



Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA):

10 Guiding Principles of Recovery¹

Working Definition of Recovery:

A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.

Through the Recovery Support Strategic Initiative, SAMHSA has also delineated four major dimensions that support a life in recovery:

- **Health:** overcoming or managing one's disease(s) as well as living in a physically and emotionally healthy way;
- **Home:** a stable and safe place to live;
- **Purpose:** meaningful daily activities, such as a job, school, volunteerism, family caretaking, or creative endeavors, and the independence, income and resources to participate in society; and
- **Community:** relationships and social networks that provide support, friendship, love, and hope.

Guiding Principles of Recovery

1. **Recovery emerges from hope:** The belief that recovery is real provides the essential and motivating message of a better future – that people can and do overcome the internal and external challenges, barriers, and obstacles that confront them.
2. **Recovery is person-driven:** Self-determination and self-direction are the foundations for recovery as individuals define their own life goals and design their unique path(s).
3. **Recovery occurs via many pathways:** Individuals are unique with distinct needs, strengths, preferences, goals, culture, and background - including trauma experiences - that affect and determine their pathway(s) to recovery.
4. **Recovery is holistic:** Recovery encompasses an individual's whole life, including mind, body, spirit, and community. The array of services and supports available should be integrated and coordinated.
5. **Recovery is supported by peers and allies:** Mutual support and mutual aid groups, including the sharing of experiential knowledge and skills, as well as social learning, play an invaluable role in recovery
6. **Recovery is supported through relationship and social networks:** An important factor in the recovery process is the presence and involvement of people who believe in the person's ability

¹ Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), "SAMHSA announces a working definition of 'recovery' from mental disorders and substance use disorders," *News Releases*, December 22, 2011: <http://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/advisories/1112223420.aspx>.



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to recover; who offer hope, support, and encouragement; and who also suggest strategies and resources for change.

7. **Recovery is culturally-based and influenced:** Culture and cultural background in all of its diverse representations, including values, traditions, and beliefs are keys in determining a person's journey and unique pathway to recovery.
8. **Recovery is supported by addressing trauma:** Services and supports should be trauma-informed to foster safety (physical and emotional) and trust, as well as promote choice, empowerment, and collaboration.
9. **Recovery involves individual, family, and community strengths and responsibility:** Individuals, families, and communities have strengths and resources that serve as a foundation for recovery.
10. **Recovery is based on respect:** Community, systems, and societal acceptance and appreciation for people affected by mental health and substance use problems – including protecting their rights and eliminating discrimination – are crucial in achieving recovery.