

THE COMMON STARTING POINT

Recovery is like a long journey on foot. Travel happens close to the ground. Terrain matters. Time matters. A trusted guide is essential. Even so, travelers are willing to start if the goal is important. The journey itself has value.

The starting point of a mental health recovery journey is like walking away from an accident, surviving a disaster, or arriving at a place that has been wiped out. A person might be stunned and shaky, and might need to figure out what to do, but the time to take action is at hand.

- Thinking has been affected. Trauma, medical issues, and adverse life events cause people to lose "executive function," the ability to make plans or take action when there are no clear guidelines.
- Feelings are affected. Shame, fear, sadness, loneliness, and anger must be expressed, worked through, and processed, not repressed.
- Relationships are critical, but may need to be rebuilt. This is unavoidable tough work.
- Information is missing. Time and technology move forward when people are stuck in troubled circumstances.
- People at the starting point need allies. Friends and family can help keep people grounded in reality. They can help their friends practice thinking. They can help their friends work through the emotional effects of shame and trauma. They can help locate information, and facilitate access to services, and act as advocates when trouble is at hand.

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