

## **Realistic Levels of Recovery**

*By Moe Armstrong*

We can be or gradually get to be:

Sane, Stable, Safe and Sober

### ***What is sane?***

We can be mentally ill but we don't have to act crazy

There is immense emotional pain to mental illness

We have to learn that we are not alone and sometimes bear the pain

There are no miracles and probably no cures

### ***What is stable?***

Not losing our housing, job, family

The psychiatric condition is an emotional disability

We have blown up at people. We have to learn to apologize. Make amends.

Struggle to learn how cool out. Learn how to feel the emotional anguish without destroying our lives and hurting others

### ***What is safe?***

We take unnecessary risks. Stay up too late. Don't get enough sleep. Keep trying to think that we need to be able to take risks and push ourselves. Prove that we can't break down again. Maybe the opposite is the answer. Live a very straight life. Go to bed early. Get extra rest. Don't stay up late or go out at night.

Learn to rest extra. Get quiet in small rooms. Learn how to de escalate before we escalate. Focus on being rested. Focus on having friends and being in environments which don't harm us.

Being stable helps being safe. Sometimes learning how to live in quiet and silence can also help quiet mind. Quieting the mind by having a quiet environment can go a long way to help keep those of us with mental illness from falling apart.

People have to learn how to get quiet and practice being quiet. We need to learn the skills of being quiet.

Being with friends who can learn from and environments which have education is important.

We can learn how to be safe. We need to be with people and environments which educational. Not educational by being superior or knowing more.

Situations can be educational by mutually sharing and learning information.

### ***What is sober?***

Mental Illness is physical, Anything that we put into our bodies drink, food, substance, drugs, medications can cause our minds and bodies to react. To pick up the early warning signs of escalating symptoms of mental illness, we need to have as much clarity as possible. Sobriety helps with clarity.

If we go through life stoned and drunk, we miss some opportunities to find ways to get sane, stable and safe. We might not be able to find a cure. We might not be able to have employment. We can find a way to be happy and have peace of mind.

We also have to watch that we don't stop drinking and drugging only to continue being angry. Anger can be a form of getting high. People with psychiatric conditions need to get free from dope, booze and anger.

Lots of educational support can help get the dope, booze and anger out of our lives. Mental health has not been set up to have enough support meetings.

When, I was in Springfield, Missouri, I went to the best mental health center. Forty support meetings a week. Open on the weekends and the weekends were when they had the highest attendance.

Sometimes over 150 people attended support meetings on the weekend. Almost all support meetings mentioned not taking booze and drugs. They all dealt with mental illness and how to better live with a psychiatric condition.

Our job as psychiatric rehabilitation practitioners and believers in the possibility of Recovery is to assist people in getting sane, stable, safe and sober.

We need to understand disability and the nature of disability before we understand recovery

The psychiatric disability is:

Easy to get hurt, confused, tired. So people who have a psychiatric condition need to be on guard not to get hurt, confused and tired. And, people who are assisting us need to understand not to have us become too hurt, confused, and tired. Both people with mental illness and people who work with us need to understand that we are human and mistakes can be made. There will be misunderstandings.

The psychiatric disability also means:

Easy to become disillusioned and discouraged

Mental Illness is an emotional disability

Those of us who have mental illness have become emotionally vulnerable

We as Psychiatric Rehab Practitioners and believers in Recovery need to believe in ourselves.

We can make a difference

We can improve the life of others

We can assist people gain clarity

We can help people get to sanity, stability, safety and sobriety

Those of us who work in mental health can also improve our lives

Those of us who work in mental health can get better

We are not just here to improve the life opportunities for others.

We can all get better by our time together.

Maybe then, after talking and think about recovery

Recovery could be defined as finding peace of mind

Here is a poem I wrote several years ago about Recovery

I hope you like it

In The Sand

Sun coming up,  
over Virginia Beach

Walking in the sand,  
with Jennifer Tripp

Conversations,  
turn to Recovery

I am mentally ill,  
I like to use,  
the term

I have a psychiatric condition

I don't know,  
if this is an illness

I don't know,  
if this is a disability

This is a psychiatric,

condition

Which is real

Which has left my brain,  
altered

Filled with fear

Unable to sleep at night

The start to Recovery,  
is understanding

This psychiatric condition is real

And

I got it

My brain is on fire

I have a brain fever

I have to rest

I have to sleep

When I start to see,  
the lack of sleep

Waking up,  
all night

Or

Several times,  
at night

I know this is it

Good Old Mental Illness,  
is back

To turn this around,  
this condition

I need a sleep routine

Go to sleep the same time

Wake up the same time

Stay away from television

Don't have any coffee,  
or soda pops

Even sugar can be stimulant

Every night go,  
to bed same time

Wake up same time

So, I can have,  
meaningful life

The next day

And, if I can't go to sleep,  
one night

I lay in bed and rest

I meditate

I don't cut any corners,  
with sleep and rest

With enough rest,  
I can go on the next day

I can be productive

I can have a meaningful life

My ability to be productive,  
and have a meaningful day

Might be very slow

Might be very limited

I accept myself,  
where I am

I love

What I can do

Even nothingness counts

Time to think

Time to reflect

Time to just look out a window

Lay in bed and rest counts

Salvation comes with,  
my peace of mind

I judge clearly what is making me happy

Everyone can have happiness

I will never have a lot of money

I can have happiness

Having a meaningful life,  
can mean happiness

I can be happy,  
without being productive

To gain happiness,  
I will need to have small,  
pools of productivity

Gaining happiness,  
with the misery that comes,  
from this psychiatric condition

Is also going to be work

There will be no,  
one to save me

I have to gain,  
my sanity back

Mental Illness,  
isn't like the movies

Mental Illness isn't romantic

I don't want this mental illness

I can turn into an attack dog,  
when my psychotic condition,  
kicks in

I am so high strung,  
I can't sleep

Start hearing voices,  
start talking to myself

Start fighting others

Without enough rest,  
I can not settle down

I have to take something,  
to cool out the mental illness

Medication and herbal teas

Calming hot baths

I have to take something

I have to do something

This psychiatric condition

Is so extreme

My head is so inflamed

I can't get through,

psychosis on my own

I need help

Because, I strike out and cause,  
damage

To myself and people around me

I need to learn

Sleep and rest,  
can stabilize me

Then

Learning how to watch,  
and transform my social interactions

Can give me a meaningful life

I need,  
to feel wanted and accepted

I need to learn

Who I am

I need to study and learn

My present behavior

I need to learn

My positive and negative parts

How can I,  
sand these corners,  
of conflict and disagreement,  
with other people

Conflict is a sign of misery,  
in myself

I need to learn about myself

I need to know others

I have to go back,  
to square one

Almost every day

That square is:

I am a person with mental illness,  
I am begging for mercy

I am begging for peace of mind,  
and comfort

I have to plan my life,  
around this mental illness

I need to live with my psychiatric condition

There are many of us out there

We need to learn this

What is our mental illness

How can we live with mental illness

We can not escape

Mental Illness is on top,  
of our bodies

In our heads

Every day

Then

Once we begin,  
to regain a meaningful life

What can we do

What can I do

To solidify recovery?

The only way,  
to gain stability, sanity and sobriety

That I know

Is either go to educational support,  
groups

Or do community service

Or do both

I have tried to just teach,  
educational support groups

This has worked for,  
periods of times

I also need to stay humble

Need to stay fresh

Need to start all over,  
just go back to groups

As participant not facilitator

Humility cuts resentments

Resentments can bring back,  
mental illness

Educational support groups,  
or community service

Group participation

Can RE connect me with,  
humanity

And happy friendships

My mental wellness is peace of mind,  
and happiness

Also, do other people agree

Do people around me,  
become happy to see me

Do they think,  
I have peace of mind,  
in my life

Community service is not,  
just me doing good for others

I am not here to help,  
other people

I am here to solidify my stability,  
my recovery

I will need care,  
and maintenance all my life

I will need self care  
and care from the mental health system

I will need peer support,  
and peer care

I will need educational care

I will need to be a learner,  
and start all over

With fresh thinking

I will need to pay attention,  
to my mind and body

So that I never fall,  
into the darkest passages

Of mental illness

I can never let the psychiatric condition

Overtake me

Destroy me

I need to discover and change,  
me

I need to believe

I can make changes

I can become a better person

Being a broken person,  
gives me the chance

To rebuild myself

To a position of stronger unity

Unity with my hopes,  
and realities for,  
peace of mind

Unity with others,  
for their opportunity,  
to get to know me

Unity so that I can love,  
and be loved again

I have a chance in life

To gain happiness

I got this this chance,  
because of my mental illness!

My name is Moe Armstrong

I am mentally ill

I need help and assistance in life

I am asking for help

I have been mentally ill a long time,  
I have suffered a lot

I have caused other people suffering

I have a chance to feel better

I have chance to become happy

I've had this psychiatric condition a long time

I will have this psychiatric condition a long time

I want to keep learning and improving

Mental illness devastated my life

I now have the chance to learn,  
social acceptance

I have the chance to discover,  
personal happiness

This chance

This opportunity

I might never have gained,  
without my mental illness

Losing myself to the despair,  
of mental illness

I now have the chance,  
to be a happier person

More secure in my happiness

More secure in my peace of mind

Than, ever before in my life

My name is Moe Armstrong

I am mentally ill

At times,  
I do need help

I have learned to continue on

Virginia Beach, Virginia

Prevention, Education and Outreach  
National Meeting

With Value/Options Mental Health Division

May 25, 2001