

Supporting Veterans' Recovery from Mental Health Problems

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What Do We Mean by “Recovery”?

What Is Recovery?

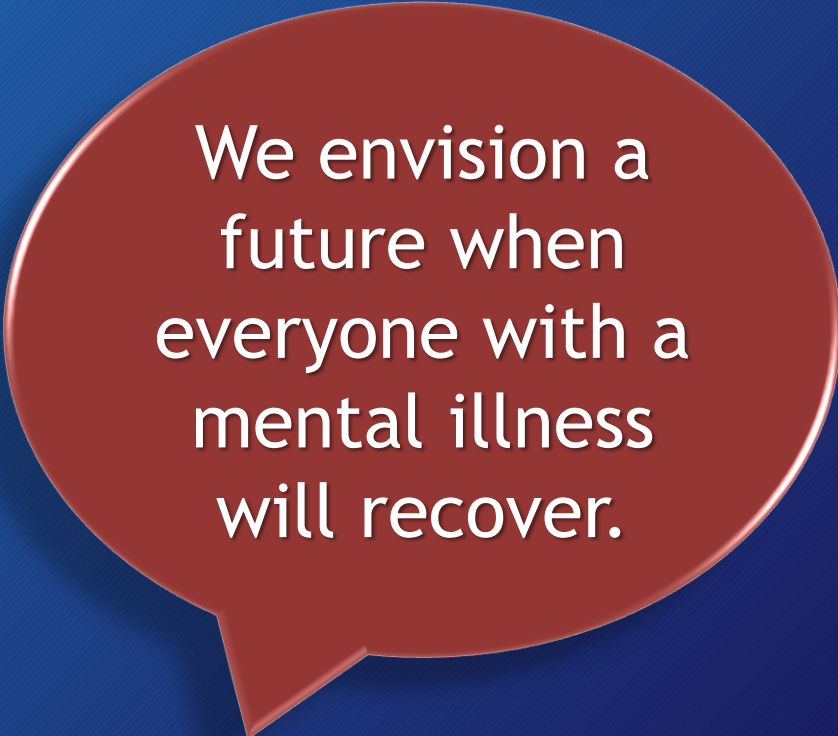
Recovery is not the same thing as a cure.

[Recovery is] a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration, 2012

What Is Recovery?

- The Recovery movement is a response to the medical model of treatment
 - It focuses on a consumer's ability to respond to life challenges, not just reduce their symptoms
- For some people, it means complete remission of their symptoms
- For others, it means living a fulfilling and productive life despite having a disability



We envision a future when everyone with a mental illness will recover.

President's New Freedom
Commission on Mental Health, 2003

Recovery Is Self-Directed

- The goal is defined by the Veteran (and his family)
 - The steps are determined collaboratively with the health care team
- “You might not like or approve of my goal, but you respect my right to choose it anyway.”
- People need to have the right to fail in order to learn from their own mistakes (Deegan, 1993)
- Help them understand that self-determination also means taking personal responsibility



Major Dimensions That Support A Life in Recovery

Health

Overcoming or managing one's disease or symptoms

Home

A stable and safe place to live

Purpose

Meaningful daily activities

Community

Relationships and social networks

10 Guiding Principles of Recovery

SAMHSA, 2012



A Journey, Not A Destination

- Where does the Veteran want to go?
- Recovery takes time
 - It took time to get here
- It isn't easy, but it's possible
- Relapse may occur along the way



Recovery from Substance Misuse

Recovery from Substance Misuse

Recovery is not just about getting sober.

It's about building and enjoying a better life for yourself in sobriety.

- Sobriety is only one step in recovery from substance misuse
 - That is why AA has 12 steps
- Addiction affects a person's whole life, including his relationships, health, career, and psychological well-being
- Recovery requires addressing the reasons why a person began using drugs/alcohol, why they use them now, and developing a new lifestyle

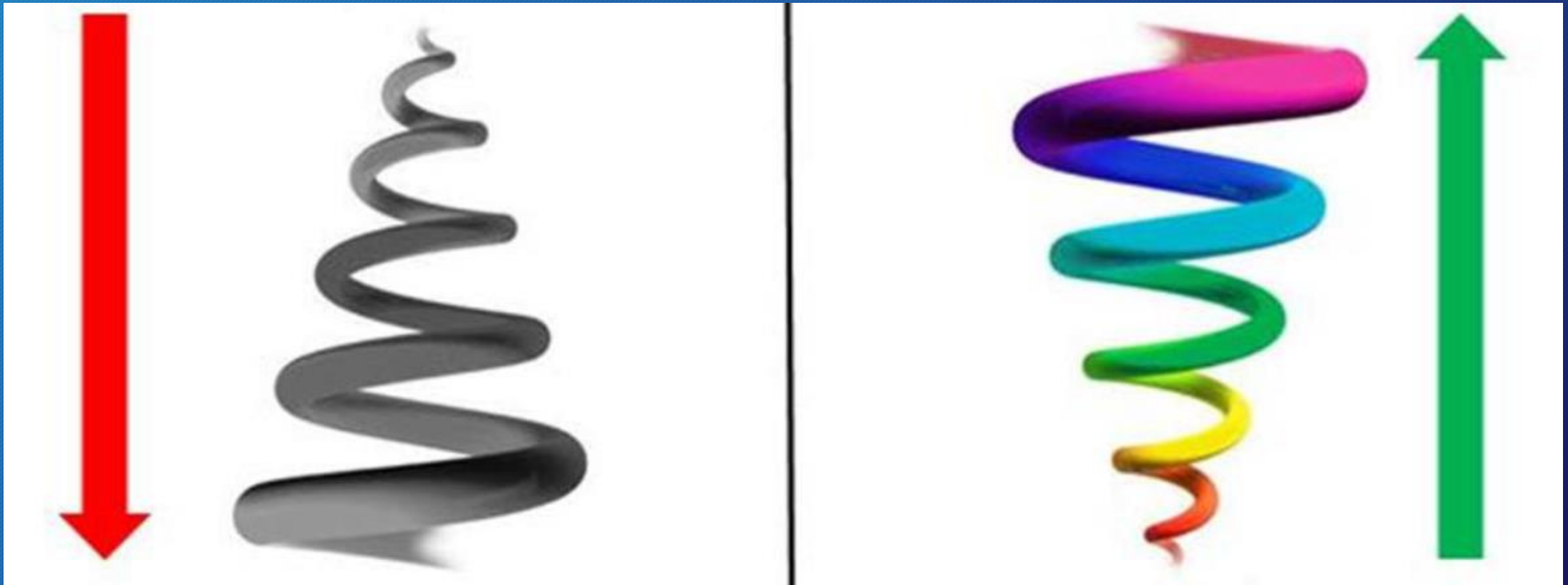


Recovery from Substance Misuse
Is Like Climbing a Mountain

Recovery Spirals

The downward spiral of relapse

The upward spiral of recovery



Recovery from Substance Misuse

- Recovery from substance misuse requires constant effort
- As soon as a person thinks “I got this”, “F___ it”, or “I’ll just have one”, there’s a good chance they will relapse



Stages of Recovery from Substance Misuse

1. Awareness that there is a problem
2. Considering and planning a change
3. Early abstinence/sobriety
4. Maintaining abstinence
5. Long-term recovery

Helping Them Recover from Substance Misuse



- Encourage them to ask for help. Be there if they ask you.
- Help them talk about their mixed feelings about giving up substances.
- Coach them to “Just win *today*.”
- Encourage determination. Setbacks are just setbacks, nothing more.
- Don’t take relapses personally.
 - The average person with an addiction relapses 7 times before becoming sober.

Recovery from Serious Mental Illness

What is Serious Mental Illness?

- Serious mental illness is having a diagnosable mental disorder that causes significant functional impairment that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities
- Serious mental illnesses include major depression, schizophrenia, and bipolar disorder, and other mental disorders that cause serious impairment.
- People with serious mental illnesses are more likely to be unemployed, arrested, and/or face inadequate housing compared to those without mental illness.

Help Them Recover from Serious Mental Illness

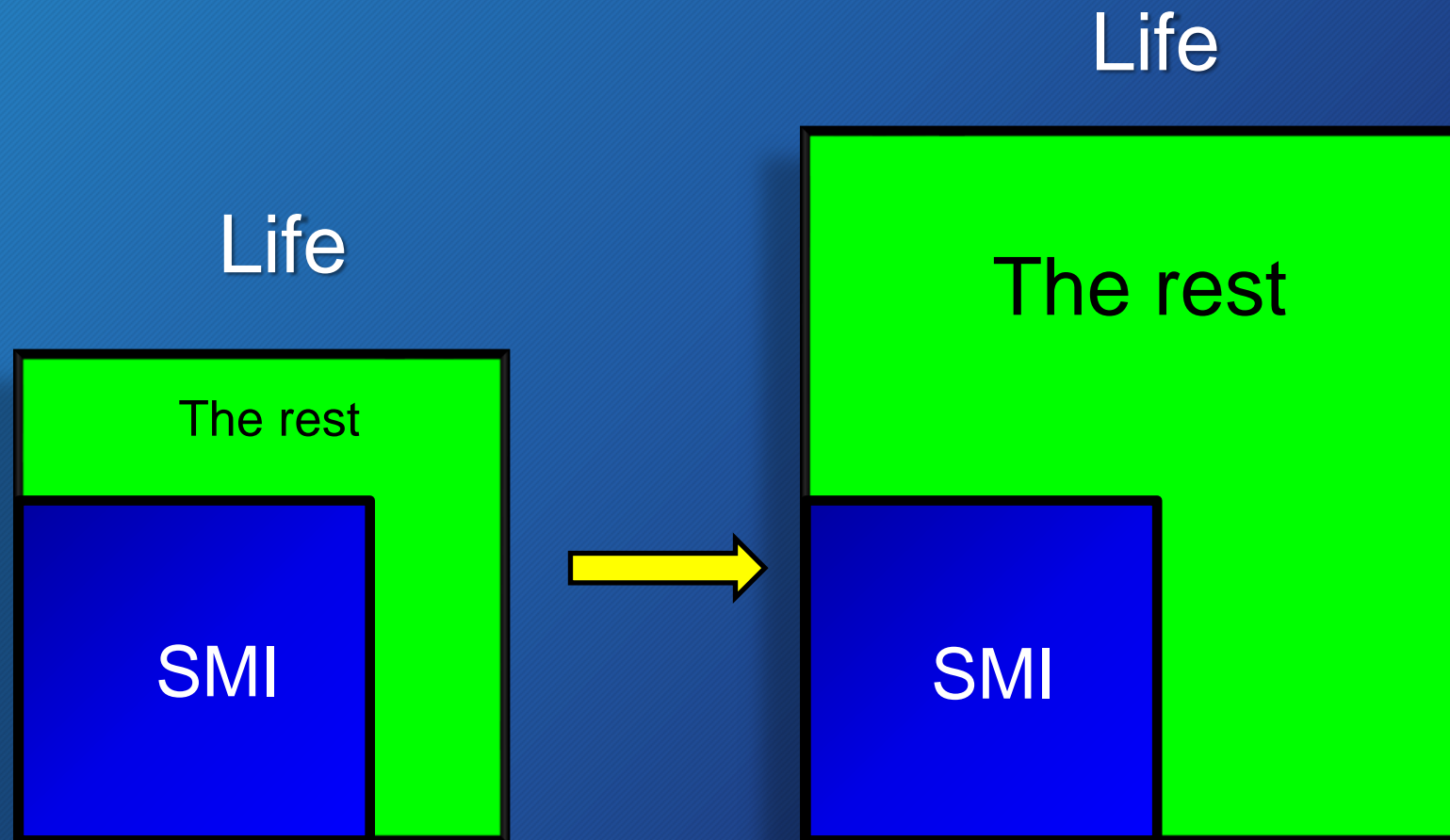
- Let them know that feelings are normal
- Show compassion
- Involve families
- Help them set boundaries on bad relationships
- Coach them not to make major decisions when their symptoms are serious
- Help them find evidence-based practices like supported housing and supported employment

NEVER GIVE UP ON
SOMEONE WITH A
MENTAL ILLNESS.
WHEN "I" IS REPLACED
BY "WE", ILLNESS
BECOMES WELLNESS.

-SHANNON L. ALDER

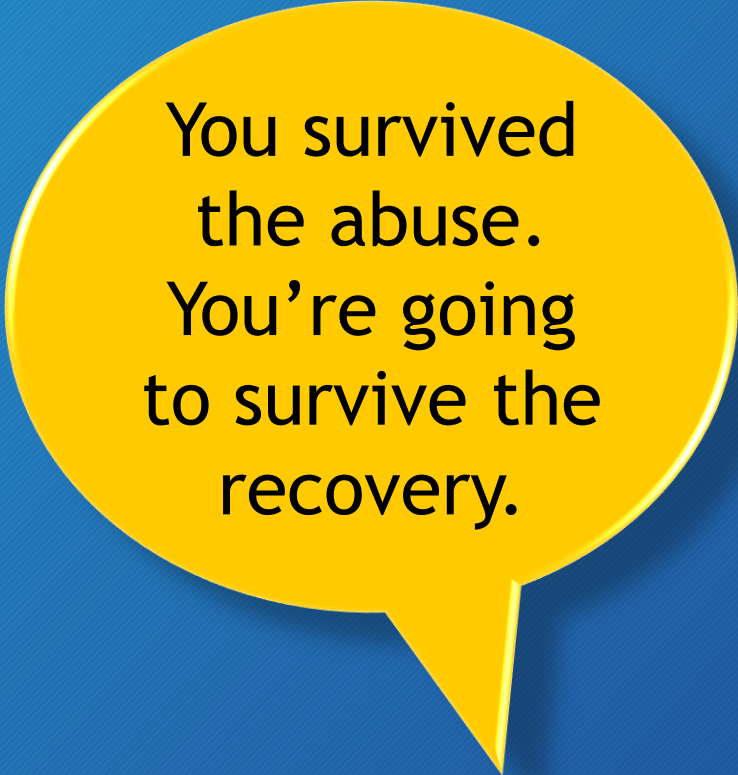


Recovery from SMI



Recovery from Trauma and PTSD

Help Them Recover from Trauma and PTSD



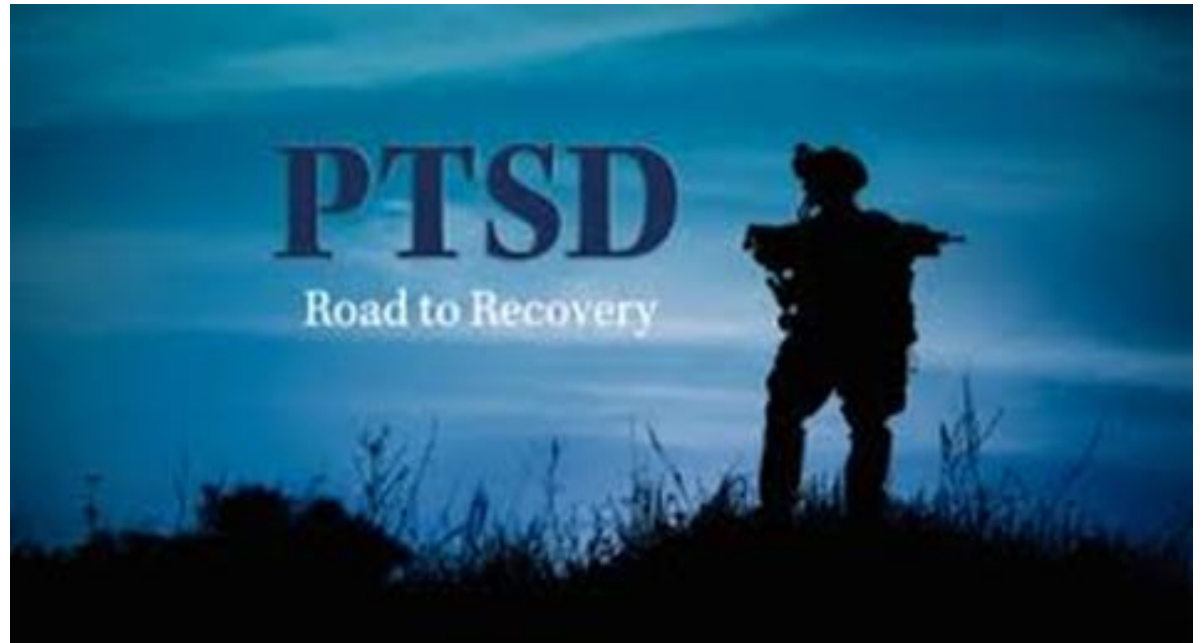
You survived
the abuse.
You're going
to survive the
recovery.

Mariska Hargitay


- “It’s not about what’s wrong with you, it’s about what happened to you.”
- Normalize their experience
- Share what has worked for you
- Help them with reality testing around trust and safety
- Help them to focus on one thing in the present moment

PTSD Recovery

- Change negative thoughts to realistic thoughts
- Coach them to praise themselves
- Remind them that if it feels awkward, they are probably doing it right



Recovery from Trauma and PTSD



Phase I:
Safety and
Stabilization

Phase II:
Remembrance
and Mourning

Phase III:
Reconnection

After Herman, 1992

Post-Traumatic Growth

- Post-traumatic growth occurs when a traumatic event results in a change to a person's core beliefs and finds personal growth (Tedeschi & Cohen, 1996)
- Growth occurs in 5 areas:
 - Appreciation of life
 - Relationships with others
 - New possibilities in life
 - Personal strength
 - Spiritual change
- A person must be open to experience
- Examples: Warriors who become ministers
 - Becoming a Peer Support Specialist, helping other Veterans



What You Can Do to Help Veterans Recover

Where to Start

1

Listen more
than you talk

2

Help them
figure out
their goals

3

Plant the
seeds of
hope

4

Ask them
about their
strengths

Help Them Become Safe

- Build your relationship
- Help them write a suicide safety plan
- Teach them anger management skills like taking deep breaths, counting to 10, and walking away
- Help them to practice self-talk
- Support them to stop using substances



Ask for
help

Never, never,
never, never
give up

Remind yourself
of what you are
living for

Think of the
consequences

Expect growth to feel uncomfortable

Praise
yourself

Attend
treatment

Choose whatever
will make you like
yourself tomorrow

Seek understanding,
not blame

Talk yourself
through it

Some Safe Coping Skills

Use Recovery Language



- Language can be definitional
 - For example, “addict” means you are defined by your addiction
- Language can create stigma
 - For example, “disorder” means something is wrong with you
- Language can create false causes
 - For example, “You could stop if you wanted to.”
 - This turns a brain disease into a moral failing
- Language can be shaming
 - For example, “You are a drunk.”

The Language of Stigma

40 year old antisocial personality disorder, with history of assaultive and homicidal behavior, opium addiction, and aquaphobia.



Use The Language of Recovery



Miss West has been unable to control her anger since the traumatic death of her sister and the theft of valuable family heirlooms, the ruby slippers. Relies on poppy flowers, which provide temporary relief from rage reactions. Has realistic fear of getting wet based on serious allergy to water. Talks about resuming healthier activities such as bicycling.

The Language of Stigma

12 year old schizophrenic with paranoid delusions of having magic powers and being pursued by an evil rival. Frequent somatic headaches, occasional temporary paralysis.



Use The Language of Recovery



Harry Potter is a 12 year old orphan from abusive foster home, whose seemingly dissociative behaviors help him cope with the death of his parents, who were murdered when he was an infant. Despite symptoms of nightmares, anxiety, and hypervigilance, he is successful in school and has friends. His strengths include: intelligence, social skills, and independence. He sees himself as a resilient survivor with meaningful life goals.

Help Them Build Resilience

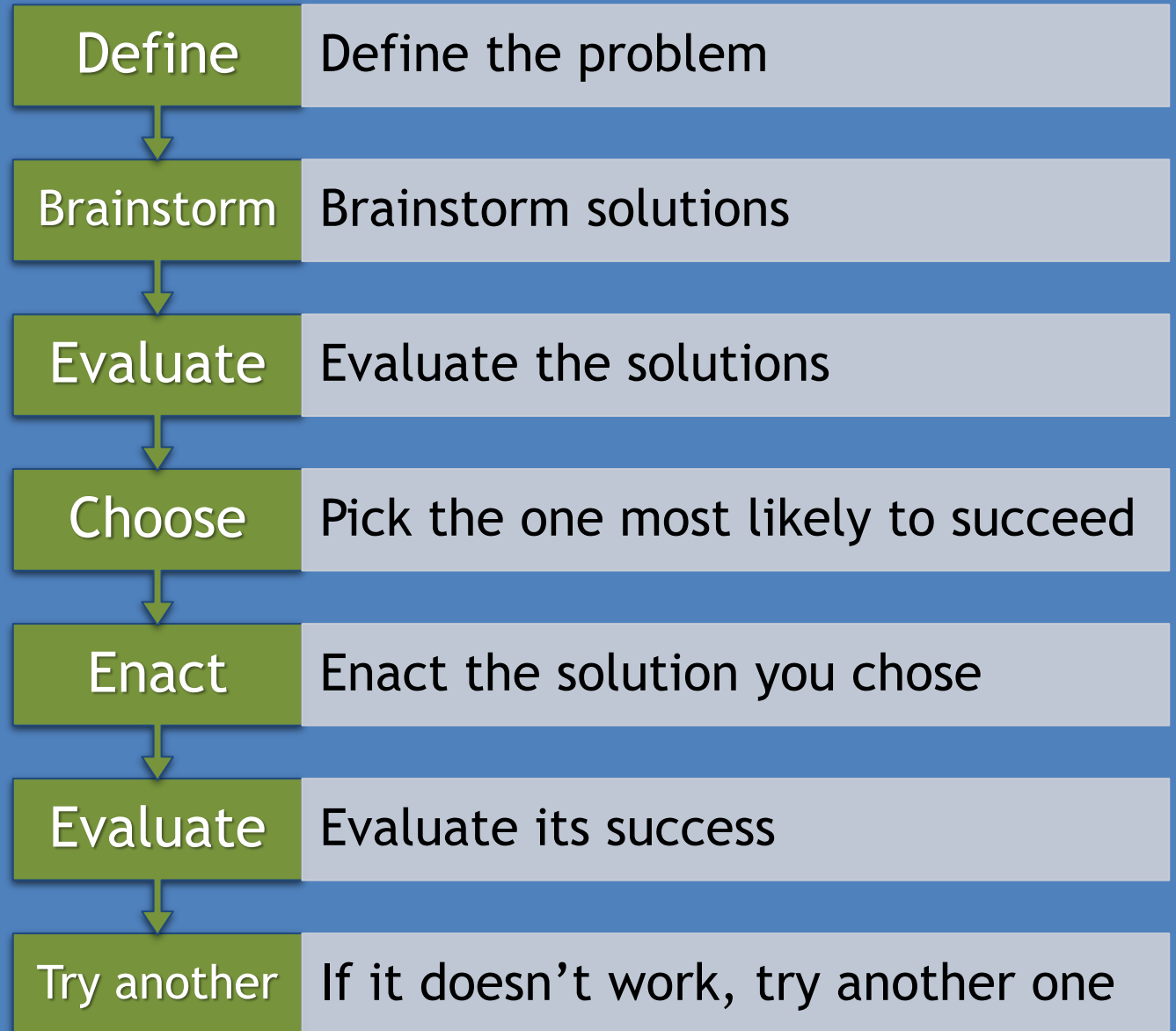
“THE POINT OF RECOVERY
ISN'T TO LIVE WITHOUT
UPS AND DOWNS—IT'S
LEARNING HOW TO LIVE
WITH THE UPS AND DOWNS.”

— Ali Foley Shenk

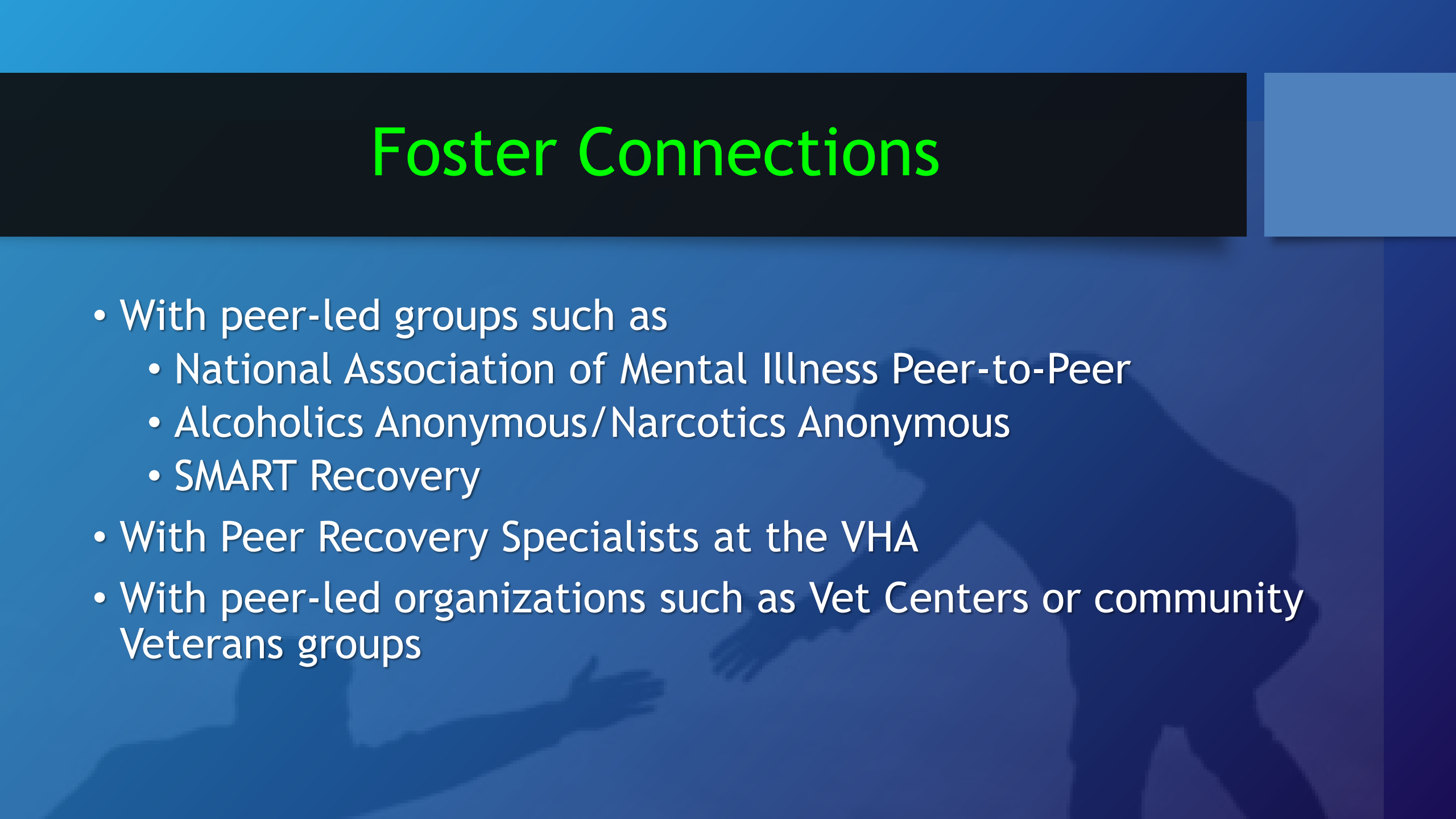


- Resilience is a person's ability to cope with life's stresses
 - It develops over time and helps them prepare for the next stressful situation
- Maintain hope and optimism
- Engage in humor
- Make a list of ways to relieve stress
- Help them to see things in a different way

Practice Problem- Solving



Foster Connections

- With peer-led groups such as
 - National Association of Mental Illness Peer-to-Peer
 - Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous
 - SMART Recovery
 - With Peer Recovery Specialists at the VHA
 - With peer-led organizations such as Vet Centers or community Veterans groups
- 
- The background of the slide features a dark blue gradient. In the lower half, there are faint, light blue silhouettes of two people. One person is on the left, reaching their right arm out towards the center. The other person is on the right, leaning forward with their left arm extended towards the center, mirroring the first person's gesture. This visual metaphor represents the 'Foster Connections' mentioned in the title.

Help Them Develop A Wellness Action Recovery Plan®



- WRAP® plans were developed by people who live with mental health problems (Copeland, 2011)
- WRAP® is an evidence-based practice
- It empowers people to be active in their care
- It helps them identify what makes them well
- WRAP® compliments treatment, but does not replace it

Help Them Develop A Wellness Action Recovery Plan®

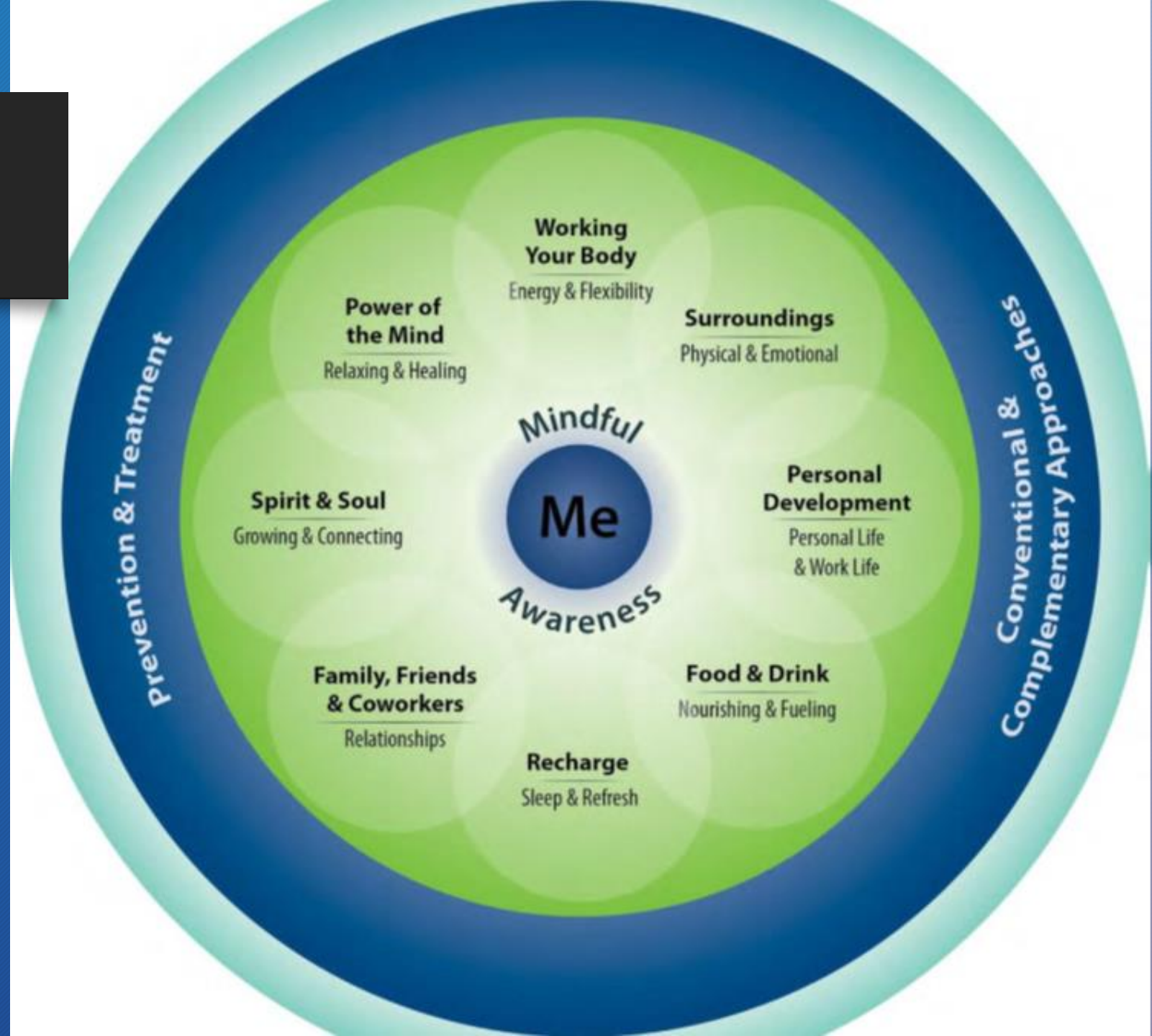
WRAP® plans (Copeland, 2011) include:

- Wellness Toolbox, like friends to contact, stress reduction techniques, and affirming activities
- Daily maintenance plan that describes them when they are well
- Triggers
- Early warning signs of feeling worse
- List of when things are breaking down
- Crisis plan that helps you know when others may need to take over
- Post-crisis plan of what you need to get well

The free
version is
called
Action
Planning
for
Prevention
& Recovery

Help Them Live A Whole Life

- Eight areas of the Circle of Health
- Develop a personal health plan
- Focus on what matters to the Veteran rather than what is the matter with them
- The VHA is shifting to the Whole Health model



Help Them Engage in Wellness Activities



- Mindfulness Meditation
- Yoga
- Tai Chi
- Qi Gong
- Biofeedback
- Guided imagery
- Massage
- Acupuncture



How Do We Know When Recovery Happens?

Recovery occurs when people with mental illnesses discover, or rediscover, their strengths and abilities for pursuing personal goals and develop a sense of identity that allows them to grow beyond their mental illness.

Mueser et al., 2002

From Surviving to Thriving

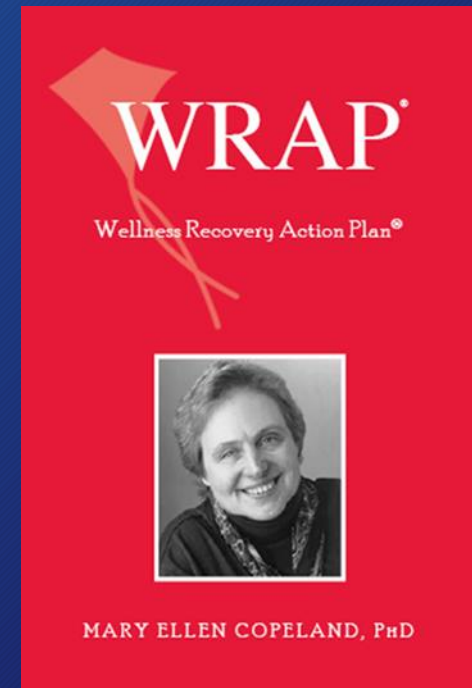
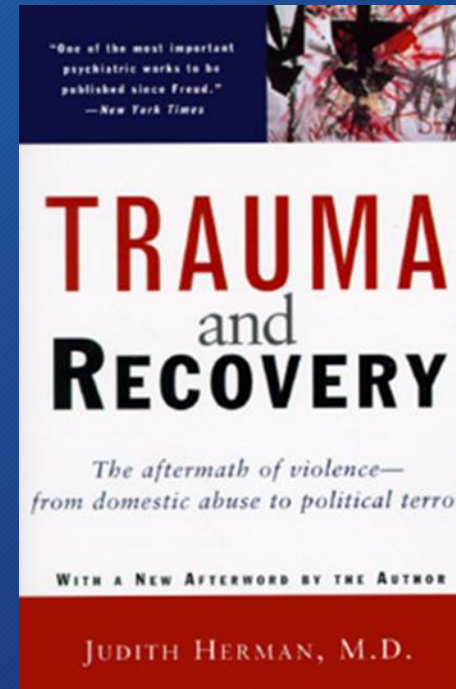
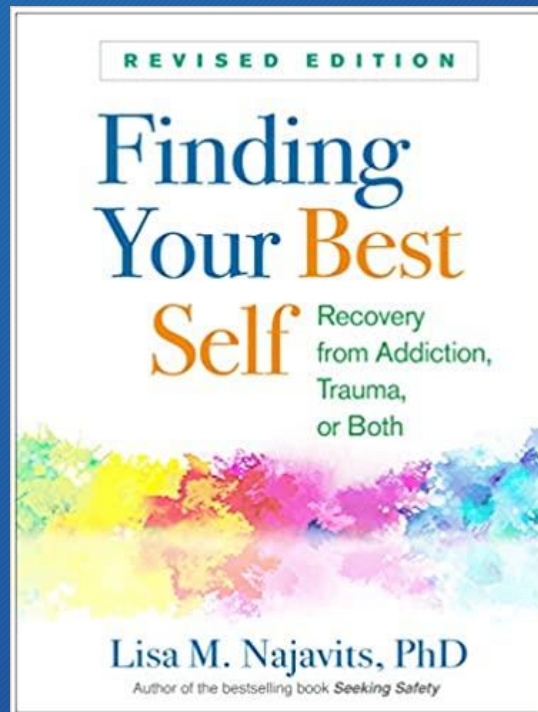
- Spending time with people who care about them
- Developing a purpose
- Finding joy
- Providing service to others
- Spiritual growth



Resources

Books

- *Finding Your Best Self*, by Lisa Najavits
- *Trauma and Recovery*, by Judith Herman
- *Wellness Action Recovery Plan®*, by Mary Ellen Copeland



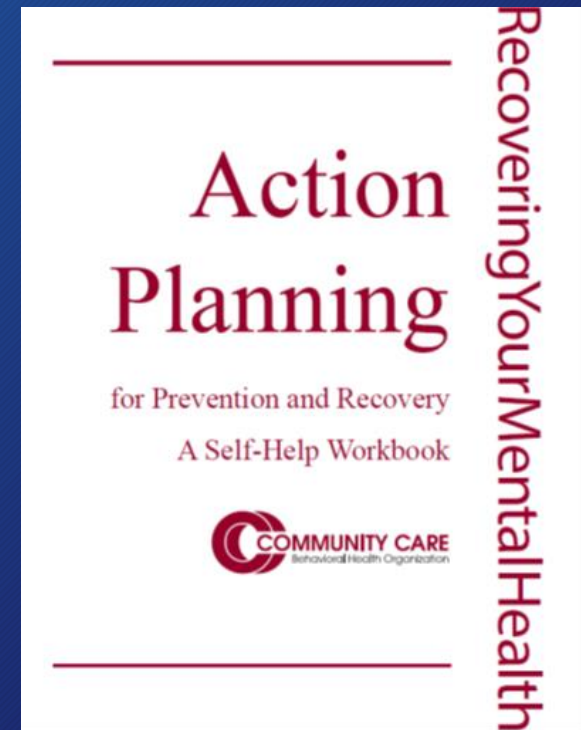
Action Planning for Prevention and Recovery

- APPR instructions

<https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Action-Planning-for-Prevention-and-Recovery-A-Self-Help-Guide/SMA-3720>

- APPR workbook

<https://www.ccbh.com/pdfs/HCMembers/stepsofhope/recovery/takingaction/actionplanningworkbook.pdf>



Online Resources

- SAMHSA's Recovery Support Initiative

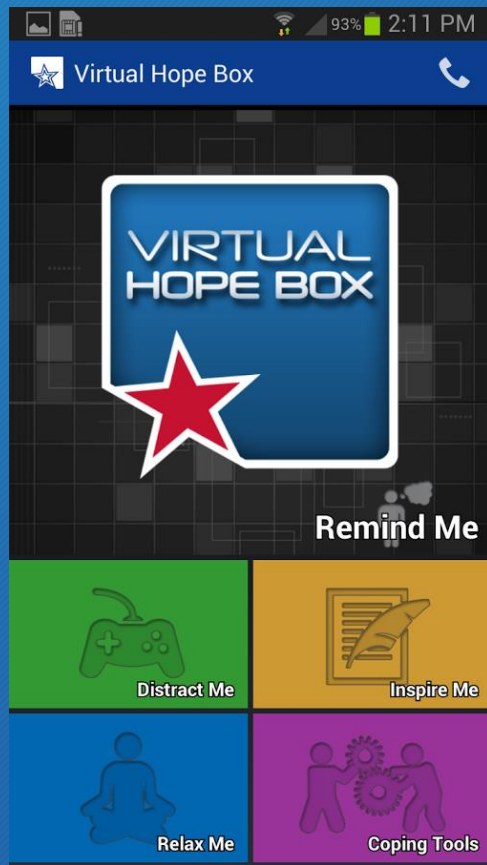
www.samhsa.gov/recovery

- Free manuals and CD ROMs for Evidence-Based Practices in Recovery

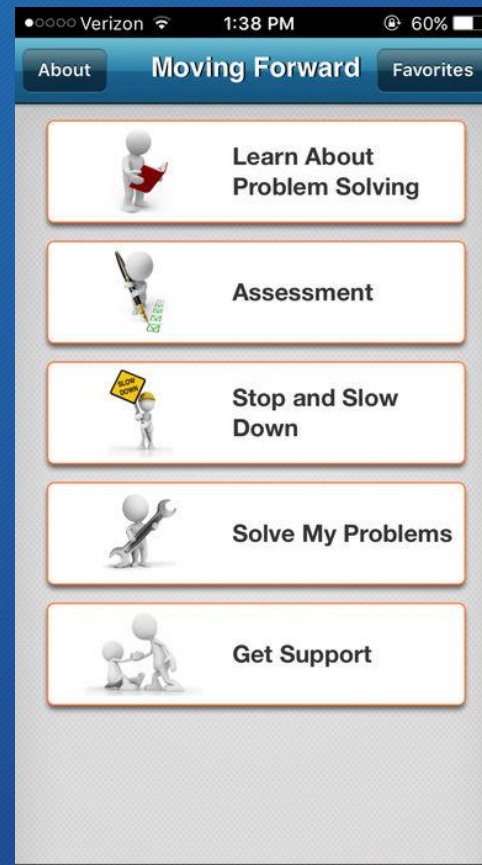
<https://store.samhsa.gov/list/series?name=Evidence-Based-Practices-KITs>

Apps

Virtual Hope Box



Moving Forward



Breathe 2 Relax



Contact

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