

Recovery

What does recovery involve?



At CMHA Toronto, we view recovery as vital to positive, high quality mental health care. Recovery is an ongoing journey of self-healing and transformation. It means living a full, self-directed life in the community, with or without the presence of symptoms. We see hope, self-determination, social inclusion and wellbeing as key to recovery. We respect that each individual's recovery is unique and we offer multiple options to support their needs.



What is mental health recovery?

The concept of recovery in mental health came to fruition in the early 1990s. People who had been through the mental health system found that building hope, talking with others who had been through something similar, and reclaiming one's identity from patient to active citizen were all crucial aspects of healing. Yet the mental health system at the time did not include these elements as part of treatment. Since then, mental health care has been on its own journey to shift towards recovery.



How does CMHA Toronto promote recovery?

CMHA Toronto offers the following recovery-oriented programs and services:

- **Social Resource Centres** – providing opportunities for peer support, skills development and leadership
- **Pathways to Recovery** – group support that fosters an individual's strengths, aspirations and goals
- **Advocacy workshops for service users** – providing opportunities for active citizenship through education and social action
- **Access to Peer Support Workers** – individuals who have lived experience of mental health challenges who draw on their experiences to provide support and inspire hope
- **Employment services** – assisting individuals in finding and maintaining meaningful work
- **Housing programs** – providing access to safe, affordable housing for individuals living with mental health challenges
- **Community support services and clinical teams** – promoting independence and improved quality of life for individuals living with mental health challenges



The Mental Health Commission of Canada (MHCC) advocates for recovery as a central practice for mental health services. In April 2014, the MHCC officially declared their commitment to fully implement recovery-oriented policies, programs, and practices. The declaration includes a comprehensive outline of what recovery means, as well as an opportunity for community members, service users, agencies and practitioners to also commit to the implementation of recovery principles within mental health services.

At CMHA Toronto, we recognize that it takes ongoing effort to shift towards a recovery orientation. We are committed to advancing recovery within our agency, and in the mental health system as a whole, through ongoing engagement and leadership in this area.

What does recovery involve?

Hope and Dignity

Having a sense of hope is the foundation for ongoing recovery from mental health challenges. Even the smallest belief that an individual can get better, and the recognition that individuals can have rich full lives beyond their mental health challenges, can fuel the recovery process. Early in the recovery process, it is possible for a service provider, friend, and/or family member to carry hope for an individual, but it is important for the individual to also develop and internalize their own sense of hope.

Empowerment

Empowerment is the belief that one has power and control in their life, including the ability to make decisions about their own mental health. Empowerment involves taking responsibility for yourself and advocating for yourself and others. Empowerment can also come from people who are supporting you. As individuals grow in their recovery journeys, they gain a greater sense of empowerment in their lives

Support / Treatment

Working on one's treatment plan is about making informed choices. Individuals can be engaged in a partnership with their service provider to determine their treatment plan, which can include many options such as supportive counselling, case management, peer support and medications.

Education / Knowledge

It is important to learn as much as possible about one's mental health, medications, recovery and treatment options and available resources. It's also important for individuals to learn about themselves, so they can make choices that help them live their best life. Individuals can educate themselves by speaking with health care professionals, attending workshops, reading articles, browsing the internet and participating in discussion groups.

Self-Help

Self-help can take many forms including learning to identify your mental health struggles and taking steps to address them, developing coping skills, attending support groups and developing a support system to rely on when necessary.

Spirituality

Spirituality is a broad concept with room for many perspectives. For many individuals, spirituality provides hope, comfort during difficult times, peace and understanding, and a source of social support. Some may find that their spiritual life involves a higher power or prayer while others seek meaning and comfort through nature or art. People's definition of spirituality may change throughout life.

Employment / Meaningful Activity

Often when we meet new people, they ask "what do you do?" What an individual does impacts their identity, and influences their confidence, self-esteem, social role and values. Employment/meaningful activity gives most individuals the opportunity to build a positive identity, including a sense of purpose and value.

Recovery Language

The words we use have an impact on our thinking and behaviour. The recovery model of mental health uses positive language, replacing clinical words such as "schizophrenic" with "person with lived experience", or labels such as "mentally ill" with "experiencing mental health challenges."