LIFE IN RECOVERY

PEOPLE RECOVERING FROM MENTAL ILLNESSES SAY IT FEELS LIKE:

- A great big sigh of relief
- Happiness and joy can be a part of your life again
- Accepting your feelings and illnesses is a way of respecting and helping others who are struggling
- Celebrating small victories
- Having energy to do things again
- A fog lifts from your mind and you can see the end of a thought
- Having your motivation back
- Freeing to realize that you don’t always have to engage with what is going on around you, because not everything really matters
- You’ve made it out of a dark forest
- Getting a piece of your old self and your life back
- Realizing that you aren’t as miserable as you were, but the same amount as everyone else
- You can let go of the small things and relax enough to live life
- Ups and downs
- A weight being lifted from your shoulders, your muscles loosen, and you can focus
- The more you face your illness, the easier it is to talk about it
- There is hope for your life
- Being alive again
- Your life and your goals are worth fighting for
- Your soul has been rejuvenated
- You can be satisfied with normal things
- Having a meaningful sense of your purpose and who you are outside of your mental illness

RECOVERY IS:

- A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live self-directed lives, and strive to reach their full potential
- Regaining losses and rebuilding relationships
- Trusting yourself
- Finding your place in the world
- Lifestyle changes
- Understanding what does and does not help you feel better
- Respect—feeling that you deserve it and are treated with it
- Something that takes time
- Incremental—with plenty of ups and downs
- Doing what you can to help others and helping yourself in the process
- Reclaiming your power
- Getting more of what is important to you

#mentalillnessfeelslike

Share what life in recovery from mental illness feels like for you in words, images or video by tagging your social media posts with #mentalillnessfeelslike.

Posts will be displayed at mentalhealthamerica.net/feelslike where you can also submit anonymously if you choose.

- Speak up about your own experiences
- Help others who may be struggling to explain what they are going through to figure out if they are showing signs of a mental illness
- Break down the discrimination and stigma surrounding mental illnesses
- Show others that they are not alone in their feelings and their symptoms

RECOVERY IS NOT:

- Instant
- A 12-step program, but they can help
- A one-size-fits-all solution
- Found in a pill, although medication does play a role in recovery for many people
- A destination that you arrive and stay at; it’s a continuous journey
- Easy—it requires hard work and dedication
- A cure

THE OTHER “R” WORDS ASSOCIATED WITH RECOVERY

RESPONSE
- is a term that service providers use to refer to improvement in your illness as a result of treatment

RESILIENCE
- is about adapting to stress and change in a way that helps you to become a stronger person over time

RELAPSE
- means that symptoms of a mental illness have returned and is part of the recovery process - there will be ups and downs

ROLES
- are about having a meaningful sense of your purpose and who you are outside of your mental illness
TIPS FOR TACKLING RECOVERY

Embrace the idea of change. Making lifestyle changes is difficult for everybody, but you will need to mentally prepare yourself for the fact that change is necessary (and worth it) in order to achieve recovery.

There is tremendous power in peer support. Peer support services put someone in your corner who has “been there, done that” and can help you find your own way through the recovery process. Some places you can find peer support are at your local MHA affiliate, community mental health centers, drop-in centers, and peer-run support groups.

Forgive yourself for failure. Recovery doesn’t happen overnight, and there are going to be days that are going to go really well, and other days that are going to be crappy. Having a crappy day, or showing signs of relapse or recurrence, doesn’t mean that you haven’t made any progress or that you should give up trying to get better. Be kind to yourself and keep fighting for the life you want.

Learn about all the resources available to you to support your recovery. Therapy and medication are the two most widely known treatment options, but recovery is about more than treatment. Other resources and services include: case management, supported employment, supported education, family supports, warmlines, peer support specialists and psychoeducation.

Think about who among your friends and family members you can turn to for support. The person or people you choose should care about you, believe in you and believe in your worth. Having someone you can call or meet up with if you are feeling lonely or starting to struggle can help you to feel better and stay accountable to yourself and your recovery goals.

Set yourself up for success by creating recovery plans that you are confident you can stick to. Try this exercise: Think about a change you want to make to help you reach a recovery goal. Now rate your confidence in your ability to make that change on a scale of 1 (not confident) to 10 (positive you can do it). If you aren’t confident at a level of 7 or higher, revise your plan. Start with smaller changes that you are sure you can make, and build up to tougher changes to reach your goals over time.