

The

REVISÉD EDITION

Recovery

Workbook

**Practical Coping and Empowerment Strategies
for People with Psychiatric Disabilities**

AN EVIDENCE-BASED RECOVERY CURRICULUM

Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation

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Contents

- iv Related Recovery Resources*
- v About the Authors*
- vi Acknowledgments*
- vii Preface to the Revised Edition*

Chapter One:	1 Purpose of the Workbook
Introduction	3 Goals of the Workbook
	3 Evidence-Based Practice
	3 Suggestions for Getting Started
Chapter Two:	11 The Process of Recovery
Recovery	12 Phases of the Recovery Process
	15 Aspects of the Recovery Process
Chapter Three:	23 The Impact of Serious Mental Illness
Increasing Knowledge	26 The Services of a Recovery-Oriented Mental Health System
and Control	28 The Values of a Recovery-Oriented Mental Health System
Chapter Four:	33 Symptoms of Stress
Managing Life's Stresses	43 Sources of Stress
	49 Coping Strategies
Chapter Five:	71 Acknowledging Your Accomplishments
Enhancing Personal Meaning	74 Personal Enrichment
Chapter Six:	83 Connecting
Building Personal Support	84 Basic Communication Skills
	92 Asking for Support
	95 Setting Boundaries on Your Relationships
Chapter Seven:	99 A Step-by-Step Guide for Setting Personal Goals
Setting Personal Goals	105 Developing a Plan for Achieving a Personal Goal
	113 Bibliography

Related Recovery Resources

Leader's Guide—The Recovery Workbook: A guide for leaders who are using *The Recovery Workbook* with groups.

Recuperando la Esperanza—Libro Práctico: Spanish version of the *The Recovery Workbook*. The accompanying leader's guide is available as a free download on the Center's website.

The Recovery Workbook 2: Connectedness: The next step for leaders and students who have experience with the first *The Recovery Workbook*. Explores the relationship between connectedness (with oneself, others, environments, and a larger meaning or purpose in life) and personal growth in the recovery process for people with psychiatric disabilities.

Leader's Guide—The Recovery Workbook 2: A guide for leaders who are using *The Recovery Workbook 2: Connectedness* with groups.

Powerpoint® Presentation—The Recovery Workbook 2: Supplements and reinforces teaching points from *The Recovery Workbook 2: Connectedness* is available for purchase on CD.

Voices of Recovery: Recommended as a stand alone text or for use with *The Recovery Workbook 1* and *The Recovery Workbook 2*, this compilation of personal accounts and Photovoice projects by persons with psychiatric disabilities is intended to stimulate hope and provide models for recovery.

The Experience of Recovery: Recommended as a stand alone text or for use with *The Recovery Workbook 1* and *The Recovery Workbook 2*, this compilation of personal accounts and poems by persons with psychiatric disabilities is intended to stimulate hope and provide models for recovery.

Toward a Vision of Recovery — DVD & Book of Readings: An informative and inspiring, 30-minute presentation on recovery by Dr. William Anthony, produced by the California affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and an accompanying book of readings on recovery. A valuable tool for stimulating group discussion for mental health service providers, students, researchers, administrators, families, consumers/survivors, and board members.

Ordering information is available on the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation website at www.bu.edu/cpr/products.

About the Authors

LeRoy Spaniol, PhD, is a licensed psychologist who has extensive experience leading workshops in divorce adjustment, stress management, writing skills, self-esteem, assertiveness skills, and other issues. At the time of publication of the first edition, he was research associate professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Counseling at Boston University, adjunct associate professor of counseling psychology at Boston University, executive publisher of the *Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal*, and associate executive director of the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Boston University.

Martin Koehler, BA, was a research assistant at the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation and a graduate of Harvard College. He also completed a certificate in public interest law at the College of Public and Community Service at the University of Massachusetts. He is active in mental health politics in Massachusetts.

Dori Hutchinson, ScD, is director of the Services Division at the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation, Boston University. Previously, she was an instructor in the Rehabilitation Counseling program at Boston University teaching courses in case management, clinical skills, and direct skills teaching. She has done extensive research in wellness and fitness in the field of mental health.

No royalties are paid to the authors of this book. All proceeds from the sale of this book are used to further the work of the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation.

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Preface to the Revised Edition

Since its first printing, nearly 15,000 copies of *The Recovery Workbook: Practical Coping and Empowerment Strategies for People with Psychiatric Disabilities* have been sold or distributed throughout the world. Users report that it is both an effective and easy-to-use resource for recovery groups and self-study, and a recent research study concluded that *The Recovery Workbook* program was effective in increasing individuals' perceived sense of hope, empowerment, and recovery (Barbic, Krupa & Armstrong (2009).

In this revised edition of *The Recovery Workbook*, we took the opportunity to update the “Physical Wellness and Recovery” section to reflect changes in the field of health and wellness. We updated the bibliography to include recent recovery-related writings and added a list of companion resources developed at the Center designed to further the exploration of recovery for people with psychiatric disabilities.

The Center has published a number of companion recovery-related resources since the first printing of *The Recovery Workbook*. They include:

- *Recuperando la Esperanza—Libro Práctico*, a Spanish translation of *The Recovery Workbook* (and an accompanying leader's guide) is now available.
- *The Recovery Workbook 2: Connectedness* (Spaniol, Bellingham, Cohen & Spaniol, 2003) was written with the understanding that as people become more aware of their recovery and its possibilities, they are more likely to feel an interest in, and the need for, “connectedness” in their lives—connectedness to themselves, to others, to various environments, and to meaning and purpose in life. This Connectedness workbook is designed to be a second step after the completion of *The Recovery Workbook* and deliberately repeats some of the exercises from the first workbook in order to provide continuity and practice for the knowledge, skills, and attitudes learned in the first workbook. An accompanying leader's guide and PowerPoint presentation are available for use with groups.
- *The Experience of Recovery* (Spaniol & Koehler, 1994), a collection of personal accounts and poems written by people who have been through the recovery process, is recommended for use with both of the recovery workbooks or as a stand-alone book of readings.
- *Voices of Recovery* (McNamara, 2009), a second and more recent book of readings, includes personal accounts interspersed with Photovoice projects—projects by individuals with psychiatric disabilities that include a photograph with a short narrative explaining the per-

sonal meaning behind the photograph. *Voices of Recovery* also is recommended for use with both of the recovery workbooks, or it can be read independently to inspire hope that recovery is not only possible—it is real!

We hope that these books are helpful to you, your loved ones, and/or the people you serve on the journey of recovery.

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CHAPTER 1 Introduction

Purpose of the Workbook

Recovery is a common human experience. We all experience recovery at some point in our lives from injury, from illness, or from trauma. Psychiatric disability has a devastating impact on the lives of people who experience it. It is devastating because people with psychiatric disability are left profoundly disconnected from themselves, from others, from their environments, and from meaning or purpose in life. While the illness itself causes people to feel disconnected, stigma (negative personal, professional, and societal values, attitudes, and practices) further disconnects people and represents a serious barrier to building new connections.

Recovery is the process by which people with psychiatric disability rebuild and further develop these important personal, social, environmental, and spiritual connections, and confront the devastating effects of stigma through personal empowerment. Recovery is a process of adjusting one's attitudes, feelings, perceptions, beliefs, roles, and goals in life. It is a process of self-discovery, self-renewal, and transformation. Recovery is a deeply emotional process. Recovery involves creating a new personal vision for oneself. Recovering from the illness and from stigma can be very stressful. We have written this workbook as a resource for individuals with psychiatric disabilities, to help them in their recovery process and to help them to prevent, eliminate, or cope with the stressors in their lives. We believe that it is never too late to begin the recovery process. Understanding the recovery process and your own recovery experience are important first steps in returning to a life that is fulfilling for yourself and contributing to others.

The coping and empowerment strategies presented in this workbook relate to this process we call "recovery." Recovery is not a concept that is commonly applied to understanding the impact of severe mental illness. It has had far greater acceptance in the field of physical illness. People with physical disability have long advocated to be seen as people first—people who happen to have a disability. While a serious physical disability, such as paraplegia, may result in a person being confined to a wheel-

chair for the remainder of his/her life—the person can change dramatically over the course of time. He/she can come to terms with the disability and its chronicity and still have a life for himself/herself. This is called recovery. The disability does not go away but the person recovers. For people with psychiatric disability, the focus typically has been more on the illness than on the person with the illness. The focus has been on symptoms rather than on how to increase functioning. People with psychiatric disability rarely have been taught about the possibility of recovery. Unfortunately, neither professionals nor family members have been taught about recovery. The acknowledgment of the recovery process, and the contribution a person can make toward his/her own recovery, only recently has been recognized. The recovery process is described in Chapter 2.

Tensions within the mental health system and among those who collaborate with people with psychiatric disability in their recovery process (i.e., the family, other people with psychiatric disability, professionals, etc.) result from a lack of clarity of and support for the process of recovery, the means to make it more effective, and the roles that each one plays in this process. Tensions are increased further by the profound feelings and emotions aroused by this lack of clarity and support.

Diversity within the mental health system and among those who collaborate with people with psychiatric disabilities in their recovery process results from the strengths and limitations each individual brings to the process of clarifying and supporting the process of recovery, the means to make it more effective, and the roles that each one plays in this process. Diversity can be a source of tension, or it can be a source of enormous creativity if it is acknowledged and respected.

Collaboration can be built within the mental health system and among those who assist individuals with psychiatric disabilities in their recovery process by actively working together to clarify and support the process of recovery, the means to make it more effective, and the roles that each person plays in this process. A commitment to working through the tensions, resulting from lack of clarity and support, and a commitment to respecting the diversity of strengths and limitations people bring to this process, will enhance collaboration and the building of new connections for people with psychiatric disabilities.

This workbook offers the potential of building your life again—of picking up the threads of personal, social, and vocational growth that were interrupted so profoundly by the psychiatric disability. The authors hope that this workbook will provide the information and the skills needed to strengthen the recovery process, to cope more creatively, and to live life more fully.

Goals of the Workbook

The specific goals of the workbook are:

1. To become aware of the recovery process.
2. To increase knowledge and control.
3. To become aware of the importance and nature of stress.
4. To enhance personal meaning.
5. To build personal support.
6. To develop goals and a plan of action.

The material has been developed to allow the workbook to be used as part of a training workshop, course, or seminar conducted by a consumer leader(s); or to be used by individuals for their own self-study.

Evidence-Based Practice

The Recovery Workbook is derived from several evidence-based practices, which are packaged together; and incorporates controlled research on skills training, psychoeducation, and recovery-oriented interventions. Research related to these practices can be found in Anthony, Cohen, Farkas & Gagne (2002); other scholarly articles focus on the concepts underlying the entire *Recovery Workbook* package, as well as a randomized clinical trial (Barbic, Krupa & Armstrong, 2009; Spaniol, Gagne & Koehler, 1999).

Suggestions for Getting Started

Step 1: Make a decision to start changing your life and to assume responsibility for your recovery process. Decide that you are worth it. Give yourself a generous amount of time to change—and then add some more time. We tend to change in stages or percentages rather than all at once. And we frequently find ourselves continuing behaviors we are trying to change. Simply acknowledge that you still have a way to go and do not be critical of yourself. Change, even when we want it, takes time and patience.

Step 2: Make a commitment to action; to taking the necessary steps to bring about the changes you want, e.g., decide now that you will complete the whole workbook.

Step 3: Build some immediate satisfiers into your life. Plan to do something that takes care of you *every day*, e.g. taking a walk, listening to music, spending time with a friend. This will begin to break the cycle of stress in your life. Build some special satisfiers into your life on a weekly basis, e.g., a trip to the library or to the beach. Focusing on enriching your life while you deal with recovery issues will help you to move your new energy into positive directions for yourself.

Step 4: Start with someone. Choose someone with whom you can share your decision and change process. Someone who is willing to progress through the workbook with you. Choose someone you can trust; someone who will be willing to give you honest feedback. It is helpful if the person also has made a decision to change.

Selecting someone to share the process with sometimes can be stressful in itself. If you do not feel ready to find or choose a partner, begin the process by yourself. You are worth it.

Step 5: If you are not working with a group, set aside time to work through the workbook. Select a day of the week. Choose 30 to 60 minutes on this day. Having a regularly scheduled time is important. Knowing that a special time is available will help to motivate you. Be possessive of this time and do *not* let anything intrude on it. Finally, make sure the setting is quiet and comfortable, and that you will not be disturbed.

If you have a partner, you can use him or her for sharing, support, and encouragement as you work through this workbook. Agree *not* to assume responsibility for each other's issues. Simply be an active listener who provides a "mirror" for the other person as he or she confronts his or her own fears and possibilities. Structured time set aside each week is especially useful for this. If issues or problems arise that you cannot handle or that cause excessive anxiety, seek assistance from another consumer/survivor, a friend, minister, priest, physician, counselor, or therapist. Feedback can be extremely useful in helping you to move ahead and avoid getting stuck. Also, it is okay to seek out assistance at even low levels of distress.

Step 6: As you work through the workbook, you will increase your understanding of your recovery process, of your symptoms and sources of stress, as well as your options for dealing with them. When you feel ready, choose a specific problem or issue you want to work on. For some people the best place to start is with something that is fun or safe.

Others may decide to start with an issue that is causing them some pain. Whatever your choice, be specific. Give yourself permission to deal with one issue at a time.

Step 7: Choose a specific strategy for achieving your goal. Be clear about the steps you must take to deal with the issue you have chosen. If the strategy requires new knowledge or skills, identify where they can be acquired, from whom, and how. Think about the kind of support you will need from people around you and how you can build extra support into your life.

Step 8: Visualize your goal and the steps you plan to take to reach it. Be as detailed as possible. Visualize your plan from beginning to end. Imagine what it will be like for you when you have achieved your goal. Visualization is a very affirming and empowering process.

Step 9: Take action on the steps to reach your goal. Practice. See how it works. Keep at it. Persevere. Remember that it takes a while to change. Find a way to reward yourself for your successes. Remember, success builds on success.

Best wishes on your journey.

Practice Exercise 1.1

You will begin exploring and understanding your recovery process with a relaxation exercise. Focusing on your body can be very relaxing. It may even have important physical effects for you, such as lowering your heart rate. Stress can cause shallow breathing. Taking a few deep breaths can prepare you for the stresses you may experience while completing this workbook. Relaxation also helps you to let go of what you have been doing during the day and to focus you on the current task.

Find a comfortable position and close your eyes. Begin breathing slowly and deeply—slowly and deeply—all the way into your abdomen—and with each exhalation of your breath let all tension flow out of your body. Continue breathing slowly and deeply—relaxing more and more with each breath.. 🍀 Repeat the following phrases to yourself: I am relaxed, I am calm, I am at peace. I am whole—I am whole.. 🍀 Now focus your attention on your left foot—tense the muscles in your left foot—then relax your left foot. 🍀 Now focus your awareness on your right foot—tense the muscles in your right foot—then relax your right foot. 🍀 Now focus on your left calf—tense the muscles in your left calf—then relax your left calf. 🍀 Now focus on your right calf—tense the muscles in your right calf—then relax the muscles in your right calf. 🍀 Now focus on your left thigh—tense the muscles in your left thigh—then relax your left thigh. 🍀 Now focus on your right thigh—tense the muscles in your right thigh—then relax the muscles in your right thigh. 🍀 Now focus your attention on your pelvis—tense all the muscles in your pelvis—now relax all the muscles in your pelvis. 🍀 Now focus your awareness on your abdomen—tense the muscles in your abdomen—then relax your abdomen. 🍀 Now focus on your chest—tense the muscles in your chest—now relax the muscles in your chest. 🍀 Now focus on your back—tense the muscles in your back—then relax the muscles in your back. 🍀 Now switch to your left upper arm—tense the muscles in your left upper arm—then relax your left upper arm. 🍀 Now focus on your right upper arm—tense the muscles in your right upper arm—then relax your right upper arm. 🍀 Now focus on your left hand—make a fist and tense the muscles in your left hand—then relax the muscles in your left hand. 🍀 Now focus on your right hand—make a fist and tense the muscles in your right hand—then relax your right hand. 🍀 Now focus on your neck and shoulders—tense the muscles in your neck and shoulder—then relax your neck and shoulders. 🍀 Now focus on your scalp—tense the muscles in your scalp—then relax the muscles in your scalp. 🍀 Now focus on your forehead and eyes—tense the muscles in your forehead and eyes—then relax your forehead and eyes. 🍀 Now focus on your jaw and mouth—tense the muscles in your jaw and mouth—then relax your jaw and mouth so that all your body is in a state of deep relaxation.

Enjoy the warmth and comfort of deep relaxation. Know that this is an exercise you can come back to at any time by yourself.

Practice Exercise 1.2

Take a few minutes and complete the following exercise. Think about your responses first, then write them down. When you are finished, go to the next page, and respond to the questions about the exercise.

1. What are three things you did for *yourself* during the previous week?

a.

b.

c.

2. What are three things you can do for *yourself* during the coming week?

a.

b.

c.

Responding to Practice Exercises 1.1 and 1.2

1. What are your own feelings and reactions to *Practice Exercise 1.1 and 1.2*?

2. Authors' comments on *Practice Exercise 1.1 and 1.2*:

When we are feeling overly stressed, we tend to forget doing the things that ordinarily take care of us; things that we enjoy and find relaxing. Self-care is often the first thing to go.

Doing things for yourself breaks the cycle of your stress. Interrupting the cycle of your stress is an important stress management strategy.

Doing something different than you are currently doing that is stressful, breaks the cycle of our stress. Even a small interruption, such as going to the bathroom, taking a brief walk, or sitting back and doing a breathing exercise, can break our stress cycle.

Simply eliminating stress can create a vacuum. Fill the vacuum with something enriching. Something you enjoy doing.

Doing things for yourself on a daily basis is a way of gradually building up your stress hardiness. If you feel taken care of, you are in a better position to manage the normal stresses of your life, to take care of other people, or to respond to the demands of your work.

One common result of stress is to feel disconnected from yourself, i.e., from your own needs, wants, feelings, ambitions, and desires. Doing things for yourself helps you to reconnect with yourself; to pay attention to yourself; to listen to what is happening.