

Recovery is a concept conceived by and for people with mental illness to describe their unique individual experiences and journey, and to affirm their identity beyond a diagnosis. This journey is not linear, it involves setbacks and successes, and happens at varying pace. Recovery is also living well despite any limitations due to illness, treatment, personal and/or environmental conditions (Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council, 2013a).

The most widely used definition of recovery comes from Anthony (1993). "...a deeply personal unique process of changing one's attitudes, values, feelings, goals, skills and/or roles. It is a way of living a satisfying, hopeful, and contributing life even with limitations caused by illness. Recovery involves the development of new meaning and purpose in one's life as one grows beyond the catastrophic effects of mental illness" (p. 527).

Recovery-oriented approaches offer a transformative model for practice, culture and service delivery in mental health service provision. Recovery-oriented approaches recognise the value of this lived experience and bring it together with the expertise, knowledge and skills of mental health practitioners. It challenges traditional notions of professional power and keeps the lived experience and insights of people with mental health issues and their families at the heart of a recovery-oriented culture.

The Australian Commission of Safety and Quality in Healthcare have embedded in the National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards recovery-orientated services in Standard 2: Partnering with Consumers. This Standard describes the systems and strategies for a person-centred health system including shared decision making with

consumers, partnerships with consumers in their own care, and the involvement of consumers in the development and design of quality health care (Australian Commission of Safety and Quality in Healthcare, 2022).

### **Principles of Recovery**

Recognising that persons' self-determination is a vital part of successful treatment and recovery. The principles of recovery emphasise choice and self-determination within medico-legal requirements and duty of care. Striking a balance between self-determination and duty of care requires an understanding of the complex and sometimes discriminatory nature of the goal of reducing all harmful risk. Services must manage various tensions including:

- maximising choice
- supporting positive risk-taking
- the dignity of risk
- medico-legal requirements
- duty of care
- promoting safety.

Maximising people's self-determination requires continued efforts to reduce coercion, seclusion and restraint.

### **The contribution of risk-taking to recovery**

Risk is an important clinical issue in the context of the move towards individuals having responsibility for, and control over, their own lives. What if the person chooses to do things which are a danger to themselves, and hence creates anxiety in the clinician? In a recovery-focused service, there is a clear separation of harmful risk and positive risk taking. The table over page presents definitions and examples as a guide to harmful risk and positive risk taking (Slade, 2009).

Harmful risk	Positive risk taking
<p>Behaviours which are illegal or not socially sanctioned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• homicidal and suicidal acts, anti-social and criminal behaviour (e.g. assault, aggressive begging and theft)</li> <li>• personal irresponsibility (such as out-of-character promiscuity or financial extravagance)</li> <li>• self-harming patterns of behaviour (e.g. violent partner choice or self-neglect)</li> <li>• relapse of mental illness.</li> </ul> <p>Harmful risk is to be avoided. Treatment goals focus on reducing these harmful risks.</p>	<p>Behaviours which involve the person taking on challenges leading to personal growth and development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing new interests, trying something you're not sure you can achieve</li> <li>• deciding to act differently in a relationship</li> <li>• developing and consolidating a positive identity.</li> </ul> <p>Positive risk taking is beneficial – even if it all goes wrong, the learning is valuable. Resilience is developed through trying and failing – we all learn from mistakes. Positive risk-taking – risk for a reason – is needed to meet many recovery goals.</p>

**A recovery-supporting approach to risk assessment and management**

1. Consumers understand that the risk assessment and management process is there to protect the professionals as well as the person.
2. The development of treatment goals should be done in collaboration with the person and carers to ensure safety of all is considered no just the safety of the professionals. This can be facilitated by including the recovery goals of the person.
3. A multidisciplinary team process allows for distributed responsibility for decision making rather than the anxiety being held by an individual worker.

*“A balanced approach values both minimising harmful risks and maximising creation of positive learning opportunities” (Slade, 2009, p. 170).*

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