

At each stage in the recovery process there is a danger that the person may get stuck at that stage and not be able to move on with their life.

Session 3

Five Stages in the Recovery Process: Dangers

explores the possible dangers at each stage and what often happens that is unhelpful or even harmful and prevents people from moving on with their lives.

Five Stages in the Recovery Process: Dangers

At each stage of the recovery process there are dangers. At each stage there is a major question that a person must answer or a major decision that a person must make. We always have “things” influencing our decisions. Internally, there are pressures on the individual to answer this question negatively. Externally, there are pressures on the individual to answer this question negatively. When the internal and external pressures become overwhelming it often causes a person to get stuck or side tracked on the journey. The following are examples of the internal and external pressure.

Impact of Illness: Question of Identity — How will I define myself on the other side of being diagnosed?

Internally — the person experiences loss, sense of failure, etc. causing them to question their ability and sees themselves as their diagnosis.

Externally — others see the person as “once broken, always broken”, will not be able to function again

Life is Limited: Question of Possibility — How will I relate to possibilities when I have redefined myself as “mentally ill”?

Internally — the person sees self as having a behavioral health disorder and unable to do very much

Externally — others see the person as “disabled” and will not be able to do for themselves

Change is Possible: Question of Risk — How will I relate to the need to risk if I am going to change?

Internally — the person is afraid of a return to symptoms and feels safe where they are

Externally — others tell the person that they finally have symptoms stabilized, don't rock the boat

Commitment to Change: Question of Support — How will I get the supports that I need?

Internally — the person is facing a new experience, doesn't know what kind of support they need

Externally — others don't believe the person should do it, so won't support them

Actions for Change: Question of Responsibility — Will I be able to take on the necessary responsibilities?

Internally — the person senses that they will have to take on more responsibilities, not sure they can

Externally — don't believe the person knows what is best for them, will need the system to take care of them

The Question of Identity... When I have experienced the symptoms of behavioral health disorder and have been diagnosed, how am I going to relate to this in terms of defining who I am and what I am able to do?

Impact of Illness is the time from the initial onset of symptoms through the time of diagnosis. When a person is experiencing intense emotional distress due to the symptoms of the illness; or is experiencing being diagnosed with a behavioral health disorder, they are oftentimes overwhelmed by it all and it changes the way they see themselves. The danger is that they will take on a new identity and begin to re-define themselves in “behavioral health terminology.” This *re-defining of their identity* automatically limits their belief as to what they can and will be able to do. They begin to see themselves as the illness, and, therefore, see themselves as unable to do most of the things they would like to do. They give up their hopes, dreams and expectations.

People often give up or reduce their hopes, dreams and expectations after being diagnosed with a behavioral health disorder. They often redefine themselves in behavioral health terminology that reduces their sense of possibilities.

Question of Identity — How will I define myself on the other side of being diagnosed?

Internally — the person experiences loss, sense of failure, etc. causing them to question their ability

Externally — others see the person as “once broken. always broken”, will not be able to function again

Give 3-5 examples of internal threats that cause a question of identity.

_Give 3-5 examples of what other people sometimes do that increases the danger.

The Question of Possibility... How will I relate to any sense of possibility once I have re-defined myself as “mentally ill”?

Life is Limited is that time when a person has resigned themselves to a life without possibility of anything ever changing. They believe that their life is limited in ways that are not necessarily true because of the diagnosis and gets 'stuck' in the behavioral health system for years. They may not believe that they can work, continue their education, live on their own, or do other things that would bring a sense of meaning and purpose to their life. They often resign themselves to a limited life of "being on benefits and going to program." The danger is that they will refuse to acknowledge that there is anything they can do that will make a difference in their life.

People often live for years in the behavioral health system without seeing any possibility for having a different life. They seem to always be able to find excuses for not moving on with their lives.

Question of Possibility — How will I relate to possibilities when I have redefined myself as “ill”?

Internally — the person sees self as “ill” and unable to do very much

Externally — others see the person as “disabled” and will not be able to do for themselves

Give 3-5 examples of internal threats that would cause the question of possibility.

Give 3-5 examples of what other people sometimes do that increases the danger.

The Question of Risk: When I sense that there is something I can do that may help me improve the quality of my life, how am I going to relate to the risks that might be involved in making that change?

Change is Possible is the time when a person has accepted or resigned themselves to a life without the possibility of change. They see their life as limited in ways that may not necessarily be the result of behavioral health, and they believe that there is nothing they can do about it. They may have been stuck in the behavioral health system for years. Something happens that causes them to see that their life can be more than they thought it could be. The danger is that when they see that they will need to take some risks and move out of their “comfort zone”, they begin to question their ability to do this.

People are beginning to see things they could do - I could... I could... I could... But they never do any of them. They find ways to talk themselves out of doing what they say that they want to do.

Question of Risk — How will I relate to the need to risk if I am going to change?

Internally — the person is afraid of a return to symptoms and feels safe where they are

Externally — others tell the person that they finally have symptoms stabilized, don't rock the boat

Give 3-5 examples of internal threats that causes questions of risk.

Give 3- 5 examples of what other people sometimes do that increases danger.

The Question of Support: When I decide to take risks, how am I going to get the supports that I need to be successful?

Commitment to Change is the time when a person decides to take a risk and move out of their comfort zone. Often this involves taking small steps that don't necessarily “move toward a goal”, but do break the pattern of doing nothing. The danger is that a person will not know all of the supports they will need to be successful, move out too quickly, not succeed and retreat back into their comfort zone within the system

People often do not know what supports are needed or do not get the support from others that they feel they need.

Question of Support — How will I get the support that I need?

Internally — the person is facing a new experience, doesn't know what kind of support they need

Externally — others don't believe the person should do it, so won't support them

What is going on with the individual that would cause the question of support?

What do other people sometimes do that increases danger?

The Question of Responsibility: When I decide to make a major change in my life, how am I going to relate to having to rely more and more on my own decision-making ability and less and less on the system?

Actions for Change is the time when a person decides to make a major change in their life. Oftentimes this involves creating relationships and getting involved in activities outside of the behavioral health system. As they move more of their life outside of the behavioral health system, they have to take more and more responsibility for their own decisions. The danger is that they will begin to doubt their own decision-making abilities and their ability to function on their own. Then they may decide they cannot function without the supports of the behavioral health system and revert back to a life lived within the confines of the behavioral health system.

People oftentimes begin to seriously question their ability to make major changes that involve creating relationships and getting involved in activities outside of the behavioral health system.

Question of Responsibility — Will I be able to take on the necessary responsibilities?

Internally — the person senses that they will have to take on more responsibilities, not sure they can

Externally — don't believe the person knows what is best for themselves, will need the system to take care of them

Give 3-5 examples of what is going on with the individual that would cause the question of responsibility.

Give 3-5 examples of what do other people sometimes do that increases danger.

Session 3—Review Questions -- Five Stages in the Recovery Process: Dangers

1. What is the danger in the Impact of Illness stage?
2. What is the danger in the Life is Limited stage?
3. What is the danger in the Change is Possible stage?
4. What is the danger in the Commitment to Change stage?
5. What is the danger in the Actions for Change stage?