



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Central Alberta

Using the Recovery Philosophy in Peer Support

Excerpted <http://peersupportcanada.ca/download.php?MHCCGUIDE2017>

Peer support strives for recovery and, in doing so, it considers the wellness of the whole person. Empowering relationships, engagement in meaningful activities, and an ability to experience happiness are all part of recovery. The reduction or elimination of symptoms may be an important goal, but it is only one aspect of the person's experience.

The philosophy of peer support is that each individual has an innate desire to find a path towards recovery, improved health and wellbeing, and has within themselves the knowledge of what will work for them. The peer support worker supports that person as they find that inner knowledge and reignite that hopeful desire.

This is also true for family-based peer support. A family member or loved one can benefit from support provided by someone who has walked in their shoes as they discern the right path for themselves in relation to their loved one. For them, the recovery path is not only about their own mental wellness, but also includes a greater level of confidence and trust in their loved one's abilities to move forward towards a more holistic and healthy life.

Peer support recognizes that wellness is a full life experience. Peer support is intended to complement traditional clinical care, and vice versa.

Mark Ragins, MD, outlines his understanding of key differences between a holistic recovery approach and a more traditional, illness-centred approach in "The Recovery Model."²⁵ This comparison highlights the ways peer support workers can complement a more traditional medical approach and, in turn, enhance the recovery experience for the peer.

Ragins refers to a recovery-oriented, person-centred approach, where the relationship (rather than the diagnosis) is the foundation and services offered are focused on quality-of-life goals (rather than illness-reduction goals). Recovery-oriented techniques promote personal growth, recognizing that the techniques used within an illness-centred approach are focused on illness control. Some of the differences identified may seem subtle but can have an important impact on the person who is striving to find hope for a better outcome.

Recovery is "a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential."

<http://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/advisories/1112223420.aspx>

"Recovery is a process through which people find ways of living meaningful lives with or without the ongoing symptoms of their condition. Helping someone recover is not just about managing symptoms, it includes helping people find a job, getting them somewhere safe to live and developing supportive relationships with family."

http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/news/2012_personalisation_paper.aspx



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