Introducing the Recovery Star

Helping you in your recovery

We are here to help you in your recovery from mental illness. Recovery usually means changing things in a number of areas of your life so that things work better for you. Making changes isn’t easy but understanding how change works can help. Many people who are recovering from mental illness have found it useful to think about recovery as a journey with different stages. They find it helps to think about which stage they are in and to get a picture of where they are on their journey. The Welcome Project uses the Recovery Star to help in this.

How we change things that aren’t working for us – the Ladder of Change

Everyone is different and it’s important to understand each person’s individual circumstances but the pattern of recovery is often similar. Consider the Ladder of Change.

At one end of the ladder is the feeling of being stuck – of not feeling able to face the problem or accept help.

From stuck we move to accepting help. At this stage we want to get away from the problem and we hope that someone else can sort it out for us.

Then we start believing – that we can make a difference ourselves in our life. We look ahead towards what we want as well as away from the things we don’t want. We start to do things ourselves to achieve our goal as well as accepting help from others.

The next step is learning how to make our recovery a reality. It’s a trial and error process. Some things we do work, and some things don’t, so we need support through this process.

As we learn, we gradually become more self-reliant until we get to the point when we can manage without help from a project.

Recovery isn’t necessarily a case of moving from the first point, to the last. Different people will be at different points and may move forwards or backwards as their circumstances change. Wherever you are on this journey, placing yourself on the ladder can help you see where you have come from, what your next step is and how we can best help you.

Seeing the big picture – the Star

The Recovery Star looks at ten areas of your life:

- Managing mental health
- Relationships
- Physical health and self-care
- Addictive behaviour
- Living skills
- Responsibilities
- Social networks
- Identity and self-esteem
- Work
- Trust and hope
The Star helps you to see the big picture – the areas of your life that are working well and the areas that are causing difficulties. This picture helps you to focus and start thinking about the actions you want to take and the support that would help you.

Look at the Ladder of change and think about an area of your life where you have made changes and see how it fits in with the ladder.

Each position on the ladder has a number where you score yourself between 1 and 10.

Decide where you are on the ladder for each of the 10 areas.

Join the number on the ladders and you will see your personal star which shows how things are for you now.

Decide which area you would like to work on to start with. The aim is to repeat your star every 6 to 8 weeks and decide what you are aiming to do in between the repeats. Set realistic goals and make a plan.

The ten areas of the Recovery Star

1. Managing mental health
   This is about how you manage your mental health issues. This is not necessarily about not having any more symptoms or medication, though this may happen. It is about learning how to manage yourself and your symptoms and building a satisfying and meaningful life which is not defined or limited by them.

2. Physical health and self-care
   This is about how well you look after yourself – taking care of your physical health, keeping clean, how you present yourself, being able to deal with stress and knowing how to keep yourself feeling well.

3. Living skills
   This is about the practical side of being able to live independently – shop and cook for yourself, deal with neighbours and people who visit, keep your place clean and tidy and look after your money.

4. Social networks
   This is about your social networks and being part of your community. It includes taking part in different activities and getting involved in things. This can include volunteering or classes, being part of your neighbourhood, a club or society, school or faith organisation, or groups of friends.

5. Work
   This is about you and work – whether you want to work, knowing what it is you would like to do, having the skills and qualifications to get the work you want and finding and keeping a job. For some people, paid work may not be appropriate but volunteering or other work-like activity may be a goal, in which case, point seven would effectively be the top of the scale.

6. Relationships
   This is about the important relationships in your life. We suggest you choose one relationship where you would like things to be different and find where you are on the ladder for that. This could be a member of your family, a close friend or an intimate relationship – one that you have, or finding a partner if you don’t have one and would like one. It could be someone who is important to you but who you are not in touch with at the moment. Whoever you choose, it is about having the amount of closeness that you want, which is something that you decide.
7. Addictive behaviour
This is about any addictive behaviour you may have, such as drug or alcohol use, or other addictions, like gambling, food or shopping. It is about how aware you are of any problems you have in this area and whether you are working to reduce the harm they may cause you or others.

8. Responsibilities
This is about meeting your responsibilities in relation to the place where you live at the moment. Responsibilities include things like paying the rent, getting on with neighbours or fellow residents and taking responsibility for visitors. It also covers breaking the law or being in trouble with the police or courts.

9. Identity and self-esteem
This is about how you feel about yourself and how you define who you are. It is about getting to the point where you have a sense of your own identity – your likes and dislikes, what you're good at and your weaknesses, and accepting and liking who you are. When looking at this scale it might help to ask yourself, what am I good at? What do I value in myself? And how would I introduce myself to someone new?

10. Trust and hope
This is about your sense that there are people you can trust and there is hope for your future. It is about trusting in others, trusting in yourself and ultimately having faith in life and trusting that things will work out somehow. It might help to ask yourself who you trust when things get very tough. And do you have faith that, whatever happens, you or someone out there will find a way through?

The Ladder of Change

Self-Reliance
10. At the end of the journey you have no particular issues which are likely to knock you off course and threaten your ability to live independently. You behave in ways that work well for you and those around you. You don't need any outside help to maintain this way of doing things. You know when you need support and how to get it.
9. Your new ways of doing things are now quite well-established and feel more natural and automatic. Most of the time you can keep the changes going on your own without support, but at times of crisis you are vulnerable to slipping back and so it can be helpful to have someone who checks that all is well and helps you to recognise the danger signs and take action when necessary.

Learning
8. With support you overcome the setbacks and learn more about what helps to keep you on course in difficult times. You get a better and better idea of what works for you in moving towards your goals and this helps strengthen your motivation, your belief in yourself and your ability to achieve your goals. For this reason, you start to become more consistent in doing things that are helpful in your journey and get you closer to where you want to be. Even when things are going well, new challenges may come that really test you. The important thing now is to keep going in the same direction and call on the help that is there for you when you need it. Don't be tempted to set off on your own too soon. At this stage you still need support to keep things up, and it helps to have someone to talk to about how you are managing things and to help you recognise how far you have come.
7. As you continue to try new things and work towards your goals, you will find that some things go well and others do not. It is a process of trial and error and you will be learning a lot about what works for you. When you have a setback, it can get you down and you might be tempted to give up and go
back to the old ways of doing things, so it is really important to have someone to talk to who can help you celebrate the successes and see the setbacks as opportunities to learn and become more skilful in achieving your goals.

**Believing**

6. You start to build on this belief by doing things differently in the world. You start to put your plans into action and do new things. This isn’t easy. It takes courage to try doing things differently and move away from the old familiar patterns, so you will need lots of support to ride the inevitable highs and lows. The next step here is simply to keep the belief and keep going, even when it feels difficult. The rewards will make it worthwhile.

5. Now, for the first time, you start really to believe that your life could be different. You start to have a sense of what you want as well as what you don’t want. You can see that real lasting changes won’t happen unless you help to make them happen. This is a really important turning point – a change in the way you view yourself and your life which makes new things possible. The next step is to act on this change.

**Accepting Help**

4. You accept help more and more, talking things through with workers and going along with the actions that are agreed, and you probably start to feel better as your circumstances improve. At this stage, you are relying very much on workers to make change happen and drive things forward. Without workers driving the process forward, you can slip back quickly and you may feel critical of workers if things don’t work out. The next step is to move into the driving seat more yourself so that you can take your life in the direction you want to go.

3. At this stage you have a really strong feeling that you want things to be different. Change may seem impossible or frightening and you may not know what you want, but you know you don’t want to carry on living as you have been. You start accepting offers of help – especially to sort out pressing problems, though sometimes it may feel like too much and you may feel the need to draw back again.

**Stuck**

2. You may find that every now and then you start to think “it doesn’t have to be like this” or you have an impulse to reach out for help. This is a really positive sign – it is an opening for things to start to move and change. Those moments are times of clarity and awareness. The next step is to trust those thoughts and act on the impulse to reach out. Then things can start to change.

1. At the beginning of the journey you just don’t want to talk about things. You might feel cut off and not aware of problems or you might be thinking about them all the time but feel scared to talk or that there isn’t anyone you can trust. Because of this, things are stuck.