

The Wellness Model: Supporting Whole-Person Recovery **By Meghan Caughey, M.A., M.F.A.**

According to the **Medical Model**, we needed to be “fixed”; and the way to be “fixed” was via the actions of clinicians upon us. The best that we could hope for was to have our “illness” controlled or go into remission, to be “maintained” rather than recovering.

We could strive to be “higher functioning,” but this was an elusive goal. The medical model sometimes helped persons on their path to recovery; but sometimes it was a hindrance because it told us that the power for changing our lives lay outside of us. Therefore, we frequently felt disempowered.

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

Now we have the **Wellness Model**, which takes the Recovery Model one step further. According to the Wellness Model:

1. It is our human birthright to recover and be well.
2. It is our right to express and enjoy our recovery without suffering preventable diseases and premature death.
3. We must have hope, believing in the truth that we can enjoy long, meaningful lives.
4. We have the ability to make choices 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 guide us in making choices about what we need to be well. This intuitive sense is powerful when combined with all of the available resources and information to help us make informed choices.
7. Keys to wellness are 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 working to express one’s potential while accepting one’s self and communicating positive expectations and acceptance for self and peers.

According to the Wellness Model, clients of the public mental health system do not have to die 25 years before their time (NRI, NASMHPD). Mutual support and personal efforts to develop wellness lifestyle changes can 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 our world.

Most of us know of persons who have died too early. We need to turn this trend around. We all want a meaningful, satisfying and happy life. 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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