

HEALING-RECOVERY

Healing-recovery is more of a process in which we make progress than a final fix-it cure event.

BRIGHT TOMORROWS MOTTO:

“For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’”

—Jeremiah 29:11 NIV

DEFINITION:

Healing-recovery supports holistic well-being—mental, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual. It enables people to lead fulfilling lives even with ongoing symptoms. For chronic conditions, the term “recovery” often suggests being fully restored to prior health. “Healing-recovery” terminology suggests hope for a new normal—a life of new beginnings.

Pain cannot be ignored or wished away.

But underneath the clanging noise of the pain there is a deep wholeness that cannot be damaged by illness and disease, a wholeness that can be reinhabited if, just for a moment, we can willingly approach, precisely sense, and tenderly befriend the body that seems to be letting us down so badly.

— Professor Mark Williams

Professor of Psychology, Oxford University, UK

SUMMARY OF MOSES’ LIFE (Exodus 4:10-17)

- A “chosen leader” is typically someone with strong communication skills, charismatic self-confidence, and life experience, who is often admired by others.
- Moses led the Israelites despite his own lack of strong communication skills, charismatic self-confidence, and life experience as a leader. He was not a perfect hero but continued to grow and mature.
- Despite imperfections, Moses, for his meekness (not weakness), improved as a leader with God's guidance. His story illustrates the importance of personal growth through challenges.

- In the Bible, meekness is defined as a form of strength under control that involves humility, patience, and deliberate restraint. It's an active, rather than passive, virtue.

RELATING TO MOSES' LIFE

- Living with mental health challenges may make you feel incapable, unworthy, or unqualified due to changing moods and symptoms.
- Family and friends may feel helpless or unprepared to support loved ones facing mental health changes. Healing-recovery takes time.
- For people of faith, healing-recovery is an ongoing journey where one may find growth and resilience through their relationship with God.

Cure may occur without healing; healing may occur without cure.

The intent, then, is not to separate cure from healing; rather, it is to see them as complementary. There are distinctions (not separations!) between medical efforts toward cure and the spiritual pursuit of healing. The focus of cure is different from, but not contrary to, the focus on healing.

—Frederick Reklau

Partners in Care: Medicine and Ministry Together

- Although healing-recovery as a process may not guarantee a cure, it offers the opportunity to optimize and stabilize wellness, thereby enhancing holistic health.
- Holistic health improves when individuals balance physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects of life, instead of just addressing separate symptoms.
- Though challenging—learning, adapting, and becoming resilient helps everyone move forward together.

BROKENESS VS. WHOLENESS

Previously, I noted that words like “broken” can be stigmatizing, but I believe it’s possible to reframe “brokenness” to reflect both temporary physical challenges and lasting eternal truths.

Wellness encompasses body, mind, and spirit, as 1 Thessalonians 5:23 highlights. Although bipolar disorder affects my biology, my spiritual wholeness remains intact through faith in God, supported by verses such as Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 3:17-19, and Colossians 2:9-10.

The phrase “*Broken in body but whole in spirit*” helps me personally. I avoid using it in a self-stigmatizing way or as an excuse for not pursuing treatment and self-care.

AT THE POTTER’S HOUSE

(Jeremiah 18:1-4 NIV)

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.” So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

1. I am broken and wounded but not without hope; I still believe in bright tomorrows.
2. I am broken and wounded but not defeated; I will get back up and back up and back up again.
3. I am broken and wounded but not destroyed; pain will not define me or keep me down.
4. I am broken and wounded but not incurable; I am on the path of healing-recovery moving toward ultimate cure.
5. I am broken and wounded but not alone; I am loved and accepted and forgiven by God and significant others.

See: 2 Corinthians 4:7-10; 2 Corinthians 6:4-10; and 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

MENTAL HEALTH HEALING-RECOVERY is a strength-based, whole-health (holistic) process of change. It focuses on rebuilding self-worth and purpose, learning self-management tools for symptom relief, having lifegiving community support, and growing in a simple sense of safety in Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- **IF DIAGNOSED WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGE:** How does this definition of mental health healing-recovery differ or align with how you are currently addressing your mental health difficulties or disorder?
- **IF A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND DESIRING TO SUPPORT:** How does this definition of mental health healing-recovery differ or aligns with how your loved one is currently addressing their mental health difficulties or disorder?

MENTAL HEALTH HEALING-RECOVERY is a process of growth that takes time. This process does not usually come in the form of an overnight breakthrough or a cure; instead, it occurs on a continuum (e.g., a progression of growth and realized stability).

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- **IF DIAGNOSED WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGE:** How have you experienced mental health recovery as a process?
- **IF A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND DESIRING TO SUPPORT:** While supporting your loved one, how have you experienced mental health recovery as a process?

MENTAL HEALTH HEALING-RECOVERY encourages the experience of growth both personally and in our relationships with our loved ones.

- This approach allows individuals with diagnosis-related challenges to independently grow and adjust their roles as they become healthier and more stable, rather than depending solely on others.
 - E.g., you can share household responsibilities with family members, spouse, or serving a friend in need at church.
- This approach enables supporters to foster personal growth and modify their responsibilities as circumstances require, rather than viewing loved ones solely as dependents.
 - E.g., you can share household responsibilities with your loved ones and partner with others in supporting your loved ones, etc.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

- **IF DIAGNOSED WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGE:** Why do you think it is essential to grow into different roles rather than remain dependent on those closest to you?
- **IF A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND DESIRING TO SUPPORT:** Why do you think it is essential to see yourself in different roles rather than feeling like it is solely your responsibility to care for your loved one?

MENTAL HEALTH HEALING-RECOVERY CONTINUUM (i.e., a continuous sequence)

The following is a charting of sequence from (1) experiencing a mental health crisis that requires critical crisis care management; (2) into the healing-recovery process; and (3) onto the need to be aware of potential episodes of relapse.

An exact representation is not possible, nevertheless, the following is helpful for discussion and observation.

- The language **INDIVIDUAL** used below refers to those living with mental health challenges related to their mental illness diagnosis.
- The language **FAMILY** used below refers to those desiring to be supportive of those on their healing-recovery journey.
- The continuum below is displayed in **FIVE** segments. I've **JUXTAPOSED** the **INDIVIDUAL** and **FAMILY** experiences in a way meant to show how separately each grouping is being impacted at the same time.

SHOCK & AWE

INDIVIDUAL DISTRESS (*Chaos*) Symptoms feel out of control, and it seems like there is no way to move forward.

FAMILY DISTRESS (*Chaos*) Life feels out of control, and it seems like there is no way to move forward with your loved one.

HEALING-RECOVERY PROCESS

INDIVIDUAL STABILITY (*Hope*) Symptoms are challenging, and life is difficult, but there is stabilizing, renewed strength and hope.

FAMILY COPING (*Hope*) Life is still difficult, but you are helping your loved one to manage life with more responsibility.

INDIVIDUAL FUNCTION (*Resilience*) Symptoms are manageable, and you now have ongoing renewed strength and energy.

FAMILY PARTNERSHIP (*Resilience*) Your loved one can now manage on their own as you partner alongside them.

INDIVIDUAL PURPOSEFUL LIFE (*Renewal*) No longer as frequently driven by symptoms; your relationships are becoming healthier, and life has a God-given purpose.

FAMILY PURPOSEFUL LIFE (*Renewal*) Life has new meaning with your loved one as you experience renewal, a growth in resilience, and a God-given purpose.

RELAPSE

Relapses are the return or worsening of symptoms of a previously diagnosed mental disorder after a period of improvement or stability.¹

A relapse does not signify failure, but it is a common part of the recovery process that can provide valuable insights for your long-term wellness.

FIVE IMMEDIATE ACTIONS TO TAKE

1. Contact your mental health providers as soon as you notice relapse signs.

- Act quickly.
 - Delaying may make symptoms worse—seek help early.
- Be open.
 - Clearly describe your symptoms, duration, and triggers to your team.
- Treatment changes.
 - Your provider might adjust your medication or therapy schedule.

2. Stick to your relapse prevention plan as a guide—if you have one.²

- Check for warning signs.
 - Note your early relapse signals, such as mood or sleep changes.
- Use coping skills.
 - Apply techniques/tools that you've learned in therapy or from support group education for handling stress.
- Distract yourself.
 - If tempted by harmful behaviors, call a friend, walk, or do a puzzle.

3. Reconnect with your support system.

- Contact friends, family, or trusted members of your support network.
- Avoid isolating yourself; social withdrawal can signal relapses.
- Clearly share what you need so loved ones can help.
- Attend support group meetings to find encouragement and community.

4. Prioritize self-care.

- After a relapse, return to healthy habits as much as possible.
- Stick to the basics.
 - Get enough sleep, eat well, & exercise regularly—physical health affects your mind.
- Pay attention to your body.
 - Rest when you're tired and eat when hungry; neglecting self-care can increase anxiety and irritability.
- Avoid negative coping.
 - Stay away from alcohol or drugs, as these can worsen symptoms and risk further relapse.

5. Practice self-compassion.

- Feeling discouraged after a relapse is normal, but it does not erase your progress.
- Acknowledge your progress.
- View it as a learning opportunity.
 - Identify triggers or missed therapy sessions to improve your coping strategies.

- Take it one day at a time.
 - Focus on today instead of worrying about the future.

A TAKEAWAY ACTION CHALLENGE

● IF DIAGNOSED WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGE:

1. Continue to review where you and your spouse/family members are on the mental health recovery continuum.
2. Continue to pray and ask for wisdom as you grow through the process.
3. Recognize that this is growth towards resilience and life renewal, built on hope, grace, and faith.

● IF A FAMILY MEMBER OR FRIEND DESIRING TO SUPPORT:

1. Continue to review where you and your spouse/family members are on the mental health recovery continuum.
2. Continue to pray and ask for wisdom as you grow through the process.
3. Recognize that this is growth towards resilience and life renewal, built on hope, grace, and faith.

SOURCES, RESOURCES, AND ATTRIBUTIONS:

1. **GOOGLE:** Preventing Relapse of a Mental Illness: Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division
2. **GOOGLE:** How to Create a Relapse Prevention Plan to Maintain Your Recovery: GoodRx

GRACE ALLIANCE SOURCE ATTRIBUTION: Some material content adapted from materials created by Grace Alliance (Mental Health Grace Alliance) based in Waco, Texas. Joe Padilla, Co-founder, Executive Director & President of Mental Health Grace Alliance, gave permission by email. Details regarding this organization and its available resources can be located by conducting a Google search for “Mental Health Grace Alliance Resources.” This lesson adapts material from GA “Living Grace” workbook Chapter Twelve and “Family Grace” workbook Chapter Ten.