

Chapter 1

What does recovery mean to me?

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One of the benefits of reading the recovery stories of others is that they can inspire you to write about your own journey or talk to someone about it. We have included some questions to help you get started with this. You may find it helpful to go through them with another caregiver or a family member. Involving the person cared for in a caregivers' Life Story Work can strengthen the relationship by helping each person to see the other's point of view, but it may not be so helpful if they have negative feelings towards each other and is perhaps best avoided where this is the case.

It is worth finding an example from your life for each question. This could be a written example but things like photos, newspaper clippings and favourite songs are just as effective, especially if you're working with another person. It's your life, so choose the things that hold the most meaning for you.

Exercise 1

Caregiver questions

1. How would you describe your wellbeing today?
2. Do you consider yourself to be on a recovery journey?
If yes, how would you describe it (see below)?

Recovery is relief from symptoms

Recovery is living a meaningful life

Recovery is holding hope for the person I care for

Recovery is holding hope for myself

Recovery is about services holding hope for the person I care for

Recovery is about services holding hope for me and the person I care for

Recovery is something else (please describe)

Choose all the statements that apply to you. Don't worry if some seem

contradictory; it's not unusual for someone in a challenging situation to hold two opposing views simultaneously.

3. What are you recovering from (if relevant)?
4. Whose recovery is it? Look back at your answers above and decide which of the following is most relevant to you:

Recovery is about the person I care for

Recovery is about me alongside the person I care for

Recovery is about me separate from the person I care for

Recovery is all of the above

Recovery is not relevant to me

5. What were your hopes for yourself before the person you care for became unwell?
6. What are your hopes for yourself today? Record an example of something you would like to do for yourself. What would help you to achieve this? What would make it difficult?
7. What (if anything) is making you feel most hopeless today? Record an example of something that's stopping you doing something for yourself. What makes this difficult to overcome? What would help you to overcome it?
8. What have you learned so far as a caregiver?
9. What could other people learn from you?
10. What has been the most helpful element of your recovery journey (if relevant)?
11. If you have time, put all your answers together and come back to them after reading the narratives. Has anything changed? (If yes, find some new examples that show this to add to your list.) Is the change supportive of your hopes and aspirations? (If yes, what would help to strengthen this? If no, what would help you to overcome it?)

If you are interested in exploring your responses further, please note that we revisit some of these themes in *Pause for thought*.

Questions for the person cared for

1. How would you describe your wellbeing today?
2. Do you consider yourself to be on a recovery journey?
If yes, how would you describe it (see below)?

Recovery is relief from symptoms
Recovery is living a meaningful life
Recovery is holding hope for myself
Recovery is something else (please describe)

Choose all the statements that apply to you. Don't worry if some seem contradictory; it's not unusual for someone in a challenging situation to hold two opposing views simultaneously.

3. What are you recovering from (if relevant)?
4. Whose recovery is it? Look back at your answers above and decide which of the following is most relevant to you:

Recovery is about me
Recovery is about me alongside the person who cares for me
Recovery is about me separate from the person who cares for me
Recovery is about services holding hope for me
Recovery is about services holding hope for me and the person who cares for me
Recovery is all of the above
Recovery is not relevant to me

5. What were your hopes for yourself before you became unwell?
6. What are your hopes for yourself today? Record an example of something you would like to do for yourself. What would help you to achieve this?
What would make it difficult?

7. What (if anything) is making you feel most hopeless today? Record an example of something that's stopping you doing something for yourself. What makes this difficult to overcome? What would help you to overcome it?
8. What have you learned so far in your personal journey?
9. What could others learn from you?
10. What has been the most helpful element of your personal journey?
11. If you have time, put all your answers together and come back to them later. Has anything changed? (If yes, find some new examples that show this to add to your list.) Is the change supportive of your hopes and aspirations? (If yes, what would help you to strengthen this? If no, what would help you to overcome it?)

If you are interested in exploring your responses further, please note that we revisit some of these themes in *Pause for thought*.

Questions for mental health workers

1. How would you describe your wellbeing today?
2. Do you consider yourself to be on a recovery journey?
If yes, how would you describe it (see below)?

Recovery is relief from symptoms

Recovery is living a meaningful life

Recovery is holding hope for myself

Recovery is holding hope for the people I provide care for

Recovery is holding hope for caregivers and the people I provide care for

Recovery is all of the above

Recovery is something else (please describe)

3. What are you recovering from?
4. Whose recovery is it? Look back at your answers above and decide which of the following is most relevant to you:

Recovery is about the people I provide care for

Recovery is about the people I provide care for and their caregivers

Recovery is about me alongside the people I provide care for and their caregivers

Recovery is about me separate from the people I provide care for and their caregivers

Recovery is all of the above

Recovery is not relevant to me

5. What were your hopes for the people you provided care for when you first became a mental health worker? Did you come into your service holding hope for caregivers too?
6. What are your hopes for the people you provide care for today? Are caregivers already included in this? Record an example of something you have done or could do to support caregivers. What would help you to achieve this? What would make it difficult?
7. What (if anything) is making you feel most hopeless today? Where could you go for support with this?
8. Record an example of something that stops you offering support to caregivers. What makes this difficult to overcome? What would help you to overcome it?
9. What have you learned so far from working with caregivers?
10. What could caregivers learn from you?
11. What has been the most helpful element of your recovery journey (if relevant)?
12. If you have time, put all your answers together and come back to them after reading the narratives. Has anything changed? (If yes, find some new examples that show this to add to your list.)

Is the change supportive of your hopes and aspirations? (If yes, what would help to strengthen this? If no, what would help you to overcome this?)

If you are interested in exploring your responses further, please note that we revisit some of these themes in *Pause for thought*.