

Putting wellbeing at the heart of our recovery

What can I do to get well and stay well?



A personal guide to mental health recovery

"Recovery is about finding a better, healthier and more sustainable life, that recognises the past, accepts the limitations of the present and is full of hope for the future."

What do we mean by 'recovery'?



Mental health problems and challenges are common and can be devastating, but people can and do recover.

Recovery is not always about 'cure', but about quality of life. This involves managing symptoms and difficulties. It goes beyond illness to finding ways to live well and to build a meaningful and satisfying life.

Personal recovery is about discovering who you are and taking positive steps that add up to a better life.

Recovery can be described as follows:

- Recovery is a unique, individual journey, involving choice, and hope. Though painful, it can be about self discovery, renewal and transformation.
- Recovery approaches value partnership, mentoring, coaching and sharing of knowledge.
- Recovery provision includes shared decisions around medication, recovery planning and other therapies. It offers support that is mindful of individual need, with tailored help at different stages.
- Recovery recognises our common humanity and moves beyond the notion of 'them' and 'us'; to just 'us', sharing the joys and struggles of being human.
- Recovery is about social justice and people in recovery have the right to be empowered, heard, and included, so that we can each progress and achieve the things that matter in our lives.

We can:

- find a new sense of self, beyond our difficulties and regain hope by finding new dreams and goals. By 'doing', we can change our 'being'.
- take back control in our lives by developing skills in looking after our mental and emotional wellbeing, accepting that setbacks will happen. Discover what works best and choose to do what works for us.
- gain hope and inspiration from personal stories of recovery, by seeing how others have found a way forward.
- remember we are 'people first', with many roles and talents. The words we choose and use about ourselves, and others, are important.
- create opportunities for ourselves, by exchanging information and offering and receiving valuable peer support.
- find meaning and gain a sense of belonging by becoming more engaged in our communities, through leisure, education, spirituality, volunteering, work and enjoying life.



Looking after your wellbeing

Recovery values

- Hope
- Empathy
- Choice
- Trust
- Acceptance
- Personhood
- Diversity
- Equality
- Respect
- Empowerment
- Partnership
- Inclusion
- Non-judgmental attitudes
- Love and kindness
- Responsibility
- Believing in people

After a meeting about your mental health, reflect on how you have been supported in your recovery. Hopefully you will be more able to:

- talk to someone you trust about the things that really matter to you
- make sense of your current difficulties and identify the things that help
- express your present needs and plan steps forward
- acknowledge your strengths and resources and build on them
- recognise that some difficulties are temporary and that 'this too shall pass'
- identify and prioritise your dreams and goals. Assess how realistic they are.

Is there anything else you need, to help you move forward?

(This could be broader issues, housing, benefits, work, creative activities, friendships.)

***“The journey of a thousand miles
begins with a single step.”***

Lao Tzu



Ways to keep well

- Have something meaningful to do each day
- Accept support when necessary; don't try to do it alone
- Breathe deeply; it calms the mind
- Try to eat and sleep well and establish routines
- Exercise; it reduces stress and helps with fitness
- Learn to relax and focus on the 'here' and 'now'
- Remember you are more than a diagnosis
- Keeping well may include taking medication
- Learn what positively and what negatively affects your wellbeing
- Take time to be in the natural world - take a walk and notice your surroundings
- Build and maintain positive relationships by being in touch with other people
- Value family, friends, and supporters, who offer a listening ear
- Try humour; smiling and laughter can help you feel better
- Be kind to yourself and acknowledge positive changes, even small ones



“The goal is to become the unique, awesome, never to be repeated human being that we were called to be.”

Pat Deegan

If you experience mental health difficulties, sources of help include friends, family and organisations such as Devon Partnership NHS Trust, who are there to help.

Accessing services

Your first port of call may be your GP who can offer information, advice and/or suggest other support services. A referral may be made to secondary mental health services.

Meetings with practitioners

Health workers have valuable skills and knowledge and can talk with you to work out what suits you. Before a meeting, think carefully about the help you need, and write down questions and key points. A relative, friend or advocate can go with you to give support.

Diagnosis

Some people find being given a diagnosis liberating. It helps them understand their problems and to access services. Others feel it to be stigmatising and disempowering. Finding out more about the meaning of any diagnosis you receive can help. Practitioners should be willing to explain. Other people with the same diagnosis may offer experience and insights. A leaflet "*How can we use diagnosis to support people in their recovery?*" is available from the Devon websites opposite.

Medication

Medication is one of a number of alternatives. It can provide helpful or necessary support. Some people find side effects difficult or a compromise. Practitioners should work patiently with you to find the medication that works best for you. Unless you have been placed under 'section', you are entitled to have the final say in your medication.

Self Help

A plan, for example, a WRAP - Wellness Recovery Action Plan, can help you focus, get a sense of direction and take small steps. Give yourself time and accept there may be setbacks. You could build your own toolkit of information, photos, activity reminders, quotes, etc. Self-help groups, books and the internet may be useful.

Overcoming prejudice and discrimination

People with mental health issues often experience prejudice and discrimination. It can lead to a loss of self-esteem and difficulty in achieving our goals. Talking with others can encourage, inspire and help to resist stigma in our lives. Together, we can help work towards a world friendly towards difference.

Recovery Learning Communities

There is a national commitment to recovery education, to help people learn about mental health and wellbeing. Such projects support people to learn together, with classes led jointly by practitioners and peer specialists.

Devon Recovery Learning Community prospectus can be viewed at:
www.devonpartnership.nhs.uk or www.recoverydevon.co.uk

Helpful websites

Devon Partnership Trust: www.devonpartnership.nhs.uk

Recovery Devon: www.recoverydevon.co.uk

Rethink Mental Illness: www.rethink.org

Mind: www.mind.org.uk

Other support and further reading

Samaritans: Call 08457 90 90 90 - 24 hours

100 Ways to Support Recovery: Mike Slade

Introduction to WRAP: search at Recovery Devon website - resources - resource library

Local help: Find local support groups at Recovery Devon website - resources - links

Be Involved Devon: www.beinvolveddevon.org.uk

Visit 5 Ways to Wellbeing

www.devonpartnership.nhs.uk/Five-ways-to-wellbeing.415.0.html

This leaflet was created by people who have drawn on their own life experiences to share learning about recovery. The suggestions and activities have helped us. We hope that you will find something relevant and worthwhile here to encourage you in your recovery.

Devon Partnership NHS Trust aspires to always improve services. We positively welcome feedback and would like to hear from you. Please contact PALS on 0800 0730 741 or access our website www.devonpartnership.nhs.uk.