

# People like us!

**Powerful stories of hope from people who have recovered from mental health difficulties**



**Recovery**  
Self Help Method  
**Ireland**

## Introduction

The purpose of this booklet, is to give you HOPE about getting better and regaining your mental health.

In the following pages, you will read the true-life stories of people just like you who have battled with mental illness and got better!

Their stories are inspiring and we hope that you can relate to them.

The common theme of all the stories is that once each person started following the Recovery Method of Self Help, their lives improved. Not just in one area, but in all aspects of their lives.

When you start going to meetings, you will also hear the encouraging stories of other people, who are just like you.

## Reading this booklet

The best way to read this booklet is to skip to a section or story that interests you, and read that first.

Once you have read that, later on you can pick other sections that will help you get a better understanding about the Recovery Method of Self help.

Our HOPE that this booklet, will give you HOPE also!



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## 1. What is the Recovery Self Help Method?

The Recovery Self Help Method is a powerful way to help reduce distress caused by mental health problems and nervous symptoms.

It is a special form of cognitive behavioural training.

The Recovery method has already helped thousands of Irish people live more peaceful and productive lives.

The Recovery method can be used on its own, or at the same time as medication or psychological help.

Research has shown, that people who use the Recovery method use fewer tranquillisers, less medication in general, and need less psychological support.

## 2. About the Charity called, Recovery Self Help Method Ireland

Recovery Self Help Method Ireland is an official Irish charity that was established in Dublin in 1971. Our charity registration number is CHY7690.

We are the Irish branch of Recovery International, which was founded in 1937 at the University of Illinois, Psychiatric Institute, by one of its directors called Dr Abraham Low, who was a psychiatrist there.

The organisation is non-religious, and non-profit. It is run by members, for members.

We only offer training in our self help method. We do not offer advice on any medical, clinical or psychological therapy or treatment.

Each member is at all times expected to follow the advice of their own doctor or healthcare professional.

## 3. Personal stories

### Anger

#### • *Barbara's Story*

I was always angry. I couldn't get along with people unless they did things my way. At work I had daily headaches that increased as I was given new responsibilities. My headaches became worse and made me miss work frequently.

I was often in trouble at work and was then transferred to an office in another place. All of this was very hard on me. During this time I went to many doctors, none of who could find a physical problem. Group therapy didn't work for me either.

I had a husband, two children, and a full-time job. However, my marriage didn't work out, so my husband and I separated when our children were 8 and 11.

Several years later I met a psychiatrist who strongly urged me to attend Recovery meetings. That was my first step in getting well.

My boss noticed the improvement and encouraged me to keep trying. As I progressed, I was promoted and was eventually placed in charge of a team.

### Anxiety, Panic & Fear

#### • *Brian's story*

Before I learned the Recovery method I lived in an almost constant state of fear. I was afraid of making mistakes and even more afraid that someone might find out about mistakes I had already made.

I was also terrified of confrontation, because I was incapable of disagreeing with someone without

feeling extreme physical symptoms, churning in the stomach, racing pulse, my face feeling hot as if I was blushing all over.

I knew, of course that most of my fears were groundless, and even irrational, but this didn't help me to deal with them.

While in hospital I learned about Recovery and decided to join when I was discharged.

Today I have my own business and every day I do dozens of things that I couldn't have done before Recovery. I no longer dread every phone call, assuming it is going to be bad news.

Most of all I have learned that fear is merely a belief, and that feelings are not facts.

### Bipolar Disorder

#### • *Tommie's Story*

Motherhood aroused fears that I might harm or neglect my baby, and these fears persisted through four more children. I was on medication for years.

I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder after my children were grown, and I divorced my alcoholic husband.

Over the next few years, I was hospitalised, took various medications, and received shock treatments. During one of my "well" periods, I saw a Recovery Self Help Method demonstration. So, during my last hospital stay, I decided that I would attend Recovery meetings after my release. That was three years ago, and I'm still well.

My children have also benefited from Recovery. Each day is good for me, and I'm proud of myself.

## **Borderline Personality**

### **• *Jeanne's story***

After suddenly being told that I had borderline personality disorder, I felt confused, angry, and doubted I would ever get well. I had always believed I was essentially bad.

My instability was so great that I continually reacted to people and situations by using obnoxious words and behaviour. I couldn't maintain healthy relationships or follow through on commitments. I spent my days alternately crying, swearing, sleeping or making obnoxious phone calls.

My husband and two children didn't know how to help. Mental health professionals who met me doubted I could ever lead a healthy life.

I then began to go to Recovery meetings. Since then, I have gained greater balance in my life. I have continued learning how to practice these self-help techniques in my daily life.

## **Depression**

### **• *Shelia's story***

I was first put on medication at the age of twelve. I took my first overdose at thirteen. I was first admitted to a mental hospital at the age of fifteen and for the next 20 years I was in and out of mental hospitals suffering from depression, bulimia and panic attacks.

I took several overdoses during that time. At times I was locked away in padded cells because I harmed myself.

Hospitalisations, shock treatment and medication all worked for a short time but the only thing that worked for me in the long-term was my Recovery training and the meetings.

## **Eating disorder**

### **• *Jan's story***

During my early 20s, I developed an eating disorder. I was obsessed by food and my weight. I frequently thought about food and how to avoid it. I was convinced I was fat. I began to isolate myself from people and normal activities.

After 15 years of suffering, including shock treatments, psychiatrists, counsellors, psychologists, and two hospitalisations, I joined Overeaters Anonymous. While attending one of its sessions, I heard someone say, "If you want to improve your life, go to Recovery meetings." I began to attend a year later.

I've been in Recovery for five years now, and my life is much better. I'm no longer plagued by obsessive-compulsive disorder. I am happily married and working in a career I enjoy.

## **Insomnia**

### **• *Peggy's story***

I was the oldest of eight children and family problems contributed to a mental breakdown when I was 17. This resulted in psychotherapy and multiple hospitalisations. My main symptom was sleeplessness and I was so tired all the time, that I felt bone weary.

During one of my hospitalisations, I saw a Recovery Self Help Method book and started to read a chapter on insomnia every night at bedtime. During the second night, I fell asleep on the book, after years of insomnia!

There were additional discoveries, and they were wonderful. Through Recovery training, I learned to channel my anger and stop wanting to change people.

I also began to modify my thoughts and stop blaming myself (and others) for differences of opinion. In short, Recovery helped put my life into proper perspective.

## **Obsessive Thoughts**

### **• *Deborah's story***

Before using Recovery Self Help Method, I didn't have a life. My obsessive-compulsive disorder consumed many of my waking hours.

Now, simple things like getting out of my car are possible. Before, I took 45 minutes to feel secure enough to get out. I had to complete a ritual of checking and rechecking to ensure everything was shut. Then once inside my home, I would return to my car several times to check again, even if it was raining

Recovery has helped change my beliefs about my car, my body and myself. I continue to attend Recovery meetings and study the books. Sure, I still struggle daily with nervous symptoms and fearful thoughts, but Recovery has helped me where other programmes have failed.

## **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

### **• *Vicky's story***

During my early childhood I was abused. I was taken into care and placed with foster parents. This didn't work either, as they also abused me. Almost from the beginning of my life I learned to distrust authority figures.

I was diagnosed as a young adult with PTSD along with several other disorders and I ended up in hospital. I was very unwell. I had a husband and two children and this did not stop me from wanting to end my life.

Later on one time at home I was in terrible distress and my landlady offered me help. She was a group leader in Recovery. She coaxed me into going to my first meeting. The first thing I learned was there is no hopeless case. Helpless yes, hopeless never.

Recovery gave me the best thing in my life, my self-respect and tools to face my fears and courage to do what I had to do in spite of how angry or fearful I was. Recovery gave me LIFE.

### **Postnatal Depression**

#### **• Kim's Story**

I came to Recovery suffering from postnatal depression after the birth of my first baby. My joy at this beautiful baby turned to terror as I found myself in a perpetual state of anxiety.

The panic attacks began first thing in the morning and continued throughout the day. Perhaps one of the worst symptoms was the feeling of unreality. I felt that the whole world was out there with everyone in it and that I was on the outside looking in. My own body felt strange to me.

Finally I went to a doctor who referred me to a psychiatrist. On my first visit to the psychiatrist she insisted on me going into hospital. However, I only stayed five days. I scanned the notice board in the waiting room and a leaflet about Recovery caught my eye. I decided to join and went to a meeting in Clontarf.

If anyone then had told me that in a few short weeks I would be feeling seventy percent better, I would not have believed them. Not only was my depression to become a fading memory, but the 'tics' and 'twitches' that I had in my muscles since childhood were also to disappear.

### **Schizophrenia**

#### **• Celinda's story**

At age 28, I was diagnosed with schizophrenia. This had followed several hospitalisations, each after a suicide attempt. I had numerous shock treatments and medications. While in hospital, I was introduced to the Recovery Self Help Method.

At last, I had found a programme to help me while I had symptoms. I gradually changed my beliefs from "There is no hope for me" to "Who knows? I could be among those who get well."

From there, it was a long, slow climb. I took steps forward and backward, but after leaving the hospital, I never returned.

Strong symptoms of despair and gloomy thoughts still came frequently, but Recovery taught me to recognise them. As years have passed, these symptoms have diminished, partly because I no longer fear them.

Recovery has given me my life, and it has given me a philosophy to help me cope with everyday living. Today I continue to attend Recovery meetings because it's good insurance against setbacks.

## **What healthcare professionals say about the Recovery method**

### **Professor Ivor Browne**

Former Professor of Psychiatry, University College Dublin

"In my experience, practice of Recovery's self help techniques helps patients respond more quickly to treatment. This can lead to shorter and less frequent hospitalisations and less need for medication."

### **Professor Patricia Casey**

Department of Adult Psychiatry, Mater Hospital, Dublin.

"'Recovery' teaches coping skills to people who have experienced problems with their mental health. It is of particular benefit to patients who have fear, anxiety or physical symptoms with a psychological cause."

### **For more information and a list of meetings:**

#### **Recovery Self Help Method Ireland**

Bridge House  
Cherry Orchard Hospital  
Dublin 10

Tel: 01 62 60 775

Email: [info@recoveryireland.ie](mailto:info@recoveryireland.ie)

Web: [www.recoveryireland.ie](http://www.recoveryireland.ie)