



Recovery: The Evolution of an Idea

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Received: September 11, 2019; **Published:** September 26, 2019

DOI: 10.31080/ASMS.2019.03.0417

Abstract

This short commentary describes the evolution of the idea recovery. We recount the role of The New Freedom Commission on Mental Health in advancing the concept recovery. We identify many recovery resources available from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. We profile Faces and Voices of Recovery, a global advocacy movement. We explore emerging ideas about recovery. Building on Federal initiatives and resources, listening to the voices of thousands of recovering men and women, and recognizing current recovery research and theories, we affirm and advance the belief that recovery is freedom, as evidenced by emancipation from addiction and empowerment for a different, better way of life.

Keywords: New Freedom Commission on Mental Health; SAMHSA; Faces and Voices Of Recovery; Emerging Ideas Of Recovery; Recovery Is Freedom

The new freedom commission on mental health

Deinstitutionalization from mental hospitals, a national movement beginning in the mid - 1960s, resulted in more individuals living in the community. Simultaneously, a recovery approach gained impetus as a social movement due in large part to a perceived failure of traditional mental health/addiction services. Moreover, the realization that people recover surfaced. Influenced in part by the philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous and social movements of the 60 s and 70 s, the New Freedom Commission on Mental Health established by President George W. Bush proposed a shift from the traditional medical psychiatric model of care toward the concept of recovery. The report, *Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America*, boldly recommended recovery from mental illness as the expected goal of this transformed system of care.

Recovery refers to the process in which people are able to live, work, learn and participate fully in their communities. For some individuals, recovery is the ability to live a fulfilling and productive life despite a disability. For others, recovery implies the reduction or complete remission of symptoms. Science has shown that having hope plays an integral role in an individual's recovery.

A recovery approach to mental disorder or substance dependence emphasizes and supports a person's potential for recovery. Recovery is generally seen as a personal journey rather than a destination. Recovery involves hope, basic security, and empowerment as evidenced by a durable sense of self, self-determination, self-management, self-help, and self-care.

SAMHSA recovery definition, dimensions, principles, and initiatives

The Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) [1] is the agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that leads public health efforts to advance the behavioral health of the nation. SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance misuse and mental illness on America's communities. In December 2011, SAMHSA defined recovery from mental disorders and substance use disorders as a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.

SAMHSA identified four recovery dimensions for recovery: 1. Health: overcoming or managing one's disease(s) as well as living

in a physically and emotionally healthy way; 2. Home: a stable and safe place to live; 3. Purpose: meaningful daily activities, such as a job, school, volunteerism, family caretaking, or creative endeavors, and the independence, income and resources to participate in society; and 4. Community: relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope.

SAMHSA advanced 10 guiding principles for recovery.

- Recovery emerges from hope.
- Recovery is person driven.
- Recovery occurs via many pathways.
- Recovery is holistic.
- Recovery is supported by peers and allies.
- Recovery is supported through relationship and social network.
- Recovery is culturally based and influenced.
- Recovery is supported by addressing trauma.
- Recovery involves individual, family, and community strengths and responsibility.
- Recovery is based on respect.

In its Strategic Plan for 2019 – 2023, SAMHSA identified five priority areas to better meet the behavioral health care needs of individuals, communities, and service providers. Two of the five priorities include Recovery Support Services [2].

Faces and voices of recovery

Beginning in the early 90s, recovering men and women, their families and friends, mental health and addiction professions, together with concerned communities began organizing recovery initiatives. Faces and Voices of Recovery, incorporated in 2004, is dedicated to organizing and mobilizing the over 23 million Americans in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, their families, friends and allies, into recovery community organizations and networks. Faces and Voices of Recovery promotes the rights and resources to recover through advocacy, education and demonstrating the power and proof of long-term recovery. See especially their Recovery Bill of Rights.

In December 2012, Faces and Voices [3] of Recovery conducted the first nationwide survey of persons in recovery from drug and alcohol problems about their experiences in active addiction and

in recovery. In 2017, Faces and Voices of Recovery, in collaboration with addiction/recovery research colleagues in the United Kingdom, amended the Life in Recovery survey to document the lives of Families Living with Addiction and Recovery. While much is known about the many costs of addiction and problematic drug use, we know very little about what happens to family members of those using or in recovery.

Emerging ideas about recovery

Although there is a shared understanding of addiction by professionals and the public, recovery has many meanings. Is recovery a process or an outcome, a journey or a destination? What is the difference between remission and recovery, between sobriety and recovery? Is recovery a concept, a theory, or perhaps a science? Today, scholar practitioners conduct recovery research. develop recovery theories, and practice in recovery-oriented systems of care (ROSC). Several examples demonstrate this movement.

The recovery research institute

The Recovery Research Institute of Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, founded in 2012, is a nonprofit research institute dedicated to the advancement of addiction treatment and recovery. Its vision statement reads: To enhance the public health impact of addiction recovery science through the summary, synthesis, and dissemination of scientific findings and the conduct of novel research. (<https://www.recoveryanswers.org/>).

The Institute believes that addiction is one of the greatest public health crises of our time, with staggeringly high rates of mortality, disease, and disability. The Institute defines recovery from a substance use disorder as a process of improved physical, psychological, and social well-being and health after having suffered from a substance-related condition. It believes that stable and long-term recovery from alcohol and other drug use disorders is possible and that rates of recovery can continue to be improved through focused scientific investigation and a commitment to public education.

The Institute conducts research to improve the effectiveness of addiction treatment and recovery efforts, to find out what is and what is not working, and why certain pathways to recovery work for some individuals and not others. It offers a course Recovery 101 that includes Fast Facts, Pathways to Recovery, The Brain and Recovery, with Special Topics and Resources.

The journal of recovery science (JORS)

The Journal of Recovery Science [4] was established in 2018, with the specific aim to create a recovery-centric academic journal that has minimal barriers to knowledge dissemination and transfer. The areas of focus for the journal - recovery support services, recovery support institutions, recovery outcomes, recovery policy, and recovery in special populations - were selected so that established, early career, and student researchers could find a suitable platform for high-quality contributions in the behavioral health recovery field. The JORS is an open-access, peer-reviewed, international journal devoted to publishing original research in the area of behavioral health recovery. Accepted articles are published on a rolling basis with numbered issues released twice per year.

Recovery theory

Published in January 2019, Brown and Ashford [5] describe A Recovery-Informed Theory: Situating the Subjective in the Science of Substance Use Disorder Recovery. The authors propose a grand theory of recovery science, built upon the seminal theories of recovery capital, recovery-oriented systems of care, and socioecological theory. This grand theory, called recovery-informed theory (RIT), states that successful long-term recovery is self-evident and is a fundamentally emancipatory set of processes. The essentials of recovery include hope and flourishing, identity, authenticity, and agency. A recovery-informed approach takes the aggregate knowledge of those in recovery, translates it into science, and further translates knowledge into practice, education, prevention, and treatment.

Recovery is freedom

Building on Federal initiatives and resources, listening to the voices of thousands of recovering men and women, and recognizing current recovery research and theories, we affirm and advance the belief that recovery is freedom, as evidenced by emancipation from addiction and empowerment for a different, better way of life.

- People in recovery sustain abstinence or harm reduction; they meet their needs for life and health. Recovering people express a self-state we call Being.
- People in recovery promote personal growth; they satisfy needs for wellness and well-being. Recovering people manifest a self-state we call Becoming.
- People in recovery serve others; they fulfill their needs for personal gain and public good. Recovering people actualize a self-state we call Beyond.

These assumptions reflect findings from several surveys about the characteristics of people in recovery [6-8]. The constructs life, growth, and service provide an organizing framework for recovery goal achievement and effective recovery practice [9].

Quo vadis?

Rigorous recovery research, new theories of recovery, and effective recovery-oriented practice must champion and continue the recovery movement. Much like AA Promises, we ask "Are these extravagant promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us--sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will always materialize if we work for them." [10-14].

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Volume 3 Issue 10 October 2019

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