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The title graphic consists of a rectangular box with a thin black border. Inside the box, the text "The Experience of Recovery" is displayed. "The Experience of" is written in a white, cursive script font, positioned above the word "Recovery". "Recovery" is written in a large, bold, black serif font, with a decorative flourish on the bottom right of the letter 'y'. The background of the box is a light gray gradient.

# *The Experience of* **Recovery**

*Edited by*

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# Introduction

*LeRoy Spaniol and Martin Koehler, Editors*

**M**ental illness and the negative personal and societal attitudes surrounding mental illness often leave those who suffer from the illness disconnected from themselves, from others, from their environment (i.e., living, learning and working), and from meaning and purpose in life. This sense of disconnectedness may extend even to other people with mental illness. Yet it is peers who have lived with this experience who can often provide the modeling or mentoring needed for recovery from the devastating effects of the illness and of negative personal and societal attitudes.

This anthology of self-reports written by people with mental illness was organized to help overcome the sense of disconnection many people with mental illness experience. It was organized to provide models and mentors for how others have struggled, coped, and developed a more solid sense of themselves, their relationships to others, to their living, learning, and working environments, and to meaning and purpose in life. We believe these stories will inspire hope in people with mental illness.

This anthology was also written for families of people with mental illness. Families have their own experience of the mental illness of a family member. They feel their own sense of devastation as they grieve for the suffering their family member has to endure and for their family member's struggles to reclaim their lives. They deal with their own anger and frustration at the lack of resources to adequately assist their family member in their

recovery. We have written this anthology so they also may learn from the recovery experiences of people who have lived with this illness. We believe these stories will inspire hope in families.

Finally, we have prepared this anthology for mental health professionals. Unfortunately, many professionals in the core mental health disciplines are not provided the essential information, skills, attitudes, or support, to assist people with mental illness in their recovery process. Because professional training programs frequently fail to address these issues, mental health professionals are often left with feelings of helplessness and hopelessness in their work with people with mental illness. We believe these stories will inspire hope in mental health professionals.

We have prepared this anthology so it can be used as a companion book to *The Recovery Workbook*. While *The Recovery Workbook* provides people with mental illness with information, strategies, and skills for working on the various tasks of recovery, this anthology describes the personal experiences of people in their own recovery process.