

**Mental Health Recovery**

**Building a Recovery  
Community:**

**The Role of Family**

**Karyn Baker  
Program Director  
Family Outreach and Response Program**

## Mental Health Recovery

### People Need to Recover From:

- What had always been the matter
- The stressful situations that led to the onset
- The symptoms of mental ill health
- Fears and anxieties surrounding the symptoms and their possible recurrence
- Treatments received for the problem, some of which were unpleasant, frightening and even traumatizing
- The consequences of the mental health problem and also of its treatment
- Destruction of self-esteem, trust optimism, hope and faith in the future
- The stigma associated with mental ill health

\*New Zealand Mental Health Commission

## Mental Health Recovery

### Recovery is:

- ❖ the reawakening of hope after despair
- ❖ breaking through denial and achieving understanding and acceptance
- ❖ moving from withdrawal to engagement and active participation in life
- ❖ active coping rather than passive adjustment

## Recovery is:

- ❖ no longer viewing oneself primarily as a mental patient and reclaiming a positive sense of self
- ❖ a journey from alienation to purpose
- ❖ a complex journey
- ❖ is not accomplished alone - it involves support and partnership

\*Mental Health Recovery: What helps and What Hinders?  
(October 2003)

# Understanding the Family Perspective on Recovery:

- ❖ **Skepticism/Disbelief**
- ❖ **Relates to Others who are not so ill**
- ❖ **Too fringe or controversial**
- ❖ **Fear and guilt**

## Why is it important to engage families in the Recovery Process:

- ❖ Many (up to 70%) consumer/survivors live with family
- ❖ Recovery research shows that a supportive family can be a major attribute in the recovery process
- ❖ Improved quality of life for families
- ❖ The recovery approach is congruent with the values of diverse communities

## Challenges for Families to Embrace the Recovery approach:

- ❖ Feelings of despair and hopelessness
- ❖ Not their lived experience
- ❖ Education and information for families is primarily medical model – poor prognosis and low expectations
- ❖ Confront hostility if family disagrees with treatment approaches
- ❖ Internalized stigma

Recovery Framework -RECOVER  
New Zealand Mental Health Commission

**R** - reading, researching and learning from others about mental health

**E** - emotional growth

**C** - change of circumstances

**O** - others - experiencing social support

**V** - virtues - practicing them

**E** - etcetera

**R** - repeat strategies that work and realize that recovery takes time

# Recovery Framework: Heart

♥ H - HOPE

♥ E - Esteem

♥ A - Agency

♥ R - Relationship

♥ T - Transitions in  
Identity

## Role of Family in Mental Health Recovery

| What helps  | What Hinders  |
|---|---|
| ♥ Being Present -listen and support   | Avoiding  |
| ♥ Treating relative as a whole human being                                      | Seeing relative as a diagnosis                                  |
| ♥ Accepting the mental health issues and believing they can RECOVER-HOPE        | Feelings of hopelessness and despair                            |
| ♥ Fostering interdependence within family                                       | Fostering dependence due to over responsibility and involvement |
| ♥ Giving relative choices   | Controlling relative's decisions                                |
| ♥ Build on their strengths  | Focusing on problems  |
| ♥ Support risk-taking and freedom to fail - Challenge in the Context of Support | Overprotecting due to fear and guilt                            |
| ♥ Avoid Coercion and Forced Treatment   | Explore Alternatives and prepare Advance Directives             |
| ♥ Take Care of Yourself   | Letting the mental health issue consume your life               |

# What families need to be involved in the Recovery Process:

- ❖ Information/Education about Recovery
- ❖ Support and Hope
- ❖ Skills and Strategies
- ❖ Recognition
- ❖ Inclusion