

Introduction to Recovery (part 1)

Learn at home pack



Our courses are open to all adults who live, work or study in the city

Learning for wellbeing

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Welcome to our new and developing **Recovery College**

We take an educational approach to improving mental health and offer information-based workshops, and training courses that focus on living mentally and physically well.

Our courses aren't therapy, but they can help you to learn about mental health, work out what keeps you well, and find ways to live better.

Courses are co-designed and co-delivered by people with lived experience of mental health and life challenges, working alongside health professionals, education providers and community organisations to share knowledge and know-how.

In this 'learn at home' pack you will:

- **Look at how others describe 'recovery'**
- **Consider your thoughts on what is important for recovery**
- **Think about what things may help to support recovery**

If you are using an e-version of this pack (on a computer) there are hyperlinks (blue and underlined) which will take you to other information sources. To open these, press 'Ctrl' on your keyboard and click the link. If opening as a PDF, look out for a function called 'fill & sign' which also will allow you to type notes into this pack. If you are using a print copy of this pack, the hyperlink details are listed in the appendices.

Sharing experience

This pack is based on the work done by The Norfolk and Suffolk Recovery College and uses information and self-care resources provided by MindWell (the mental health website for adults in Leeds).



By completing the activities in this pack, you will be:

- Looking at the Recovery College's view of 'recovery'
- Reading about how others describe what recovery is
- Consider what the key things about recovery are for you
- Identifying 5 things that may support your wellbeing and recovery

Introduction to recovery

In mental health, the word 'recovery' has two meanings.

The first involves clinical recovery – when someone 'recovers' from the illness and no longer experiences its symptoms.

The second involves personal recovery – recovering to an extent, which your life feels worth living. It is about building a life that is satisfying, fulfilling and enjoyable, with or without 'clinical recovery.' **At the Recovery College and within this work book, we will focus on this meaning.**



Simon, Recovery College manager, **Halima**, Recovery College co-facilitator

Bev and Dan, (middle) Recovery College supporters

Our thoughts on recovery

Recovery is personal and unique to us.

Life is full of challenges and anyone can experience periods of time when their mental health is challenging.

Mental health affects everyone. For some, this may be for a relatively short period of time – for others this may involve diagnosis, medication, and long-term treatment.

Recovery is about having a good life, with or without symptoms, focusing on what we can do, rather than what we cannot.

It doesn't mean we return to where we were, but learn new ways to better manage our experiences.

The good thing is that people can, and do, recover – and for a lot of us, it's about recovering a sense of self, purpose and control in life despite facing these challenges.



Video:

[Julie talks about Leeds Recovery College](#)

Julie shares her experience of Leeds Recovery College, what recovery means to her and the impact of WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Planning).

How others describe recovery

'In mental health, recovery may not always refer to the process of complete recovery from a mental health problem in the way that we might recover from a physical health problem.'

[\(Mental Health Foundation, 2018\)](#)

Recovery is where people find ways of living meaningful and purposeful lives with, or without, ongoing symptoms.'

[\(Shepherd et al., 2014\)](#)

'Recovery from mental illness involves much more than recovery from the illness itself.'

[\(Anthony, 1993\)](#)

'[Recovery is] a deeply personal, unique process of changing one's attitudes, values, feelings, goals, skills and/ or roles.'

[\(Anthony, 1993\)](#)

What other students have said

'Recovery is about having a better quality of life.'

'Recovery is work, often hard work and one of the many things that make it difficult is, how attached we can become to our problems, and how reluctant we are to give them up.'

'Recovery is about hope and moving forward.'

'Recovery is about helping others to discover their personal strengths too.'

'Recovery is about leading the kind of life I want.'

'There's no quick fix, but I know more about what helps.'

Add comments below:



What words would you use to describe recovery?

‘For most of us, recovery is not about a cure or an end point, it’s about managing, living and learning each day – trying the best you can.’



I'm not good enough
I'm NOT creative
What would I write about?

In our courses, people talk about ‘recovery’ as a personal journey, one that can have bumps and setbacks along the way. How it involves ‘making sense of’ and ‘finding meaning’ in what has happened, learning how to look after ourselves better, and building a new sense of self and purpose – these things can be lost in mental illness.

(Picture) **Robert**, Creative writing co-facilitator

Video links



[Norfolk and Suffolk Recovery College](#)

The Norfolk and Suffolk Recovery College produced this film in 2019. It features Recovery College students, staff and peer tutors sharing their experiences and perspectives.



[Pat Deegan: Showing up for recovery](#)

Pat Deegan talks about how she looks to nature to find fortitude and inspiration for recovery and wellness, in this 2012 photo animated personal reflection.



[Good days and bad days: Jo's story](#)

Jo talks about the ups and downs of recovery in this short film made as part of the health campaign 'we are undefeatable.'

For additional information about the origins of Personal Recovery, please see the Appendix [page 17](#).

For further video web address details, see [page 21](#).

Debbie's thoughts on Recovery

I attended the Leeds Recovery College Wellness Recovery Action Planning course in 2019. It was a challenge, meeting new people and doing something different at a period in time, when just getting by was hard enough.

Recovery is a difficult thing to understand when you've spent a long time pushing on, but they supported me every step of the way. They have listened to me, never judged or treated me any differently. Giving me space to be quiet or to talk, and release my emotions when I needed to.

I now understand that it's okay to ask for help, even when I didn't understand what help I might need. Being able to listen to others and express how I was feeling safely, enabled me to gain a better understanding of what may work for me.

To realise I am not alone, mental illness is nothing to be ashamed of, or feared, that it's an illness and not a curse.

Recovery is tough, but it has given me many fun, unique and exciting opportunities, and as a result I recognise the value of self-care and making time for me.

Since attending the group sessions, I have rediscovered my creative side through learning to draw and paint, and exploring my thoughts through creative writing.



What helps recovery?

There is no right or wrong way to recovery; it's personal and unique to us all. Recovery may involve medication and/ or specialist treatments like, talking therapy. It may involve talking to professionals or peers. What's helpful to one person, may not be helpful to another, but what can help, is to try different things. It's better to have a mixture of 'tools.'

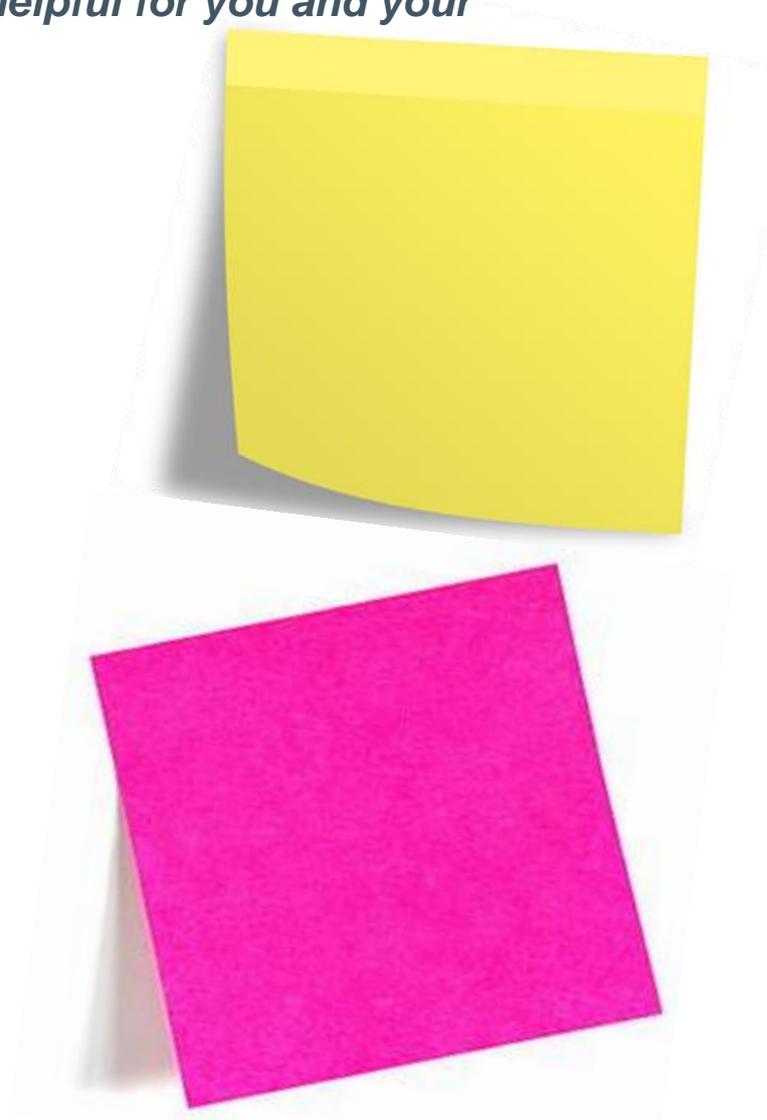
Evidence suggests that there are five areas that can be really helpful when thinking about recovery. ***Take a look at [5 steps to mental wellbeing](#) and then, can you think of any one thing per point that would be helpful for you and your wellbeing?***

Connect with others

- ✓ Helps to build your sense of belonging and worth
- ✓ Provides an opportunity to share your experiences

Be physically active

- ✓ Regular activity is associated with positive mental wellbeing
- ✓ Supports self-esteem and confidence



Learn something new

- ✓ Helps develop a sense of purpose
- ✓ Helps build connections with other people

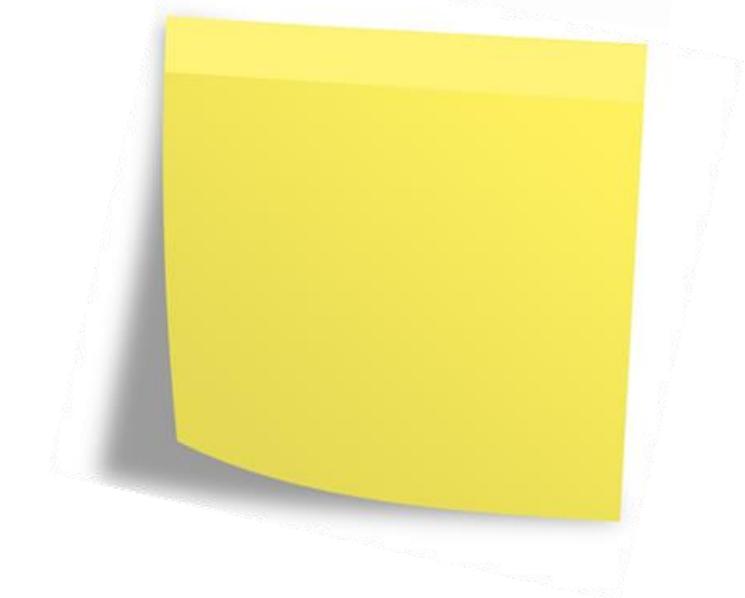
Giving time and showing acts of kindness

- ✓ Creates positive feelings and a sense of reward
- ✓ Gives you a feeling of purpose and self-worth

Take notice and pay attention to the present moment

- ✓ Helps develop more self-awareness and understanding
- ✓ Provides an opportunity to reflect on what works

Add comments below:



Keep learning: A good place to start

MindWell-Leeds.org.uk

MindWell is the mental health website for adults in Leeds. It brings together mental health information from the NHS, Leeds City Council and third sector organisations into one single, 'go to' place.

We know that we need to do things every day to take care of our mental and physical health, and in recovery these can often start with very small but meaningful things.

The [MindWellMOT checklist](#) is a useful tool, in helping you think about the activities you would like to do to help create and maintain 'healthy habits' to support your personal wellbeing and recovery

MindWell MOT Checklist (with example)

Name: John Smith Date: 13 May 2019

Pressure levels
How are you feeling?
At optimum level
Calm
Focussed
Engaged
Too low
Bored
No motivation
Too high
X Worried & stressed
Frazzled
Panicky
Overwhelmed

Energy reserves
Do you have enough energy in the tank?
High
Energised
X Motivated
Raring to go
Getting low
Tired
Feeling sluggish or slow
Very low
Run down
Exhausted

Battery recharge
I get hours of unbroken sleep each night.

Most adults need an average of 7 to 9 hours of sleep per night. What do you need to feel your best? www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/sleep
Do you take any breaks from checking your mobile? When and for how long?
Only at bedtime - I switch off at least 30 mins before.
I am trying to extend this to an hour.
Do you use it in bed at night?
No
Do you take at least 15 minutes a day to do something you enjoy, just for you, that doesn't involve a screen? What kinds of things do you do?
I read a book

What's affecting your energy and pressure levels?
X Children and home life
Becoming a parent
Work pressures
Family worries
Money or benefit issues
X Relationship problems
Experienced a crime
Moving house
Change of job
Redundant

MindWell

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The origins of personal recovery

Personal recovery has roots in US Civil Rights Movements of the 1960's and 70's, as well as in self-help groups for Alcoholics Anonymous, where the term being 'in recovery' was formed.

Through the 1980's and 90's a great deal of work was done to develop self-help, self-advocacy and empowerment of people who experience mental health challenges, which further contributed to the development of the 'recovery' approach.

During this time, [Pat Deegan Ph.D.](#) along with others championed recovery being seen as, something much wider than a medical concept to a wider holistic view, commenting;

'Recovery is a process whereby people accept the challenge of being socially disabled by their mental ill health and recover a new sense of self.'

Others, notably [Mary Ellen Copeland Ph.D.](#) began to develop approaches which focus on life management, peer support and education (Wellness Recovery Action Planning).

In 1993, William Anthony, the Director of the Boston Centre for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, described recovery as;

'Recovery is a deeply personal, unique process. It is a way of living a satisfying, hopeful and contributing life, even with the limitations caused by illness. Recovery involves the development of new meaning and purpose in one's life as one grows beyond the catastrophic effects of mental illness.'

From Victoria: A recovery letter

Dear You,

I have been living and dealing with mental health problems for about four years, but it wasn't until a year ago that I started properly opening up to people around me.

After some advice from my parents and teachers at school, I agreed to get counselling in the hope that it would help me. Unfortunately, it hasn't worked as well as I hoped, but let me tell you something, life for me right now has never been better. All of the support I received has taught me one simple thing: self-help is the best form of medication. I could carry on seeing my counsellor for the next decade or two of my life but, until I learned to stand on my own two feet, I would still feel exactly the same. This was my life, and only I had the power to change it.

To put things into perspective, I believe that recovery from a mental illness is the same as the birth of a butterfly. A caterpillar remains trapped inside a small, dark claustrophobic cocoon until it learns to break free from its shell, and grows into a beautiful butterfly. Once you start to face your mental illness head on and properly begin the recovery process, you can finally spread your wings and fly. Prescription drugs and treatment might help you along the way, but ultimately it all comes down to you. Three words spring to mind: self-acceptance, self-help and self-love.

Another analogy that I love referring to is the idea that mental health problems are like 'clouds in the sky.' Sometimes the clouds are stormy and consume your life, or you might even feel like you are lost in thick fog. Other times, in the sky might only have a few speckles of cloud, barely noticeable, but is still there in the background. Clouds come, and go, and come, and go... it is important to accept that your life will have cloudy days every now and again. You just have to learn to dance in the rain, rather than simply waiting for the storm to pass.

You might be having a thundery day today, but I promise you there will be sunshine eventually.

If you are suffering from depression, you have to embrace your illness and accept that it is only a temporary part of your life. Do not be afraid to speak out and ask for help. Sometimes you might feel all alone in the world, but I promise there are people in your life who love and care about you. Do not let anyone tell you that you are weak. You are a wonderful and strong individual, with a fighter inside of you. You cannot let your mental health put you down or prevent you from doing what you want to do. Travel the world, meet new people, and try new things. Make those around you happy and you will feel happiness in return.

I know that the road to recovery is long and hard, but I promise you, it will be worth it. There is a light at the end of the tunnel and even if the light is merely a dim flicker in the distance, chase it. Chase the light and never look back. As Winston Churchill once said “if you are going through hell, keep going.” Accept your past and move onwards and upwards into the future. It sounds like a cliché but you only live once, and there is a huge difference between living your life and just merely being alive.

You get one chance to make your life amazing, and we have to make the most of every single opportunity. So, one day, when your life flashes back before your eyes, make every second worth watching.

*All my love,
Victoria.*

This letter is from the book **‘The Recovery Letters. Addressed to people experiencing depression’**. Edited by James Withey and Olivia Sagan. Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers (2017). ISBN978-1-78592-

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Links & further details



Title: **My experience of Wellness Recovery Action Planning**

Web address:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rAa5pnLkirE&feature=emb_logo



Title: **Recovery College - co-produced with people with lived experience of mental health challenges**

Web address:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0IqYGUGJnM>



Title: **Showing up for recovery**

Web address:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWNlg-xEuYU&t=1s>



Title: **We are undefeatable: Jo's story**

Web address:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j_OSfIAc-o4



Title: **5 steps to mental wellbeing** Title: **MindWell**

Web address:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>



MOT checklist

Web address:

<https://www.mindwell-leeds.org.uk/myself/feel-better/mindwellmot>



Title: **A feature Article by Pat Deegan**

Web address:

<https://www.scottishrecovery.net/resource/personal-medicine-power-statements-and-other-disruptive-innovations-in-healthcare-technology//>



Title: **History of WRAP**

Web address:

<https://copelandcenter.com/what-wrap/history-wrap>

The Leeds Recovery College would like to thank Norfolk and Suffolk Recovery College for their support in the development of this workbook.

For more information about the Leeds Recovery College please visit:
[Leedsrecoverycollege.com](https://leedsrecoverycollege.com)

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