

A STRATEGY FOR RECOVERY

1. Learn about what you are facing. You will need basic information about what is happening, and what can help. Try to understand what others are experiencing. Expect to encounter conflict and uncertainty as you gather information. The subject matter can become extremely complex. Find your path by focusing on issues that are most relevant to your own experience.

2. Find allies to support you. Family, friends, neighbors, and professionals all have roles to play. Your allies can support you, and help you work through the potential risks and benefits of the steps you include in your plan.

3. Find resources to work with. People can preserve their capacity to lead an ordinary, successful life. Institutions and systems offer access to treatment, and support the necessities of life. Groups like NAMI (the National Alliance on Mental Illness) and Mental Health America (formerly called the Mental Health Association) offer support, education and advocacy. Their members are familiar with the struggle.

4. Plan both near-term and long-term. The plans you make should always include meaningful human connection, as well as medical and legal advice from professionals you trust. Choose techniques that respect people, build on strengths, and increase independence.

5. Follow your plan. Take charge. Do what you need to do. Use your plan to guide your decisions. Revisit your plan when you get stuck or run into trouble. Do not fret if you are only partially successful. Everyone struggles with achieving success. Do not get discouraged. Action plans never play out as first written. Everyone is a work in progress.

FOUR QUESTIONS FOR RECOVERY

Recovery is a process of building a person's capacity, empowering the person to overcome the effects of the illness. Every person has a range of talents and abilities, a variety of vulnerabilities, a certain capacity to withstand stress, and a certain risk of causing harm when something goes wrong.

Ask four questions to help build recovery.

1. What helps you make the most of your talents?
2. How can you reduce the areas where you are vulnerable?
3. How can you improve your ability to cope with stress?
4. How can you deal with the risk of something going wrong?

The answers will inform critical choices about treatment, medication, overall health, career, housing, and family relationships.

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