Your Recovery Workbook: Finding Your Way to Manage Mental Illness

(Including stories of bipolar disorder)

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Your Recovery Workbook: Finding Your Way to Manage Mental Illness

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A Recovery Story: A young woman struggled with mood swings, being depressed and then feeling very "up" and full of energy. She did not eat or sleep much and made many risky choices with unhealthy relationships. She was overwhelmed with anxiety, drank alcohol to calm down, and had problems at work. She went to a clinic and found out that she had bipolar disorder. Mood swings were safely managed with support from her family and her healthcare team. She learned that by getting enough sleep, having counseling, and taking some medications, she could help control her symptoms. She thought, "This doesn't have to get me down. My life will be different, but it can still be good." She was grateful to know about the illness before it caused more serious problems. She accepted the need to **care for herself** instead of expecting other people to make sure she followed the treatment plan. Then, she was able to recover with only a few "bumps in the road" as she learned to manage her 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 mental (psychiatric) illness.
- The bipolar disorder 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 rather than 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

ACCEPT MENTAL ILLNESS



Although stigma still exists, mental illness doesn't need to be seen as a negative trait or a part of you. Society has become more accepting and understanding of psychiatric illness in recent years. To help cope with stigma, you can:

Remember that you have choices - You can decide who to tell about your illness and what to tell them. Your confidentiality will be respected in the hospital.

Remember that you are not alone – Many others cope with situations like yours. People struggle with depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and many other psychiatric illnesses, but there is support available.

Be hopeful and remember that there are effective treatments for psychiatric illnesses. Medications and other treatments are available. New treatments are being developed and researched. Most people with psychiatric illnesses lead fulfilling, productive lives.

Be proud of yourself for seeking help – It can be very hard to ask for help, and frustrating when the treatments take a long time to show positive results. You can learn new ways of coping. Learn more about your illness to develop a positive, more empowered attitude.

Be active and keep supportive people around you – Withdrawing or isolating from others can be a negative effect from stigma that puts you at risk for depression. Pursue positive activities or hobbies and try new social activities. Consider being a volunteer in your community. If you or your family needs further support, contact your local chapter of NAMI (National Alliance for Mental Illness).

The Honest, Open, Proud Workbook is recommended for you to read: Corrigan, P. W., Nieweglowski, K., Buchholz, B. A. & Al-Khouja, M. A. (2015). Retrieved from http://

comingoutproudprogram.org/images/

Honest_Open_Proud_WorkbookBooster_FINAL_2.9.2016.compressed.pdf

National Consortium on Stigma and Empowerment and Patrick Corrigan gave permission to share the Coming Out Proud Manual (2013). It was revised and renamed to **Honest, open, proud: To eliminate the stigma of mental illness.**

UNDERSTAND MENTAL ILLNESS



Some common illnesses that affect individuals and their families are listed here:

- Anxiety A vague feeling of fear, nervousness, tension, worry, uncertainty, or helplessness without a specific reason feeling "keyed up"
- Bipolar disorder A mood disorder with both manic behavior and depression
- Eating disorder Anorexia (refusing to eat because of a distorted body image), bulimia (having uncontrolled binge eating along with vomiting or dieting) or binge eating (eating too much or too fast – more than your body needs)
- Major depression A severe or long-lasting time of deep sadness and grief
- Mania When someone is manic, their mood is too upbeat, happy and fast-paced. Thoughts and activities can be non-stop. Some people experience mania as being very irritable
- **Obsessive Compulsive disorder** Having unwanted ideas, emotions or impulses that force themselves into mind. They cause a strong impulse to do something that is very hard to resist
- **Panic** Having extreme anxiety that can cause poor ability to think and function, distort how you see things, and make it harder to communicate. There are often distressing physical symptoms with "panic attacks"
- **Personality disorder** A set of patterns or traits that make it harder to maintain meaningful relationships, feel fulfilled, and enjoy life
- Phobia A horrible fear that can cause extreme anxiety
- **Psychosis** Having problems telling the difference between seeing reality and having delusions like feeling controlled, paranoid or suspicious. May include hallucinations like hearing voices or seeing things other people don't see.
- Schizophrenia A long-term psychotic disorder that can include some unusual behaviors or ways of speaking, problems with focusing and decision-making, and less ability to express and experience positive emotions

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
- □ Not dealing with trauma that affects your life

You need healthcare, support, and guidance. Your treatment 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



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 <u>http://aces_autoimmune.tripod.com/copingb.htm</u> (... 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 selfconfidence 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

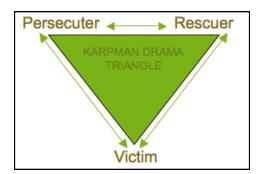


Empowerment and communication can be improved if we recognize when there is a "drama triangle" going on around us, fueling conflict. When we see it, we can respond openly and honestly, in a way that empowers instead of rescues.

- In a drama triangle (Karpman Triangle) there is a victim, persecutor, and rescuer.
- The victim fails to take responsibility for himself/herself or keep 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.lynneforrest.com/articles/2008/06/the-faces-ofvictim/



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

A DRAMA STORY



- A young woman with bipolar disorder lived near her parents. She had medicine but didn't like the way it made her feel "slowed down". She had mood swings of depression and mania with racing thoughts. She often called in sick for work. She did not want to go to her healthcare provider, but sometimes went to the hospital when she couldn't take care of herself, lost too much weight, or felt suicidal.
- After discharge, she didn't keep appointments with her counselor and healthcare provider. She saw herself as the victim of a serious disease. She felt out of control and powerless. She went to her parents' house and sat on their couch when she was feeling sad and hopeless.
- Her mother (the rescuer) said "I will take care of it for you." She checked on her and did her housework. She brought food that she wanted from the store (mostly beer and cookies). The mother didn't like bringing unhealthy food and drinks, but she did it anyway, so her daughter would at least eat something. She was tired of taking care of both households and was neglecting herself.
- Her father (the persecutor) thought, "You can't manage it." He sat his daughter down at the table to eat and take pills when she was supposed to. The daughter felt insulted and resentful. The father felt more like he was being mean instead of showing that he cared, but he felt responsible to do it (to avoid hospitalizations).
- They all became victims because of these unhealthy family relationships.
- Her 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 set 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."



Instead of staying in the drama triangle, the responses below 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 <u>YOU</u> and <u>YOUR</u> actions. Start by thinking about what is important to you. Then, set some goals that are within reason..

6. SET GOALS



Long-term goals for the woman in the story could be to keep her job, feel better, and avoid being in the hospital. By eating a variety of foods in a balanced diet, she could meet a short-term goal of maintaining her weight and providing fuel for her body. She set specific goals with the help of her healthcare team.

- To gain some weight when she chose healthier foods and ate meals and snacks regularly.
- To sleep better after taking medicine as prescribed and having a realistic schedule.
- To avoid drinking alcohol. She used essential oils and yoga to relax.
- To call her healthcare team when she had more than usual anxiety, mania, or depression, so medicine dosages could be changed quickly if needed.

She knew that managing mood swings was important to avoid health problems. The risk of self-harm or injury, and unhealthy sexual behavior, or spending came from uncontrolled bipolar disorder.

She took care of herself so she 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 <u>you</u> 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.

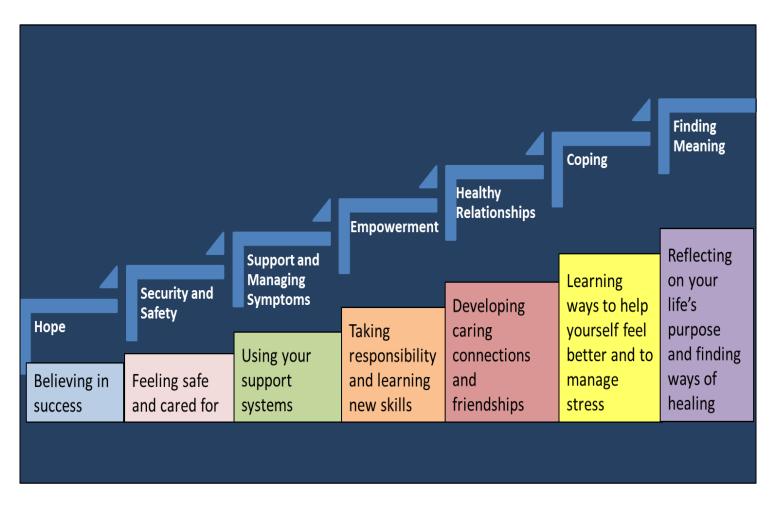
Bring a copy of this page and your goals page to the clinic to discuss with your healthcare team. Also, show them to family or friends. Let them help you.

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:



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.



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)





| 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: | |



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.essentiallifeskills.net/ patience.html or the related Patience handout at http://www.healthvista.net/wpcontent/uploads/2015/05/Patienceandhowtodevelopit.pdf.

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)
- \Box 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?

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

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)
- Deleasure (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.

STAY HEALTHY



Use your basic personal values as strengths. They can be very powerful.

Relapse is a gradual decline in function that leads to the return of an illness or unhealthy behavior pattern. It can often be prevented if people are aware of warning signs or changes in their symptoms and ask for help. Some possible warning signs are listed below. (Check off any that apply to you. Write your top 3 in the chart below, along with your usual response and what changes you can make to help prevent relapses)

- Depressed, hopeless or suicidal mood
- Worsening anxiety or panic attacks
- Denial of symptoms
- Poor judgment or self-harm behavior
- Compulsive/impulsive behavior
- Confused or disorganized
- Difficulty making decisions
- ♦ Easily irritated or angered

- Unhealthy eating patterns
- Withdrawing from usual activities
- ◊ Feeling helpless or powerless
- Unhealthy sleeping patterns
- ♦ Using substances to feel better
- ◊ Lack of motivation or caring
- ♦ Unable to concentrate or focus
- Agitated, violent, or manic behavior

| When experiencing this warning sign: | I usually respond by: | Instead, I will try: | What others can do to help: |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. | | | |
| 2. | | | |
| 3. | | | |

Be serious about your health and find your way to stay healthy!

WHERE ARE YOU ON THE JOURNEY?



How close are you to recovery? (Mark the statements that are true for you)

- □ I have never really thought about recovery from my symptoms or experiences.
- □ I don't think I need to recover.
- □ I have so much going on that I can't think about recovery right now.
- □ I'm thinking about recovery, but haven't decided to move toward recovery.
- □ I am committed to my recovery but I am having a setback right now.
- □ I am actively involved in recovering.
- □ I feel that I am fully recovered and now I have to maintain my gains.

"IF YOU ARE ON THE WRONG ROAD, TURN BACK."

A big turning point in my life was the connection that I made to key people who saw something in me beyond my illness. They pushed me to disclose my dreams and wishes. Through this process of support, motivation, self-advocacy and my own determination, I began my recovery journey.

Recovery enables me to have options and choices... It has opened pathways for opportunities and new discoveries. Most importantly, recovery has given me hope—believable hope—for a future that I can design myself. This hope comes through different channels—spirituality, education, and a support system that includes my peers, coworkers, family members and mental health professionals.

I feel recovery changes people by giving them a language—an understanding—in which everyone can relate. I think most people are recovering or have recovered from something in their life—perhaps a disaster, a death, divorce, or a financial or job loss.

I believe recovery gives my peers and me the simple message...enough is enough of the same old stigmas and beliefs. It is time to take charge of our lives...

- Cherie Bledsoe, Kansas Peer Provider

Reference for this page was Ridgway, P., McDiarmid, D., Davidson, L., Bayes, J, & Ratzlaff, S. (2002). Pathways to recovery self-help workbook. Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas School of Social Welfare.



To stay on the right track, learn to cope with setbacks that happen along the way:

- 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 woman in the story was able to cope better after accepting the bipolar disorder and its treatment. She took responsibility for her health, followed the treatment plan, and kept the healthcare team updated. Journaling helped her 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 you can 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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