

**The Recovery Workbook II: Connectedness**

*Leader's Guide*

**LeRoy Spaniol, PhD**

**Susan Spaniol, EdD**



Center *for* Psychiatric Rehabilitation  
Sargent College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences  
Boston University

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Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation  
Sargent College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences  
Boston University  
940 Commonwealth Avenue West  
Boston, MA 02215  
[www.bu.edu/cpr/](http://www.bu.edu/cpr/)

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**Contents**

Orientation to Recovery II .....1

Chapter 1 Introduction .....9

Chapter 2 Connecting with Oneself .....11

Chapter 3 Connecting with Others .....17

Chapter 4 Connecting with Our Environments .....23

Chapter 5 Connecting with a Larger Meaning or Purpose .....25

*Appendix: Some Guidelines for Teaching and/or Group  
Process with People with Psychiatric Disabilities* .....27

*Bibliography* .....33

## Orientation to Recovery II

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### Purpose of the Leader's Guide

This *Leader's Guide* is intended to guide leaders in using *The Recovery Workbook II: Connectedness* to facilitate the building of important connections for people with psychiatric disabilities. Connectedness is not something that can be forced on a person. Although ultimately the process of connecting is in the hands of the individual, it is a process that can be encouraged and facilitated. The leader, therefore, is a guide to this process of connecting. This guidance is carried out by providing people with the knowledge, skills, support, and opportunities that can help them to build or rebuild connections that are so frequently devastated by the illness, by discrimination, and by multiple and recurring trauma.

This *Leader's Guide* provides ideas and strategies that the authors have found to be useful after extensive pilot trainings of *The Recovery Workbook II* in the United States and in Canada. As leaders, we encourage you to test out these ideas and strategies and to rely on your own past experience in teaching. Be creative and flexible in how you use the workbook and in how you integrate your own material into the teaching. We do not assume that what we present is the best way, but only a way that has worked well for us and our students with psychiatric disabilities. Feel free to add your own content and exercises as the need arises in the class.

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### Benefits of Class Membership

In recruiting students it is sometimes useful to be able to explain the benefits of being in the class. Orientation can be given individually or in an introductory class. The orientation gives people an opportunity to become familiar with the leaders and the content and process of the class. It also provides an opportunity to decide not to take the class. We strongly believe the Recovery II class should be voluntary and not a requirement. The benefits include:

- Acquiring information about building relationships;
- Practicing new relationship building skills in the class;

- Learning from watching others (modeling, mentoring);
- Reducing the sense of isolation;
- Learning to feel hopeful, to feel there is a way;
- Getting feedback on how we view ourselves and others;
- Learning new ways of thinking, feeling, and acting; and
- Having a place to go where we can feel successful.

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**General Guidelines  
for Leading the  
Recovery Workshop II**

*Experience with the first Recovery Workbook*

It is important for leaders and students to have experience with the first Recovery Workbook (*The Recovery Workbook: Practical Coping and Empowerment Strategies for People with Psychiatric Disability*). Teachers should have taught the first Recovery Workbook and students should have taken the first Recovery Workshop. The first Recovery Workbook covers basic information about recovery and important coping and stress management skills. It also provides students with an opportunity to be part of a group process and to feel comfortable learning with others.

*Time frame*

We have piloted this class in 30 weekly 2-hour sessions for a total of 60 hours. This seems to be a good time frame within which to create the readiness for beginning the process of building relationships or for enhancing it in those who have already begun. Other time frames might work better in other settings; however, it is important not to compress the learning experience too much. The recovery process needs ample time. A sample class outline is presented in Table 1 on page 4 of this guide.

*Stay focused*

It is important to stay focused on the general content of the section you are studying. At the same time, it is important to be responsive to the expressed experiences, needs, and wants of the students. We know some things about building relationships, yet there is still much to be learned. Your students will be your best teachers. As in all teaching situations, students can get distracted from the topic of the class. If the discussion or questions begin to go too far from the content, gently bring the discussion back. Getting distracted is normal. Helping students to refocus on the topic is good teaching. One technique might be to ask the person how what he or she is saying relates to the topic of discussion.

***Do not assume responsibility for the students***

We have a responsibility to the students to do our teaching competently and skillfully. Yet we cannot be responsible for the students. Remember that we do not know how to lead someone's life better than they do, especially if we think we do. Leaders and students should not assume responsibility for changing the students. This is something only they can do. We can act responsibly by bringing our own knowledge, skills, support, and hopefulness to the teaching process. Hopelessness is challenged by helpfulness. Helping people to be helpful to themselves and to feel empowered creates hopefulness.

***How to deal with "giving advice" to students***

Rather than giving students advice, we ask ourselves and the students to do two things:

- Tell the person what you have done that has been helpful to you in this situation.
- Tell the person the feelings that have arisen in you because of what they have said. Just listening to what others are saying is difficult, yet, what most people need, is to be listened to. This will be discussed further in the text.

***Recruitment***

We have recruited students to our classes at Boston University through mailings to self-help organizations, social clubs, family groups, clubhouses, and mental health professionals. Our primary criteria for acceptance have been the willingness to attend and to make a commitment to the class. The level of disability has not been used to eliminate anyone. Also, we have not attempted any particular mix in the class. Our students have included both men and women, people who are homeless, people with dual diagnoses, people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, people who came from the hospital on passes, and professionals with psychiatric disabilities. In community programs recruitment might be limited to individuals from those programs, but need not be.

***Planning***

The leader and co-leaders meet 15 minutes before the class to plan the class. They decide what will be covered and who will lead what section. They also discuss any issues arising in the class. The leaders also meet for 15 minutes after the class to debrief what happened and to provide support for one another.

***Training of leaders***

It is very useful if the primary leader has had some teaching or group work background. The Recovery Workshop II is not therapy but does require some teaching or group process skills. Some of these skills are listed in the Appendix.

***Supervision of leaders***

The leaders provide supervision for each other in their planning meetings. It is helpful if the leaders also have an opportunity to have supervision from someone else within the program who understands psychiatric disabilities and the teaching process.

The classes have been very moving experiences for us as leaders. We feel confirmed in our belief in the capacity of people to heal themselves. We hope your experience will be similar to ours.

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**Table I:**  
**Sample Class Outline**

In addition to following the exercises in *The Recovery Workbook II* as suggested below, assign a reading from *The Experience of Recovery* at the end of each class, beginning with the second class. An optional Microsoft PowerPoint® presentation that supplements and reinforces these teaching guidelines is also available for purchase in CD format.

<i>Session</i>	<i>Topic</i>
1	Chapter 1: Introduction
2	Chapter 1: Introduction: (cont.)
3	Chapter 2: Connecting with Oneself
4	Chapter 2: (cont.)
5	Chapter 2: (cont.)
6	Chapter 2: (cont.)
7	Chapter 2: (cont.)
8	Chapter 2: (cont.)
9	Chapter 2: (cont.)
10	Chapter 2: (cont.)
11	Chapter 3: Connecting with Others
12	Chapter 3: (cont.)
13	Chapter 3: (cont.)
14	Chapter 3: (cont.)
15	Chapter 3: (cont.)
16	Chapter 3: (cont.)
17	Chapter 3: (cont.)
18	Chapter 3: (cont.)
19	Chapter 4: Connecting with Our Environments

- 20 Chapter 4: (cont.)
- 21 Chapter 4: (cont.)
- 22 Chapter 4: (cont.)
- 23 Chapter 4: (cont.)
- 24 Chapter 4: (cont.)
- 25 Chapter 4: (cont.)
- 26 Chapter 5: Connecting with a Larger Meaning or Purpose
- 27 Chapter 5: (cont.)
- 28 Chapter 5: (cont.)
- 29 Chapter 5: (cont.)
- 30 Chapter 5: (cont.)
- 31 Graduation

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**Beginning the  
Recovery Workshop II**

*Leader's Introduction*

For the purpose of these instructions the authors assume that one professional leader and two co-leaders with a psychiatric disability are involved. However, all the leaders may be people with psychiatric disabilities. We have found it helpful to have a male and a female co-leader to provide mentoring and modeling to the students. The leaders introduce themselves, commenting on how they became involved in recovery training and saying a few words about how this class began and evolved. The leaders ask the students to say their name and anything else about themselves they want to add. One helpful technique is to have students identify something they enjoy doing.

*Class Expectations*

*Agreements.* Ask students to take a beginning step in taking control of their lives by agreeing to the following:

1. Ask students to make an agreement to come to each class even if they do not want to come to a particular class. Because recovery is a process and not an event, ask them to make a commitment to the process of the class so they can experience this recovery process fully.
2. Ask students to arrive 15 minutes prior to the class so they can greet and share with one another. Remind them that the class will start promptly and end at the designated time.
3. Ask students to agree to be available to start on time and to remain throughout the class.
4. Ask students to agree to put their feelings into words and not into actions. This gives students permission to express their feelings and provides safety and protection for them in the classroom.



5. Ask students to agree to protect the names and identities of their fellow class members. As in any class, it is important to discuss what happens in the class, but ask students not to link the content of the discussion to any one person. This provides anonymity to the students and permission to be open in their discussion of their recovery process. If the class is part of an agency, the boundaries of what will be shared with whom should be discussed.
6. Ask students if there are any other agreements that would help them to feel safe in the class. The students can add to the examples given. For example:

Respecting other people in the class.

Respecting the unique recovery journey of each person in the class.

Acknowledging, owning, and expressing our own feelings, likes, and dislikes.

Seeing the class as an important vehicle for our own development.

Claiming our own time for expressing our thoughts and feelings in the class.

Sharing only what I want to share. There is no pressure to share anything that I don't want to share.

*Time frame.* Each class will last about 2 hours with a break in the middle. This will give the students sufficient time to work through the material for each class. We ask that students come 15 minutes early to say hello to other students. We have coffee, soda, and some snack available to the students.

*Educational/nontherapeutic focus.* Explain that the focus of the class will be on the teaching of new information and skills. The class is not intended to be group therapy. Although teaching is therapeutic in a broad sense, the leaders will not focus on individual therapeutic issues. Leaders should avoid *interpreting* what people share. Listen to their stories and comments during the class. Focus on the present and the future. Meeting around a table rather than in a circle can enhance the educational focus of the class. Circles remind people of therapy.

*Design of the class.* Tell the students that this class combines didactic presentation and experiential learning. They will be asked to participate in a variety of activities, including group discussion, sharing of personal experiences, exercises, and periods of quiet reflection.

*Responsibility.* Let the students know that it will be their responsibility to create value and meaning for themselves from this class. The leaders will not be able to do this for them.

*Availability of leaders.* Inform the students that the leaders will be available for brief individual contact as the need arises. Individuals requiring or wanting more personal time can negotiate it with the leaders. Referral to other resources may be made if needed or requested by a student.

*Commitment to one another.* Ask students to be available to each other for support and sharing over the course of the class. After the first few classes we ask students for their permission to have their telephone numbers listed in a class roster. Each student is asked to call at least one other student during the week to say hello. This increases their feeling of connectedness. Leaders and co-leaders also list their work and home phone numbers. We wait several classes to do this in order to give the students a chance to get to know one another and to feel safe in the class.

*Class content may raise strong feelings.* Let students know that the content of the class may raise strong feelings in them at times. This is natural because their relationships may have been bruising or destructive in the past. Building new relationships can be very emotionally and even physically painful. It is helpful to have someone to talk to such as a therapist or friend if the feelings become overwhelming.

*Personal journal.* Ask students to keep a personal journal during the class. Ask them to set aside 15 minutes each day and to use a time of the day when they have energy. Encourage them to focus on what is happening in their lives, their accomplishments, and what they have done for themselves.

*Anonymity agreement.* Ask students to agree to protect the names and identities of other class members. It is OK to talk about what happens in class. But do not link what happens to any particular person. This agreement is necessary for building trust and frankness.

*Workbook.* Ask students to sign their name on the cover of the workbook. The workbook is intended to serve as their personal record. Ask students to agree not to look at another's workbook. Emphasize that they do not have to share anything they write in their workbook that they don't want to. This helps students to feel free to be open and honest in recording experiences and feelings.

*Teaching note.* We have found it useful to have a student volunteer to read one paragraph at a time from the workbook. This gives the students a chance to speak even if they don't participate actively. It also helps students who may not be able to read the text because of language or learning difficulties to participate in the class. When the paragraph has been read, ask what thoughts or feelings came to the students about the paragraph. This discussion can go on for quite awhile depending on the responses. The leaders may also add their comments on the paragraph after the students have commented. Also, we usually do not ask specific students to share their responses. We tend to wait until they are ready to participate.

*Teaching note.* We end each class on time after the 2 hours. We do not try to cover any particular amount of material but go with the pace of the class. At the end of each class we give the students a homework assignment based on the content of the day. At the beginning of each class we ask students to say their name, report on their homework, and bring up anything left over from the previous class. Then, we move into the text where we left off the past class.