

Behavioral Health: Developing A Better Understanding

DEFINITION OF RECOVERY

“Recovery - A process of change through which individuals improve their health/wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.” ~ SAMHSA

The word recovery is a general term that is used to explain a transitional time in life; whether it is an athlete recovering from a knee injury, a family member who is recovering from losing a loved one, a child recovering from a mental illness, or an adult recovering from an addiction. The word recovery can be used in many realms of life; the idea of recovery is multifaceted and some types of recovery can be expected to be easier than others. Regardless of the type of recovery an individual is facing, the recovery process itself will be unique and personal to the individual, pushing them to become better than they were the day before.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has delineated four major dimensions that support a life in recovery: *Health* - overcoming or managing one’s disease(s) or symptoms and making informed, healthy choices that support physical and emotional well-being; *Home* - a stable and safe place to live; *Purpose* - meaningful daily activities, such as a job, school, volunteering, family caretaking, or creative endeavors, and the independence, income and resources to participate in society; and *Community* - relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love and hope.

"Living in the community supports my recovery. Recovery has empowered me to contribute more to my neighborhood"
 ~ Kyle L.



“The recovery movement embodies [a] humanizing approach, promoting greater respect, appreciation, and empowerment for all members of society.”
 ~ Miraj Desai, Ph.D.c

Principles of Recovery

While the recovery process is unique for every individual, when dealing with mental health and/or addiction issues, there are some guiding principles that can help an individual’s recovery go more smoothly, as well as their continued sobriety, for the recovery process is never-ending. These guiding principles are general, but when applied to the individual in their own unique way, they can help advance their recovery. When using these principles, it is important to make them as personal to the individual as possible.



SAMHSA's 10 Guiding Principles of Recovery

Recovery emerges from hope: In order for recovery to happen, the individual must keep an optimistic/positive attitude that recovery can happen for them as long as they are willing to put the effort in to recover. Hope is internalized and can be fostered by peers, families, providers, allies, and others.

Recovery is person-driven: Self-determination and self-direction are the foundations for recovery as individuals define their own life goals and design their unique path(s) towards those goals. Individuals optimize their independence to the greatest extent possible by leading and controlling choice over the services and supports that assist their recovery and resilience.

Recovery occurs via many pathways: Individuals are unique with different needs, strengths, preferences, goals, culture, and backgrounds. Recovery is built on the multiple capacities, strengths, talents, coping abilities, resources, and inherent value of each individual. In some cases, recovery pathways can be enabled by creating a supportive environment. This is especially true for children, who may not have the legal or developmental capacity to set their own course.

Recovery is holistic: Recovery encompasses an individual's life; including mind, body, spirit, and community. This includes addressing all of the areas of a person's life, family, housing, employment, education, clinical treatment/services/supports for mental disorders and substance use disorders, primary healthcare, dental care, complementary and alternative services, faith, spirituality, creativity, social networks, transportation, and community participation that should be available, integrated, and coordinated.

Recovery is supported by peers and allies: Support from others, including the sharing of experiential knowledge and skills play an invaluable role in recovery. Peers encourage and engage other peers and provide each other with a vital sense of belonging, supportive relationships, valued roles, and community. Peer-operated supports and services provide important resources to assist people along their journeys of recovery and wellness. Professionals can also play an important role in the recovery process by providing clinical treatment and other services that support individuals in their chosen recovery paths.

Recovery is supported through relationship and social networks: The presence and involvement of people who believe in the individual's ability to recover is of the utmost importance. These are the people who offer hope, support, and encouragement; and who also suggest strategies and resources for change. Family members, peers, providers, faith groups, community members, and other allies form vital support networks. Through these relationships, people leave unhealthy and/or unfulfilling life roles behind and engage in new roles that lead to a greater sense of belonging.

Recovery is culturally-based and influenced: Culture and cultural background in all of its diverse representations including values, traditions, and beliefs are keys in determining an individual's unique pathway to recovery. Services should be culturally sensitive, congruent, and competent, as well as personalized to meet each individual's unique needs.

Recovery is supported by addressing trauma: The experience of trauma is often a precursor to or associated with alcohol and drug use, mental health problems, and related issues. Services and supports should be trauma-informed to foster safety and trust, as well as promote choice, empowerment, and collaboration.

Recovery involves individual, family, and community strengths and responsibility: Individuals, families, and communities have strengths and resources that serve as a foundation for recovery. In addition, individuals have a personal responsibility for their own self-care and journeys of recovery. Families and significant others have responsibilities to support their loved ones, especially for children and youth in recovery. Communities have responsibilities to provide opportunities and resources to address discrimination and to ensure collaboration.

Recovery is based on respect: Community, family, and societal acceptance and appreciation for people affected by mental health and substance use problems, including protecting rights and eliminating discrimination, are crucial in achieving recovery. Self-acceptance, developing a positive and meaningful sense of identity, and regaining belief in one's self are particularly important.

Source: Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration - SAMHSA's Working Definition of Recovery