

Recovery Is Different For Everyone



We talk a lot about the word “recovery” in mental health, and it can be a helpful idea for expressing that there is hope and a way forward after a mental health crisis or struggle. But recovery means different things for different people, and everyone’s mental health recovery journey looks different.

What Does Mental Health Recovery Mean?

The idea of mental health recovery came from social movements that challenged mental health discrimination and stigma in society, calling for more humane and hopeful approaches to mental health that recognised people could get better after a mental health crisis. These days, recovery means different things to different people. Some think about recovery in terms of managing their mental health symptoms, such as finding the right medication or treatment plan. For others, recovery may be about living a meaningful life and regaining a sense of control and agency. Recovery isn’t a straightforward process. There can be setbacks and detours along the way, and our idea of recovery can change throughout our lifetime.

Different types of Recovery:

Clinical Recovery: Clinical recovery is usually focused on reducing or getting rid of unwanted mental health symptoms, such as panic attacks, persistent low moods, compulsive behaviours, and insomnia. Managing symptoms is important to many people, but certainly isn’t the only aspect of recovery.

Personal Recovery: How you define your own recovery is unique to you. Some people think of recovery as being able to lead a meaningful and fulfilling life, regardless of whether or not mental health symptoms are present. People can have their own recovery goals, such as finding a sense of belonging or feeling part of a supportive community, working towards meaningful employment or study, or finding a personalised treatment plan that works for them. For others, recovery goals can include things like being able to take public transport, learning a new skill, working through trauma, or helping others through peer support.

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Some people dislike the term recovery when it applies to their mental health, as they feel it suggests they should return to who they were before getting sick, or that it ignores social issues that led to them becoming unwell in the first place, such as poverty or the impacts of racism. Others feel their mental health struggles have led to personal growth and a stronger sense of self than before they developed mental health challenges. However you define or relate to the concept of mental health recovery is valid.

Ways to Support Mental Health Recovery

- Fostering a sense of hope
- Building a supportive group of friends and family
- Exploring what is meaningful and fulfilling for you
- Building a mental health or counselling team
- Setting achievable goals
- Listening to your needs
- Setting healthy boundaries
- Developing a routine
- Nurturing a healthy lifestyle
- Doing things you enjoy
- Becoming aware of and challenging internal stigma and perceived limitations
- Connecting with a peer support worker, support group or mental health advocate
- Discovering what services and social supports exist in your community

The idea of mental health recovery can provide people with hope and a foundation for exploring what is important and meaningful in their life. That being said, everyone's recovery journey is different and takes place in their own time, in their own way. Some people might feel pressured to get better right away, but it's important to remember that recovery is a journey with ups and downs. The most important thing to remember is that there is always hope after a mental health challenge, and many avenues for seeking support.