

The Wellness Model: Supporting Whole Person Recovery

By Meghan Caughey, M.A., M.F.A.

First we had the **medical model** that said that we needed to be “fixed” and that the path to being “fixed” came from sources outside of us via remedies and treatments that were performed by clinicians upon us. The best that we could hope for was to have our “illness” be controlled, or go into remission, to be “maintained” rather than getting better. We could strive to be “higher functioning,” according to this medical model, but this was an elusive goal. The Medical Model sometimes helped persons on their path to recovery, but sometimes it also was a hindrance because it told us that the power for changing our lives laid outside of us, and therefore we frequently felt disempowered.

It was a great improvement when we claimed for ourselves the realities of **the Recovery Model** which posits that recovery is possible for every person. It says that we are all capable of leading a life that is meaningful and that this does not look the same from person to person, but is unique to individuals. Recovery does not necessarily follow a linear path of progression. It is created by each person out of her/his own potential and expresses that individual’s constellation of abilities, strengths, supports and choices for their own life. With the Recovery Model, we learned that the power of recovery lies within each of us. Although we often may make use of supports and kind assistance, we have the power to determine and choose the nature of our course. We are an important part of the of the web that makes up the community of all of those who journey on the path of recovery.

Now there is another level to consider: **the Wellness Model**.

The Wellness Model takes the Recovery Model one step further.

It says that 1.) It is our human birthright to recover and be well.

2.) It is our right to express and enjoy our recovery in our lives without suffering preventable diseases and without suffering premature death.

3.) We must have hope in the truth that we can enjoy lives that

are quality infused and characterized by longevity.

- 4.) We have the ability to make choices for our lives that support our greater health, safety, and well-being.
- 5.) We are inherently whole at the deepest of level of our being , and the path to wellness is the journey of discovering and expressing this wholeness.
- 6.) Our deep wholeness can be used as to guide us in making choices about what we need to be well. This intuitive sense is powerful when combined with information and all available resources to make informed choices for lifestyle development.
- 7.) A key to wellness is kindness, gentleness, and a non-judgmental stance toward self and others. We cannot push ourselves or other people into wellness. We can offer hope, and as Patricia Deegan said, “We can, with understanding, create conditions that potentially excite motivation.”
- 8.) Keys to success include having the intention to guide one’s life to express one’s potential while at the same time accepting one’s self and intentionally communicating positive expectations and acceptance for self and peers.

The Wellness Model believes that the 25 years of lost life for persons with severe mental health challenges served in the public health sector (NRI, NASMHPD) can be recovered. Mutual support and personal effort to develop wellness lifestyle changes, can thereby create a “**Culture of Wellness**” within the mental health community.

This change will become a reality as each of us commits her/himself to making small changes and larger changes-----every action counts!

Every time we encourage and support one another to make a choice for health or choose this for ourselves, we are helping create a paradigm shift. This means that we are molding the very fabric of our culture and of our world.

Most of us know of persons who have died too early. We need to turn this trend around. We all want high quality of living. It is worth acting for---it is for ourselves and for each other.

Every action counts. Nothing is insignificant.

This transformation is for our very survival.

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