

Healing and Recovery

WELLNESS AND ADVOCACY CENTER

NEWSLETTER

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Editor: T. Petersen

Musings on Wellness

When I think about wellness and healing at this time of my life, I find that the word “discovery” seems more applicable than recovery. From Webster’s, ‘Discovery’ is ... to obtain sight of or knowledge of for the first time’. Hence, discovery evokes anticipation and excitement rather than fighting or “combating a disorder, real or perceived”. Yet both recovery and discovery have connected me to a process of finding out whom I am, reclaiming lost senses of myself and seeing just a little more deeply into my inner life of thoughts, feelings and sensations. Many writers have shared their thoughts about recovery and I am uncertain whether I can add anything new to the mix. Still, looking back on my life’s journey, several things stand out. Perhaps you may recognize some of these from your own path.

1. **Intentionally trying to my change behavior.** For example, getting up at the same time every day and taking a shower, despite the resistance not to.
 2. **Grieving loss.** I discovered the one of my best coping methods had been minimizing my experiences of grief and sorrow. When I finally allowed myself to acknowledge my sense of pain and grief, I began to have a sense of self acceptance. Telling my story over and over, until what seemed unbearable no longer seemed that way. And listening to the stories of others seemed to lessen the burden of feeling different and alone.
 3. **Asking for help.** Despite all the advances in mental health care and even working in the mental health field, asking for help was a major hurdle. There is stigma that comes with the dread of being labeled through diagnosis and yet, surprisingly, much help is available. There were peers, therapists, co-workers and a few friends. It is amazing to feel a sense of acceptance which is not filled with judgment or self judgment. Additionally, the culture I was raised in promoted a stoic acceptance of life, along with the sense that an individual must be strong enough to take care of oneself. Taken to an extreme, this attitude can be life threatening.
 4. **Celebrating our strengths.** Despite depression, self doubt, self loathing and fear, we often manage deep acts of unacknowledged courage. A friend said once, “It is important to build on our successes.” Learning to believe in oneself, at some core level, has been indispensable in getting up after falling down one more time. We help someone else, face a difficult fear and walk through the woods at night, under a surprisingly benign sky.
 5. **Working. Creating. Fixing.** “I heard someone say a long time ago that ‘work competes with symptoms.’ If you are able to pursue something you love or at least like, you may surprise yourself with what you can do. Focusing on the value of something well done, can allow you to forget some of the negativity circulating within for awhile.
 6. **Helping others.** Being able to connect with another human being is a gift in itself.
 7. **Exploring “labels”** of all stripes and deciding how to relate to them. Diagnosis has been such a hot topic among peers for a long time. Labels can create more of a prison, or something that allows you to explore more deeply, how to live outside of others’ boxes.
- Many writers say recovery is a personal journey. For no two people is the journey the same. But along the road of our journeys of discovery, shared experience goes a long way in lightening our load, understanding ourselves and others, and dare I say it... moving in the direction of joy.

Amy Breckenridge

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Mission Statement

The Wellness Center is a peer-run, self-help, mental health program. Our mission is to support individuals living with mental health challenges in developing and sustaining health and well-being through self-



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While there are many ways to deal with recovery, unfortunately the pain still exists, especially when brought to your attention. Most people with mental illness who have experienced some kind of trauma may experience some of these **warning signs...**

- An increase in anxiety
- Being more forgetful than usual
- Not being able to enjoy things
- Not feeling like doing anything
- Feeling slowed down or speeded up
- Avoiding things you need to do to take care of yourself
- Not caring about people you usually care about
- Avoiding others or choosing to be alone more than usual
- Being obsessed with things that don't really matter
- Thinking thoughts that are not based in reality
- Feeling unconnected from your body
- Being more irritable or negative than usual
- Increasing your smoking, drinking, or eating
- Doing things without thinking
- Experiencing more aches and pains
- Feeling discouraged, hopeless, or worthless
- Losing things you normally keep track of.

Try not to sink into paranoia at this point, seek treatment.

When things are breaking down or getting worse:

- **Feeling very oversensitive, fragile, and needy...***(Be very careful when you are in this state of mind, you feel the tendency to cling to someone else too much, there is always the possibility that they may pick on your vulnerabilities. If you turn to someone else, they may not know how to help, and you may be causing them excess stress, irritation, or just plain making them uncomfortable. Try to struggle through your insecurities. Look inside. It may not be all that bad in time.)*
- **Having irrational responses to situations and/or actions of others...***(What's going on inside yourself? You may not know or have the ability to cope with the way someone is treating you.)*
- **Feeling very angry all the time...***(Allow yourself personal time to calm down and sort through feelings. Perhaps then you can use your words to express your feelings.)*

Factors that affect recovery and healing:

- Personality type (resiliency may play an important factor)
- The environment you grew up in-was it hectic or chaotic
- Your current living circumstances
- Your general health/age
- Substance abuse or addictions
- The length of your exposure to trauma
- The number of traumas you have experienced-even minor traumas

No one else can determine how a trauma could or should affect someone else; do not feel that your trauma was 'too small' to have had such a powerful impact.

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Most people with mental illness who have experienced some kind of trauma or abuse in their life may be **triggered** by their past...

Triggers: *(And possible ways to deal with them.)*

- **Anniversary dates of losses...** *(How did you feel about the loss in your life? Particular losses affect people differently. Whether it is a person, place or possession, what's gone is gone. Perhaps then it is time for reflection. And looking at things differently.)*
- **Anniversary dates of trauma...** *(How did you feel about the trauma that occurred on that day, in the moment of it, the person who inflicted it on you, and your reaction to the person and what you went through? You may have to delay your reaction time until you can assess how you think and feel about the event that occurred; otherwise the same mistakes are made. Age and distance may help.)*
- **Seeing OR hearing something that reminds you of the trauma...** *(What do you do? The first reaction for me is instant anger, which is denying the hurt. Possibly better to think or do something else to take your mind off of it, then slowly train yourself to listen for cues on how to deal with it.*
- **Flashbacks (seeing in your mind a vivid picture of a traumatic event or course of events...** *(Try to sift through slowly, but the bad memories will often be with you when triggered. If you relive them, or are pushed to face them when not ready, or in a way that is inappropriate for you, recovery may be more difficult.)*
- **Traumatic news events...** *(See what you don't like; use discrimination.)*
- **Sexual harassment or references by others to sexual acts...** *(Watch yourself for social cues and report incidences.)*
- **Disagreements or fights with family members, friends, or co-workers...** *(Try to work it out when you can, realize when you can't. Seek therapy.)*
- **A relationship ending...** *(Depends if you are the one that is ending it; or the other person, and how each party feels about it. Personal feelings in relationships should be dealt with personally. You can look at it as a way to grow within yourself.)*
- **Spending too much time alone or feeling left out...** *(Is it me, or is it you?) Depends on your own personality, who you want to spend your time with, and when you want to be alone, which should give you the inner strength to get through the world on your own.)*
- **Self-esteem...** *(If your self-esteem is low, recognize your talents and weaknesses, and try to strengthen your weaknesses; watch out for people putting you down.)*
- **Being judged, criticized, or teased...** *(It really happens to many of us. Good to accept people for whom and what they are, but it is good to put a stop to people walking all over you, recognizing it's unfair.)*
- **Things that remind you of abandonment or deprivation...** *(Try to fill your own soul.)*
- **Physical illness...** *(People deal with physical illness differently. Taking care of your health is important, but it is also important to recognize there is death.)*
- **Aggressive-sounding noises...** *(Are very scary after you have been through a very traumatic experience.)*
- **Intimacy...** *(Very tough if you have had a traumatic experience involving sex. It is good to find a wall that will not actually isolate you, but keep you safe.)*
- **Excessive stress...** *(Give yourself a little leeway to deal with it, having something to do helps.)*
- **Someone trying to tell you how to run your life...** *(Never helps...for they are trying to make you carbon copy's of themselves, robbing you of your decision making process. Find your own voice and what works for you in your individual life.)*
- **Self-blame...** *(You can't take it all!)*

How do you regain your own mind, body, and soul after experiencing a traumatic experience?

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Ways to deal with trauma:

Daily Activities:

- *Hygiene*
- *Having something to do each day, which means finding a task to complete.*
- *Take time for yourself.*

Pay attention to the senses:

- *Hearing*
- *Sight*
- *Touch*
- *Feeling*
- *Smell*
- *Bodily functions*

Posture:

Walk around a bit and notice how you did so. How did you feel about yourself as you were walking?

What message did the way you were walking convey to others who might be looking at you?

Notice how you are sitting. Are you paying attention to your eyesight, face, and forehead, top and back of your head and neck, shoulders, chest, spinal chord, lower back, etc.

(This may help with your self-esteem and notice what you are feeling inside your body.)

Exercise:

- *Find out what works for you.*

Living space:

- *Organize it in a way that makes you comfortable, and somewhat happy.*

Accept your inner child:

- *I was a good child*
- *I had the right to be a child, and to act the way children act.*
- *I had and have the right to make mistakes.*
- *I don't have to let others define who I am*
- *I deserve to be treated with dignity and respect*

Watch out for obsessions:

- **Your Internal dialogue with yourself and others.**
 - **Sexual fantasies...**(Sexual fantasies don't have to become realities, even if you have been abused. Someone who has been abused has no right to take it out on someone else.)
 - **How to ward off predators?** What lies beneath other people that I should be aware of? Who can I trust in my life?

When you have been sexually abused by a family member?

- *Seek Help. Watch out for your own mental state, because it can drive you over the edge or make you want to take it out on someone else.)*

Again, the way you deal with trauma is personal. No one can really tell you how to handle it, and reactions are personal. A suggestion to people in the mental health field; watch your choice of wording, tone of voice, and how you treat clients, realizing that the client has been through a traumatic experience that may be difficult to recover from.

Healing and Recovery

“Wellness and Recovery”

“Wellness”. A concept that can be applied to all human beings, in that it is probably in essence and in theory something all human beings “should” be striving for. What does it mean, though? Is “wellness” your attitude towards life, or other people? Is it a premise applied to mind, body, and spirit? Is it the knowledge that you cope with life on life’s terms, playing the hand you’re dealt, right or wrong?

“Wellness” can be properly defined as “The condition of good physical and mental health, especially when properly maintained”. But, in a broader context, it could be considered what? Harmony. Spirituality. Peace of Mind. Insight. Having Self-respect or Dignity. *Also sticking up for yourself and not letting people walk all over you.* Realizing that beauty comes from within. Fighting Stereotypes. Breaking barriers of Social Stigma. Being nice to someone else. In other words, “Wellness” could also mean striving for a balanced life with some deeper meaning.

Bob Quinn, a mental health advocate, has coined the phrase, “Your Diagnosis is not your Destiny”, calling this “the new catch phrase of a new era in mental health” (Shelly Spear, Cal-Net Gazette). A mental health diagnosis does not define an individual. As people with mental health issues, challenges pertaining to our brain chemistry or our emotions may be more acute, affecting us in sometimes seemingly odd ways. However, life is on a continuum, and we, as human beings, run the gamut of individuality, facing different challenges on different levels. Along this note, we all, including mental health clients, belong to the human race. Sometimes “wellness” may seem more challenging for people diagnosed with a mental illness, but if we realize that most of the world may be out of balance in one way or another, you realize “**that’s life.**”

Everyone’s Recovery is Personal. Here are some suggestions:

Go slow and carefully, notice where your mind is or was...use discernment.

Practice daily maintenance and mental skills.

If for some reason you are distracted, put off what is on your mind until you can deal with the issue...but not too much time. (Of course, when things have fallen apart, it can be hard to know how much time you need or when you will ever be in control of your own life again?)

If the issue is too overwhelming, progress slowly. Sift through your personal feelings on the matter; listen to your mind, body, and inner core being.

Try to recognize where you were wrong, realize it’s tricky to examine your past...work slowly and thoroughly not to repeat the same mistakes.

Also realize when someone else is at fault...don’t take excessive blame, or let someone else mess with your mind or body, or soul. (Recognize this is a sign of an abuser.)

Don’t egg others on (push buttons), the argument will most likely be turned around on you.

Sometimes the “somebody did me wrong so I’ll get back at them” game is taken too far.

Watch out for quick fixes, over reactions, and impulsive behavior due to hurt/anger.

Realize you don’t have to please everyone all the time, but sensitivity and sincerity help.

Apologize where you see you were wrong, it builds a healthy relationship.

Watch out for criticisms that hurt...and the duality of people.

Stand up for yourself, if you cannot do it externally, at least do it internally, you will find out how you feel about yourself and others.

You don’t have to take sides, think for yourself.

Watch your inner personality, what you like and don’t like about it. It will lead to knowing yourself.

End statement:

Nobody’s perfect!

We're Hoping this Newsletter on
Healing and Recovery
May be helpful to you!
Happy New Year!

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July / August
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Editor:
T. PETERSEN

Wellness and Advocacy Center Up Coming Events

New Workshops and Events

Mark your calendars!

January 2013

What 's Holding You Back?-Looking for your dream job? Come to this Thursday group hosted by Susan Stone, Consumer Liaison for the Mental Health Co-op and Linda Matteson, Career Lab Coordinator.

Thursday from 11:15 – 12:00 Noon.

Self Esteem-Learn ways to raise your self esteem and learn how to navigate and cope with sneaky, self-esteem saboteurs. Leigh DeLap and Kris Teixeira lead this group on

Tuesdays, from 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

February 2013

! Hola and Hello -Join us Mondays for a conversational, group approach to learning Spanish. Learn at your own pace. This will be a supportive environment with real-life activities and games. All adults are welcome. Contact Jessie for more information at 565-7803 or Jpanoski@gire.org.

First Friday Forum

Will not be held this month.

A springtime Inspirational Poem
My Poems, my songs, my voice, Like Butterflies rejoice
From Flower to Flower, They flit and they flee,
Like hummingbird, and honeybee.

By Mel Strasser

Call for Contributors

We are looking for articles on the topics of
“Ways to implement Change after dealing with Trauma and Abuse”
for our next Newsletter. Articles should be no more than 300 words and are due by...

February, 2012

Articles should be e-mailed to our editor at
trinitypetersen@yahoo.com

The next edition of the newsletter will come out on February 20th
Please contact Amy Breckenridge at 565-7804 if you have any questions.