you need)
- An exciting life (stimulating, active)
- A sense of accomplishment (lasting contribution)
- A world at peace (free from war and conflict)
- A world of beauty (finding pleasure from beauty, nature and arts)
- Equality (brotherhood, equal opportunity)
- Family security (taking care of loved ones)
- Freedom (independence, free choice)
- Happiness (being content with what you have)
- Inner harmony (freedom from inner conflict)
- Mature love (intimacy, deep caring)
- National security (protection from attacks)
- Pleasure (enjoyment, leisure, meaningful activities or relationships)
- Salvation (being spiritually saved, believing in eternal life)
- Self-respect (self-esteem, confidence in your abilities)
- Social recognition (having respect, admiration from others)
- True friendship (close companionship)
- Wisdom (a mature understanding of life that comes from experience, knowledge, and judgment)

What have you learned about yourself from using this checklist? _____

How can your strengths help you make changes during recovery? _____

Modified slightly from Rokeach, M. (1973). *The Nature of Human Values*. New York: Free Press.

9. USE YOUR COPING AND LIFE SKILLS



- To stay on the right track, learn to cope with setbacks that happen along the way. And use your basic personal values as strengths. They can be very powerful.
- Calm your mind and body with relaxation skills, meditation, or prayer. Tap into protection and guidance from an accepting, peaceful spiritual source (God, Yahweh, Great Spirit, etc.) that is present and can hear us.
- Download and print **Your Recovery Workbook: Coping and Relaxation** free on <http://www.healthvista.net/store/> or the Recovery Resources page. **Practice relaxation skills.** If they don't seem to work the first time, try them again.
- Use coping and relaxation skills while also making efforts to solve your problems. But, **if you are having an emergency, get help.**
- Learn about your illness and medicines you are taking. Be open to lifestyle changes.

Discuss your plan for a healthy recovery with someone on your healthcare team. Who? _____

- Think of how the man in the story was able to cope better after accepting his illness. He took responsibility for his health, followed the treatment plan, and kept the healthcare team updated. Journaling helped him gain insight and stay more calm and balanced after beginning to understand some family drama.
- Take small steps at your own pace. That is good enough to get where you are going, as long as you are going in the right direction. Ups and downs are to be expected on your journey. **Use help and support** to get back on track.
- Recovery and managing a serious illness is not easy, but find **your** way, and do it!

"I AM NOT INTERESTED IN THE PAST. I AM INTERESTED IN THE FUTURE, FOR THAT IS WHERE I EXPECT TO SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE." - CHARLES F. KETTERING



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary B. Knutson is a Registered Nurse with a Master's Degree as a Nurse Educator. She has worked to improve education resources in academic settings, hospitals (including psychiatric units), in homes and other community healthcare settings with the goal of empowering people and helping them toward better self-care. A collection of health education resources can be found online at www.healthvista.net.

Visit healthvista.net for more recovery resources.

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