Making recovery visible

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• NZ’ers as a population have some of the higher drug use rates in the developed world
• Most people can use AOD without it becoming problematic
• Some people can’t
• Some will seek help
• Some won’t
Research tells us...

“Individuals who are actively using substances and even individuals in remission from substance misuse are still targets of significant stigma and social distancing”

(Phillips & Shaw 2013)

Stigma

The association of negative characteristics to an individual or group based on behaviours that are seen as being outside the social norms
The power of perception

• We hear/see a lot in the media about addiction and about certain substances
• Uses stigmatising language
• Shapes public perception
• Creates disconnection & social distance
• Jail seen as a solution
• People less likely to seek help
Phillips & Shaw (2013)

“Individuals who are actively using substances and even individuals in remission from substance misuse are still targets of stigma and social distancing”

Public perceptions of addicts

• Addiction more stigmatised than smoking
• And obesity
• And people with mental health issues
• That includes people in recovery

(Phillips & Shaw)
Recovery

“A process of change through which people improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, connect with others and aspire to reach their full potential.”

Recovery is defined by the person themselves. And there are multiple pathways to recovery.

Generating recovery capital

- Connection with others
- Belonging to groups is good for you
- Social network change
- Identity change
- Community re-engagement
- This means reintegration models & challenging shame & stigma

(David Best 2016)
My ‘visible’ role

• Supporting those in dedicated consumer and peer positions
• Growing and developing a career pathway
• Encouraging visibility
• Support in the workplace for those with lived experience
Story telling

• From the beginning of time we have used stories to understand our experiences, share wisdom, and build connection. Stories are a part of our lives for a simple reason – we are biologically hardwired for storytelling.

• This is why when something difficult happens, our first thought is, “What’s the story?”

(Brene Brown)

MRCLG ‘stories’ project

• Making recovery visible
• Acknowledging diversity of recovery paths
• Connecting people - reducing stigma
• Completed scoping - December 2015
• Gathered stories
• Developed the book
Recovery Stories

12 stories

Uptake by the sector

5000 printed July 2016
Launched July 2016
5000 distributed
Reprinted 5000 September

"I haven't lost being my own person, which seems to be the thing that people say they will lose when contemplating doing any sort of treatment."

"I spent about a year thinking I had it sorted—working part-time, under the table of course and spending my wage and benefit on my drug of choice. Inside I was dying."

Order copies of Real people share their recovery stories online
www.matuaraki.org.nz/recoverystories
Making recovery visible

- Recovery stories ‘keynote’ at Cutting Edge
- Story in Matua Raki Newsletter
- Story in the DAPAANZ Newsletter
- Stories at CEP Day
- Story at Consumer & Peer Days
- Stories gathered and available at CADS AK
- Stories at mutual aid groups in the community
- Stories in ‘Living Sober’ website

Asian translations coming soon
Supporting the story telling

- Keep it contextual
- Keep it simple
- Keep it recovery focused - from the heart
- Share from the scar, not from the wound
- Media will want the using story - the drama - the ‘other’
Practice based evidence

“Maybe stories are just data with a soul.”
(Brene Brown)

Connection

“The first essential factors for a person to be able to recover are hope and a sense of belonging”
(David Best. 2015)
References

• Lindsay A. Phillips & Atherine Shaw (2013) Substance use more stigmatised than smoking and obesity, Journal of Substance Use, 18:4, 247-243, DOI


Connection

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Addiction

• *Addiction does not discriminate*
• People do. Systems do. Cultures do.
• Internally & externally
• Stigma feeds shame and can prevent people and/or their families from seeking help and/or believing recovery is possible