

SANE AUSTRALIA

SANE Australia Mental Health Meet-Up

Date: 11/03/2021

Topic: Recovery: Skillsets for greater resilience

Description: An empowering dialogue grounded in lived experience about the non-linear nature of recovery and skills in resilience.

Welcome everyone to today's Online Mental Health Meet-Up talking about Recovery: Skillsets for greater resilience This is a new peer support service we are trialling. Because of this, we really value your thoughts on how it goes, so we will send a link to a short survey at the end of this event for you to complete. While this survey is optional, it is a chance to provide feedback for us to improve our services. In case you might need to leave part way through the event, you can find the survey here now: https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW If you have any questions about this Chatwee website, please see our FAQ here: <https://www.sane.org/peer-support/online-mental-health-meet-up/chat-faqs> Tonight, peer support workers @TideisTurning and @Girasole will be facilitating a discussion around the topic of recovery and resilience. Whether you have lived experience of complex mental health issues, you care for someone who does, or both, these are important topics to talk about. In order to take steps towards recovery, developing skills in resilience is important as it helps us to deal with everyday challenges. When experiencing a mental health challenge, resilience can help us better get back to being able to function on a daily basis and participate in things that bring us joy and meaning. We'll be moving through a number of discussion questions tonight, and it's entirely up to you how much or how little you are comfortable with sharing. Some of the conversation may be heavy in nature as we talk about mental health struggles. @Jynx, who moderates on the SANE Forums, is working behind the scenes to ensure our safety. We're looking forward to creating a space where we can reflect and learn together, and we encourage your active participation with each other! Let's hopefully expand our understandings of recovery and our skillsets for resilience :slightly_smiling_face:

TideisTurning (PSW)

TideisTurning (PSW)

Eth

Girasole (Peer Worker)

We will be starting the discussion shortly, and will just allow a bit more time for people to log on and join

Hi TideisTurning

Hey @deer! Welcome :)

TideisTurning (PSW)

Hi @ Deer! :)

Eth

I am known as Eth on the forums. Just tried to edit my profile here unsuccessfully. Not sure how to do it but it would be good to be using the same name here. When I signed up last time I thought we had to use a different name.

Jynx (Moderator)

Hey @deer, I can change your name for you from my end - would you like it to be Eth?

Eth

Yes please @Jynx

Jynx (Moderator)

No worries

TideisTurning (PSW)

Welcome Everyone! Please introduce yourselves [anonymously] :)

Loco

Good afternoon hi everyone

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Hey @Loco! Welcome :)

Loco

How's your day been

I identify as having both bipolar1 and complex PTSD. I also have NDIS. For me it's been really helpful to find a model of recovery (definition) that works for me. I sent a link to one in the box for questions prior to this discussion. If it could be shared that would be great.

Eth

It's been nice thanks @Loco! How about you? :)

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Loco

Really relaxing day thanks

TideisTurning (PSW)

Alright, we'll get started now with or first question!

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Thank you for sharing a bit about yourself @Eth :heart:

TideisTurning (PSW)

What does recovery mean to you?

Learning to manage my symptoms and the functional effects of my disability and live the best life I can. Including being able to participate in community and have a sense of worth and purpose.

Eth

Hi Everyone, I had some technical issues getting in but here now. Recovery means doing what I want to live a fulfilling life within my means.

jem80

Having a sense of purpose and to be able to actively engage in the community and do some fun things

jem80

Recovery to me doesn't mean getting to a point where mental illness somehow magically no longer exists, but rather I've learned how to control symptoms to a point where I can cope with and function in daily life, and I can effectively prevent or manage distress. Recovery means I'm more able to live a meaningful life.

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Eth

Specifically, I don't think it has to mean cured as such.

Loco

It's hard for me to put in 2 Words what recovery means to me I spent 3 week admissions x 3 in a mental institution in the past 5 years due to my schizoaffective disorder and ADHD generalized anxiety it's about finding yourself again

Interesting, so there's a common theme I'm noticing about being able to have a sense of purpose and meaning, and to be able to experience life in a fulfilling way. But at the same time, recovery means different things to different people, and can look different from person to person :)

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Recovery can be non-linear- that is, we can experience setbacks when we feel like we've otherwise been making progress. Have you experienced this?

TideisTurning (PSW)

Yes I have had set backs and it's about the journey that happens when you take one step forward and two steps back and then one step forward again. I have had to learn patience.

jem80

Yes I have. I experienced a pretty major setback last year, after years of thinking I had things under control, and that was really upsetting to realise. But when I reflect, I know that I can struggle the most in new situations, and I'll probably come across new situations for the rest of my life! So it'd be helpful for me to anticipate that I can definitely struggle again, and that's okay. To me recovery is ongoing, not like a checkbox you can tick and move on from

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Absolutely, it's def not a straight line, there are many twists and turns and sometimes setbacks along the way.

Eth

I just got my Car back after 2 days (right now) - Several Thousand \$ it cost. So it's been stressful.

adge

That's no good @Adge. Life does throw us a curve ball at times.

Eth

Does seeing how common this is let you feel more gentle with yourself when thinking about experiencing setbacks, or reflecting on previous setbacks? How? :)

TideisTurning (PSW)

So it seems like for all of us, recovery is not a straight line!

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Yes setbacks occur, when experiences are overwhelming - When events are all at once, or beyond ability to cope.

adge

I would much prefer a Straight-Line Recovery - That would be far more predictable, more measurable.

adge

It helps yes but it's still hard to be gentle with myself with some setbacks. And hard not to be cranky when external stimuli that are out of my control trigger setbacks. And disappointed too.

Eth

I first started Therapy with a Psychologist, over 25 years ago.

adge

I'm pretty hard on myself when I have set backs as I strive for success which can be damaging. I have to learn not to be so self-critical when it should be a time of reflection and self care

jem80

It takes a lot of effort to recover when depression and anxiety is high. Trying to put in place skills learnt is not simple

Cestmoi

I have learned that my being self-critical over progress (not seeing any) - Makes me feel worse & self-defeated. So I try to think more Gentle, less self-critical thoughts about myself.

adge

That's really insightful @adge :)

TideisTurning (PSW)

Taking some time out when my anxiety is high is important, as long as I return after using some breathing or mindfulness; that is so hard to do at the time

Cestmoi

Eth

I agree @Cestmoi, especially when panic attacks happen. I have learned lots of techniques over the years (I'm 57) but it's really hard to apply them in those moments.

So it looks like it can be hard to be gentle with ourselves when we experience setbacks because we might have high hopes, expectations, or standards of ourselves. Or simply, it's just upsetting! But reflecting on how for most (if not all) people, recovery is indeed not a straight line, and also acknowledging that as @Adge said it can make ourselves feel even worse when we're critical of ourselves - hopefully we can start to think about being more gentle with ourselves :heart:

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Do you find that there are any obstacles that get the way of your recovery? These may be external (e.g. people, situations) or internal (e.g. hesitation to access mental health services). If yes, tell us about them

TideisTurning (PSW)

Thanks TideisTurning - Self-critical thoughts come from internalising what abusers/ perpetrators did to me, & how they treated me. I don't want to be Re-abusing myself or repeating it - by being so Self-critical.

adge

Feeling unsafe, whether when out or in my home is a big one.

Eth

Also any type of conflict happening near me.

Eth

Cestmoi

Yes @Eth being able to apply techniques in the moment is the struggle

Eth

Fear holds me back in lots of ways.

Obstacles to recovery is my physical health which has been a barrier in doing activities and engaging in the community. I have had to wait over 8 years before I could go to the gym or go on holidays which effected my mental health because I felt isolated and trapped as I couldn't do the things that I wanted to do and what others were doing. It took time to get my self esteem back up to try things. Having been tossed around different workers was a pain in mental health as I had to start over again with my story. I have now got a more stable mental health network

jem80

Hello everyone, it's different with me. My claim is that my alleged mental illness is not severe enough to warrant treatment. I am in a constant battle with Mental Health Authority to get them to justify their decision-making upon me. Sorry about this fact.

marc6x

:rolling_eyes:

Fear & anxiety can be major obstacles. Conflict is very triggering. Attitudes in society that seem patronising or that invoke Stigma towards people who have MI - Are huge obstacles.

adge

Yes it can be re-traumatising having to have disclosure with someone new e.g. therapist, support worker, even a friend.

Eth

Ok so it looks like there can be a broad range of obstacles that we can face in terms of our recoveries, and they can look fairly different between us!

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Do you have any ability to address/change these, either by yourself or with the support of others? Let's talk about this for a moment.

TideisTurning (PSW)

Eth

And it's especially hard when someone we thought was a primary support person turns out not to understand at all.

Some things can be changed but others simply have to be accepted as out of our control. This can be really hard to do. Sometimes all we can do is take a deep breath and ground in the present moment. Progressive de-sensitizing can be helpful (graded exposure) but sometimes it isn't appropriate. Reaching out and asking for support is sometimes helpful, if we reach out to the right person. Sometimes get it wrong but keep trying.

Eth

Cestmoi

It always starts with myself. Asking for help can be very hard at the time. There is so much going on internally. Need far more support to change these - I'm highly resilient (apparently), yet lacking in basic social networks & support. So need far more.

adge

I talk it over with family and I have personally researched into mental health clinicians to ensure that I decide who is part of my medical team, not someone else choosing for me. The royal commission into mental health has some damning recommendations to help provide supports to get over obstacles in the system.

jem80

It can sometimes feel like we need to manage everything by ourselves, but we can be better supported in our recoveries with support from other people. Has anyone provided important support for you in your own recovery? Who are they and what have they done for you? :)

TideisTurning (PSW)

adge

I just had long 2 hour meeting with HACC Regional Assessor this morning - To try to Submit Application for NDIS. My sister-in-law has been an amazing support throughout my NDIS journey in particular. And I have a wonderful psychologist for about 3 years now.

Eth

Eth

Having a good team of GP, psychologist and psychiatrist who communicate with each other has been invaluable for me.

Cestmoi

Empathy is number one for me. It is hard to ask that of others when anxiety turns to anger and lack of control. My immediate family, my medical team for both my physical and mental health. There have been services in the past which no longer exist that have been beneficial in my recovery. At the moment I sit in limbo because I don't qualify for the NDIS as I am too highly functional. Yet if I get sick tomorrow I would require those supports. I have my community groups which I engage in which help my self esteem and self confidence.

jem80

adge

My Psychologist is the only on-going support I have.

26aqua

I am doing it all on my own rn. I am trying to find support. Using services and counselling lines. Start a new psychologist in a few weeks, other than that, that is all the support I have. I have to rely on myself, and it is exhausting.

jem80

@26aqua I can relate to having to rely on yourself to find supports, it is exhausting. Unless you have prior knowledge about it, it is hard to find the information

If you don't have anyone who can support you now, remember that it can take a while to find supportive people and build positive relationships. Feeling isolated now doesn't mean that you'll always be isolated. It might be helpful to think about what qualities would make a good support person for you. What kinds of characteristics would you like to seek out in other people?

TideisTurning (PSW)

Best wishes for you with NDIS @Adge. @jem80 my disability is episodic and life-long and it was hard but eventually proved to NDIS and accepted. Wish the same for you. I had a disability advocate who also got me a legal aid solicitor and these people were hugely helpful too. Not meaning to harp on it but having it has really changed my life for the better. My support workers are really helpful too.

Eth

I may be considered too Functional to qualify for NDIS (I was told) - Despite having several major Physical illnesses, as well as Complex PTSD

adge

So it looks like professional forms of support and community services are valuable to our recoveries, as well as personal networks :)

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Cestmoi

Yes @ 26aqua, I also find it exhausting trying to get through a hard time, especially when others are not as approachable I guess that's part of what I'd like to see in recovery, having supportive relationships, being able to identify positive relationships in all aspects, work, home, friends, family..

26aqua

adge

I do not always agree with my Psychologist - Yet her heart is in the right place. She does show care & concern.

The person supporting me must be friendly, approachable and sincere. I like honesty as I don't want someone to give me the cotton ball opinion, I would rather know the truth. With the NDIS, I went to the tribunal but had to withdrawal as the evidence was not strong enough. I was told to try again in a year or two... No one would write damning reports it was too general. I like to have supportive relationships, however I am guarded due to my physical and mental health because a lot of the time no one understands until they make me ill.

jem80

It is not so simple to approach someone because most people are experiencing their own life experiences. I often end up feeling guilty because I didn't check-in on the person I am seeking help from. This often makes me hesitant

Cestmoi

I have to say that having medications that work well for me (after years of trying different things) is also a part of staying stable enough to make progress with my recovery journey.

Eth

It sounds like it's important for us to have a support person be sincere and honest; that a positive relationship is essential. I'd have to agree! I'd add caring and empathetic too :)

Girasole (Peer Worker)

TideisTurning (PSW)

And are there any characteristics you would not accept in a support person? What would they be?

Someone that doesn't listen. I hate going around in circles repeating myself. Someone that doesn't care or empathise the complexity of my situation. Someone that doesn't understand how mental health and physical health are intertwined.

jem80

Emelia8

Hi everyone. Finally managed to get on here. Just finding my way around and reading along.

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Absolutely @jem80 I was just about to say that, about how it important it is for someone to genuinely listen.

Someone judgmental, telling me about others they work with so I know they talk about me too, someone who doesn't respect my 'dignity of risk'.

Eth

Cestmoi
marc6x
adg
Eth
26aqua
Eth
TideisTurning (PSW)
marc6x
Girasole (Peer Worker)
jem80
Eth
TideisTurning (PSW)
26aqua
Eth
Cestmoi
26aqua
Zoe7

Not helpful is someone who turns the conversation on themselves and someone who offers all forms of advice instead of listening and working out what I can do, right now.

@Eth what do you mean by "dignity of risk"?

Most of my Trauma was caused by Males (I'm male) - So I have great difficulty in relating to other men. I experience them as harsh & judgmental (often). That said - I have a very Good Rapport with my GP, who is a man.

@marc6x basically the right we have to make our own choices, even if there is a degree of risk involved (different for everyone). Worth googling. I'll try to find a definition and share it here.

Someone who says "I don't understand what you're dealing with/going through" but doesn't take the time to find out what could be helpful in that situation ie flashbacks, disassociation, trauma response fight/flight/freeze

@marc6x <https://www.ausmed.com.au/cpd/articles/dignity-of-risk>

Describe how you think recovery might look like for you.

@Eth it's a great article

What's really important in terms of my own recovery is that I'm engaged with ongoing professional mental health support.

Recovery is a process that requires active, ongoing work

Recovery happens every day. It has it's ups and downs, but overall it's a safe and secure place. I will remain engaged with my medical team for both my physical and mental health. I will remain actively engaged in my community groups and activities, go to work, go to the gym, do hobbies like art and photography. Have plenty of cups of tea and go window shopping!

From my perspective with mental illness, recovery means gaining and retaining hope, understanding of ones abilities and disabilities, engagement in an active life, personal autonomy, social identity, meaning and purpose in life, and a positive sense of self.

What does resilience mean to you?

Recovery for me would look like supportive relationships (both ways), understanding my responses, utilising techniques to move past responses, feeling like I'm living life, being able to communicate boundaries positively and healthily without compromising my mh or morals

the ability to come back from set-backs

To me, resilience is having the internal resources to bounce back from adversity

Resilience to means to overcome set backs, to keep moving forward even when facing obstacles, to keep trying

The ability to tackle whatever comes our way - it is a process though and entails also knowing when to feel what we are feeling and allow ourselves time to get through things.

jem80

Resilience is about fighting the battle and striving forward. It's about ensuring that my rights are not trampled on and that I get a fair go and a fair say in my recovery journey. It's about finding out what works and if something doesn't work it goes in the bin and there are strategies created for when this occurs.

Resilience to me is an ability to get through a difficult mental health situation and come out on the other side, hopefully with some lessons learned along the way that can help me in future situations. Going through major negative mental health experiences, on reflection, helps me get through the next ones, because I'm able to say "I got through that situation in the past, I'm sure I can get through this too" :)

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Resilience = the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress—such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, or workplace and financial stressors.

Eth

Now that we've talked about what resilience means to us, do you have any skills that you've learned to develop your resilience? If so, what do they look like for you?

TideisTurning (PSW)

I love all those posts about resilience. And I forgot to say that being part of the SANE community is also a very important support in my life.

Eth

Allowing all our emotions to have a 'voice' so we can work our way through them. Resilience means being able to tackle all that comes our way - the good and the bad - and knowing that both need time to get through.

Zoe7

Avoiding certain situations and environments. Invoking my self care plan for when I have a bad day. Relaxing and resting and doing the things that I love. To be engaged with the community but also have quiet time for reflection and me time.

jem80

Eth

challenging self-talk is helpful, reaching out to effective support, practising self-care and mindfulness

Cestmoi

I have learnt that taking time out to think things out and to deal with my reactions, hopefully finding a better way forward

Zoe7

Self-care is number 1 for me.

Eth

Hi @Zoe7 me too

Zoe7

Hey Eth 👍

Eth

and part of it is remembering to practice boundaries that I've previously clarified for myself

Zoe7

Agree Eth.

Cestmoi

I build my resilience further when I can personally reflect on getting through something with having learnt from it

Eth

getting adequate sleep and eating healthy at least some of the time are helpful too

I've been trying to do a lot more self care. I find it hard and feel selfish, but I'm learning it helps to sort out the thoughts, I often go to my room with candles (scents seem to help be more present) and I write in my journal, try some mindfulness or look for support (helplines, support groups) I've been trying to include my kids in beach walks too and it helps

26aqua

Girasole (Peer Worker)

There are some great strategies that you're all doing! :) :heart:

TideisTurning (PSW)

adge

jem80

Eth

Eth

Cestmoi

We're nearly at the end of our time tonight, so in starting to wrap up, :arrow_right: Have you learned anything helpful from others' experiences here tonight that you might be able to apply in your own life? If yes, what did you learn?

Daily Breathing Meditations (including Mindfulness) & Yoga - Maintains & improves my Resilience.

taking time out

that resilience and recovery are different for each of us

there's no one right way

I learnt that self care is a good start through a challenging time

Tonight I learnt im in the centre of recovery, I'm learning and even though I feel like I haven't made progress, I can see from what

I've written I am trying, and that's all I can do, keep trying

26aqua

Girasole (Peer Worker)

I liked what @jem80 said about how avoiding certain situations or environments can be a strategy of resilience :)

Tonight's topic may have brought up some heavy feelings as we talked about setbacks and obstacles to recovery. Would some self-care be helpful for you after we finish? If so, what might you do?

TideisTurning (PSW)

marc6x

Cestmoi

jem80

@Eth dignity of risk - very important and great

Enjoy a cuppa

I am going to my cupboard and decide which yummy cup of tea that I am going to have :relieved:

I'll be signing up for an online thing for tomorrow morning about regeneration, both personal and for the earth, with a couple of elders leading a 'fire circle' on zoom.

Eth

I'm going to start a new book tonight, it's a self help and lots of positive reviews, ill have some candles and music too 💜 I've had a big day, I'm glad I came tonight- I needed it!

26aqua

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Candles and tea! Good ideas, I might do those myself :)

We'd like to invite you to complete a survey reflecting on your experience in this Online Mental Health Meet-Up. As we're trialling this service, we'd love to hear any feedback you may have. It will only take a few minutes to complete. Please click this link: https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW

TideisTurning (PSW)

Loco

Eth

Loco

adge

Kapiti bubble bath and some candles

then an early night so I'm fresh for the morning

A cup of tea bubble bath and some candles

I'm going to lie down, I'm exhausted - I came straight here from picking car up (dealership).

For anyone who'd like to read more, you can visit either of these sites <https://www.rethink.org/advice-and-information/living-with-mental-illness/treatment-and-support/recovery/> or <https://positivepsychology.com/resilience-skills/>

TideisTurning (PSW)

Eth

thanks to all for making this happen. a really positive discussion.

adge

I cooked Dinner while we were having this discussion - Multitasking is not my strong point...

jem80

thanks for the chat tonight

adge

Thanks everyone.

26aqua

Thank you, everyone. I had a really helpful experience here. Thanks for sharing your experiences.

Thank you so much everyone for sharing your thoughts an experiences! There was some really great discussion and ideas, and it's thanks to your contributions! :relaxed:

Girasole (Peer Worker)

Thank you for joining, and we hope you enjoyed the discussion. If you'd like to be informed when our next Online Mental Health Meet-Up will be taking place, you can sign up to our mailing list here <https://www.sane.org/peer-support/online-mental-health-meet-up>

TideisTurning (PSW)

Loco

Goodnight and thanks for tonight

adge

I'm pretty sure I'm already signed up for Mailing List for MH Meetups.