

# WE RECOVER TOGETHER

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A simple 3 step program of ongoing family/CSO support that helps maintain long term recovery AFTER treatment for substance use and mental health disorders.

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**CRAFTCONNECT**  
Mindful Family Support

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## **CRAFT Connect Introduction**

CRAFT Connect is a respectful, loving, non-confrontational, collaborate set of skills and principals that families/CSOs can use to support their loved with a behavioral health disorder make choices that lead to progress and healing for everyone. Curated from evidence-based CRAFT (Community Reinforcement and Family Training), Mindfulness, Peer Support, Wellness, Motivational Interviewing and DBT (Dialectical Behavioral Therapy).

Since 2013 we have had the weekly privilege of helping 100s of families encourage their loved one with a substance use or mental health disorder to:

- Get into treatment,
- Stay in treatment, and
- Maintain long term recovery after treatment.

We are grateful to our “recovery thought leaders” particularly Dr. Robert J. Meyers the creator of CRAFT, Dr. Kevin McCauley, Dr. Jeffery Foote the Center for Motivation and Change, Dr. Marsha Linehan the creator of DBT and Eric Schmidt CEO of New Roads Behavioral Health. CRAFT Connect would not be possible without their influence and our friends at USARA, Self-Reliance Services, NAMI, Family Services and the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation.

The 1,000s we have met in halfway houses, community centers, and churches in person and on Zoom while facilitating 100s of support group meetings have been our mentors and become our heroes. Thank you all for sharing your lives with us.

Remember we all recover together,

Kristin & John Garbett  
Founding Partners, CRAFT Connect Family Support

## OUR MISSION

Recovery is not about getting rid of mental health or substance use problems but seeing beyond them, recognizing and fostering abilities, interests and dreams. Recovery is looking beyond limits, real and imagined, and helping people become their “best self”. CRAFT Connect accomplishes this mission through a network of Partners that includes private agencies and non-profit Recovery Community Organizations.

### Hope

Hope is the foundation of change and recovery. Hope is the belief that the challenges and conditions associated with substance use and mental health disorders can be overcome. Hope is a powerful force to help maintain motivation. We offer hope for a fresh start for struggling family/CSO members who can all have a “life worth living”. CRAFT Connects’ evidence-based skills and strategies have helped families/CSO find hope again as they identify and capitalize on opportunities to bring about ongoing intentional, incremental change.

### Recovery is about “connection”

“Clinical” recovery involves diagnosis, objective measures of symptom management and remission, and psychosocial functioning, as rated by behavioral health professionals.

“Personal” recovery is an ongoing, lifelong, and highly subjective process. Key concepts in the recovery process include personal responsibility, self-advocacy, wellness, empowerment, self-determination and acceptance. Being supported by others, “Relational” recovery, is critical for those trying to live interdependently in the community.

Our relationships and how happy we are in them has a powerful influence on our physical and mental health. Connecting with friends, family and community is an indication that someone has returned to basic functioning and underlines the importance of social relationships in recovery. The importance of the family/CSOs connection is a recurring recovery and wellness topic that is not being used to its greatest capacity in ongoing recovery from chronic behavioral health conditions.

### A promising pathway

“Family/CSO engagement and involvement in recovery offers a promising pathway toward better-quality health care, more-efficient care, and improved health for those with behavioral health disorders. The way forward lies in developing, promoting and implementing approaches that properly acknowledge the irreducibly relational nature or “connectedness” of recovery.”

Excerpt, “Engaging families in recovery of their loved one from substance use and or mental health disorders” presentation. *John Garbett, NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals, Annual Conference (2021).*

## A strategic shift

CRAFT Connect advocates for a strategic shift from the traditional model of behavioral health related family/CSO care where:

- Trained professionals make all the decisions and are expected to ‘fix’ clients.
- Experts give family/CSOs advice about what to do.
- Family/CSOs are viewed as source of the problem or obstacles to recovery.
- The family/CSO client relationship has a narrow focus in treatment and recovery.
- Formal systems, independent of family/CSO networks, are built to support clients’ success
- A western “rugged individual” worldview underpins many conceptualizations of recovery.

To “The Pyramid of Family Care” that incorporates family support services into everyday behavioral health practice. The Pyramid’s foundational principle is ‘minimal sufficiency’, or do what is *needed*. It is within the scope and competence of generalist substance use and mental health service front line workers like CRAFT Connect peer coaches to assess, engage, and address the basic needs of most family/CSOs.

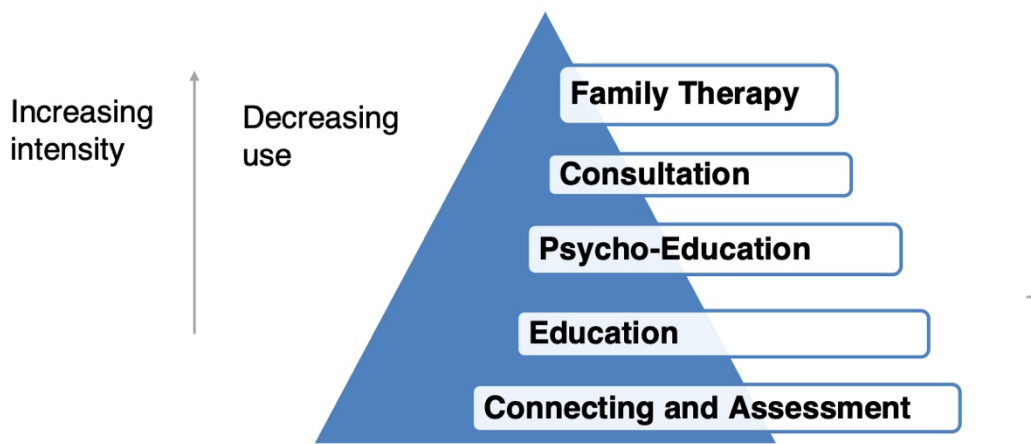
CRAFT Connect meets the Pyramid’s Connecting and Assessment, Education, Psycho-Education and Consultation tiers (see diagram that follows) by offering:

- “Unilateral family/CSOs therapy” not involving struggling loved ones,
- Support groups,
- Skills training, and
- Peer coaching.

The intensity of intervention increases as you move up the Pyramid, while the number of family members and CSOs who are likely to require the intervention decreases. If families/CSOs have their basic support needs met in these first four tiers, then only 20-25% will require more specialized, more expensive fifth tier interventions such as family therapy. The five-tier Pyramid of Family Care is used as a framework for behavioral health interventions in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and many other governments around world.

# MHCC Pyramid of Family Care

(Mottaghypour, 2005; MHCC 2013)



All front line workers should be offering the first two levels of care to their clients' families (minimum standard of care).

"Working with families of patients with severe mental illness has proven to be effective in reducing the relapse rate for patients and the distress level of families. However, there is no general framework available for adult mental health professionals on incorporating family work in their everyday practice. The Pyramid of Family Care discussed in this paper is based on the same conceptual work as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The bottom levels include the family's basic needs for information about the illness and orientation to the mental health service. This contrasts with the top level which represents complex needs for interventions such as intensive family therapy. This paper will expand on this model of family care. The different levels of the Pyramid will be discussed and a minimum level of care defined."

Abstract, "The Pyramid of Family Care: A framework for family involvement with adult mental health services". *Yasaman Mottaghypour, Psychiatric Department, Shahid Beheshti Medical University, Tehran, Iran and Annemaree Bickerton, Division of Mental Health, Sutherland Hospital, Sydney, Australia (2005)*

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The importance of the family/CSOs connection is a recurring recovery and wellness topic that is not being used to its greatest capacity in on going recovery from chronic behavioral health conditions. The We Recover Together program is designed to help those with substance use or mental health disorders and their family/CSOs recover together AFTER treatment. It has three simple steps -- Self-Assessment, Engagement, Weekly Recovery Meetings

We Recover Together acknowledges that those with a disorder are at the center of all recovery related decisions and are accountable for updating family/CSOs on their recovery. The program reframes and energizes family/CSOs groups into a “recovery partnership” that leads to healing for everyone. It’s easy to follow online curriculum is designed to be used in a self-directed group setting that can start before treatment ends and be implemented after graduation or discharge.

### Goals

- #1: Maintain behavior change by helping prevent relapse and consolidating gains secured during treatment.
- #2: Improve family/CSOs relationships by creating a safe space for members to hold themselves and one another accountable.
- #3: Enhances family/CSOs happiness and functioning by offering love, companionship and a continuity of relationships with a positive history.

### Objectives

- Practice living life *with* disorders, rather than struggling *against* the disorders.
- Break the “nagging, pleading, threatening” family/CSOs cycle of recovery maintenance by providing increasing levels of independence and responsibility.
- Make recovery feel doable by treating it as a continual process of improvement -- progress not perfection – that can be positively managed. Reinforces the importance of making and keeping daily commitments.
- Encourage those with a disorder to develop and follow through on their recovery plan returning to full functioning incrementally and safely, and as quickly as possible after treatment. Family/CSOs suppling information that helps refine plans.
- Learn about ongoing needs and how family/CSOs can respond in helpful ways to meet them e.g., financial, housing, transportation, etc.
- Develop a family/CSOs “partnership” that addresses recovery related issues in an open, collaborative and caring manner. Communicating about warning signs and triggers for slips, lapses and relapse.
- Helping people help themselves by gaining practical skills needed to stay in recovery and have a “life worth living”.

## **YOU CAN DO THIS!**

The We Recover Together program augments any recovery method, existing inpatient or outpatient treatment programs, community-based organizations or family/CSOs recovery efforts.

We Recover Together is a ready to go “off-the-shelf” scalable program with an easy-to-follow online curriculum that is constantly updated

If a family/CSOs group gets “stuck” at any point in the program, a CRAFT Connect Coach is available to help them get “unstuck.” Message [info@craftconnectfs.com](mailto:info@craftconnectfs.com) whenever you need help.

Monthly in-service training experience for all family/CSOs groups.

The only requirement for program participants is internet access and a desire to support recover together.

### **Fills the post treatment “gap” with on-going support**

“The first year of recovery is all about risk management.”, Dr. Kevin McCauley. We Recover Together helps fills the “gap” that often occurs between the structure of treatment and a return to daily functioning. It also broadens the focus of recovery from the person who is suffering with a disorder to include meeting the needs of their family/CSOs. Collaborative and practical, We Recover Together is focused on behavior change and uses a well-researched group learning process that has been proven to help overcome the resistance to change.

### **Integrate recovery skills into daily life**

Trying new skills within real-world situations while getting support from family/CSOs helps everyone reflect on their recovery and make sense of how things are going. Online or in person groups help to integrate skills into daily life and generalize and increase the frequency of their use. Well supported scientific evidence shows that studying with others makes a big difference in our learning.

### **Connect family/CSOs on Zoom**

Online platforms like Zoom make it possible to connect with family/CSOs members no matter where they live in the world. Well supported scientific evidence shows that studying with others makes a big difference in our learning. Trying new skills within real-world situations while finding support from others will help everyone reflect on their recovery and make sense of how things are going. Virtual or in person groups help to integrate skills into daily life and generalize and increase the frequency of their use.



## **STEP 1: SELF-ASSESSMENT**

Self-assessments are helpful in supporting and motivating change. Completing these activities will help you better understand your values, vulnerability factors, what kind of support you need and who may be able to best help you.

Everyone who participates in the CRAFT Connect programs is encouraged to complete these self-assessment activities:

- What are My Values? Worksheet
- Who Are My Family/CSOs? Worksheet
- Social Support Worksheet ((Sarason, S. et al, 1983)
- My Vulnerability Surveys
- “My Recovery Story, So Far” Worksheet

## What are My Values? Worksheet

Generally, people like to live a life with meaning and purpose. When these goals are met we are able to develop a harmony with our inner self and the outside world. This is a lifelong journey that evolves based on unique circumstances, individual experiences and global events. Explore your values by answering these questions. Then look for differences between what you believe in and hope for and your behavior. Consider how your actions may go against your values.

What gives my life meaning?

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What gives me hope?

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How do I get through tough times? Where do I find comfort?

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Am I tolerant of other people's views about life issues?

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Do I make attempts to expand my awareness of different ethnic, racial and religious groups?

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Do I make time for relaxation in my day?

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Do my values guide my decisions and actions?

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Summarize what you learned from the worksheet.

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## Who Are My Family/CSOs? Worksheet

Think about all of the people in your life you feel a particularly strong connection with. People who support you “when you are feeling down and help you get your feet back on the ground”. These could be people you spend holidays or birthdays with. Whose praise or encouragement makes you feel good. Who regularly text, phone, or email you. People you “appreciate being around”. Your family/Concerned Significant Others (CSOs) could include immediate and extended family united by birth, marriage or adoption including parents, partners, grandparents, spouses, children, siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles as well as friends, sober peers, co-workers, members of the community, etc. It’s doesn’t matter if you live with or nearby by them.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to me: \_\_\_\_\_  
Identify why you feel close to them:

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to me: \_\_\_\_\_  
Identify why you feel close to them:

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to me: \_\_\_\_\_  
Identify why you feel close to them:

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to me: \_\_\_\_\_  
Identify why you feel close to them:

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to me: \_\_\_\_\_  
Identify why you feel close to them:

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to me: \_\_\_\_\_  
Identify why you feel close to them:

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What do these relationships have in common? Think about one-word qualities.

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3 A. Who accepts you totally, including both your worst and best points?

No one      1.)                      2.)                      3.)                      4.)  
5.)                      6.)                      7.) 8.) 9.)

3 B. How satisfied are you with the support you have in area 3 A?

6—very      5-fairly      4-a little      3-a little      2-fairly      1-very  
satisfied      satisfied      satisfied      dissatisfied      dissatisfied      dissatisfied

4. A. Who can you really count on to care about you, regardless of what is happening to you?

No one      1.)                      2.)                      3.)                      4.)  
5.)                      6.)                      7.) 8.) 9.)

4. B. How satisfied are you with the support you have in area 4 A?

6—very      5-fairly      4-a little      3-a little      2-fairly      1-very  
satisfied      satisfied      satisfied      dissatisfied      dissatisfied      dissatisfied

5 A. Who can you really count on to help you feel better when you are feeling down-in-the-dumps?

No one      1.)                      2.)                      3.)                      4.)  
5.)                      6.)                      7.) 8.) 9.)

5 B. How satisfied are you with the support you have in area 5 A?

6—very      5-fairly      4-a little      3-a little      2-fairly      1-very  
satisfied      satisfied      satisfied      dissatisfied      dissatisfied      dissatisfied

## My Vulnerabilities Surveys

Your quality of life has suffered from the stress of a substance use or mental health disorder and made you more vulnerable or capable of being emotionally wounded. Select from the drop-down menus of the five online surveys he answers that apply to your situation over the last 30 days. Survey results are confidential. Entering your name, email address and hitting “Send” downloads the completed survey and sends it to you within the hour.

Surveys are found at <https://www.craftconnectfs.com/self-assessments>.

Family Support. Focuses on the consequences this struggle has had on you, your family/CSOs.

Family Satisfaction. Measures the level of satisfaction with your current family/CSOs system and communication within that system.

Anxiety. A diagnostic self-report scale for screening, diagnosis and severity of anxiety disorder.

Depression. A diagnostic self-report scale for screening, diagnosis and severity of depressive disorder.

Happiness. Intended to estimate your current happiness with 10 areas of your life.

## “My Recovery Story, So Far” Worksheet

The thoughts of writing may frighten you, writing is a powerful tool for recovery. It will give you time to reflect; it will help you focus your thinking; it will help you see and understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. When you write, you also create a record to measure your progress. For now, just be honest and sincere as you write your thoughts, feelings, and impressions.

1. Identify your underlying positive feelings about your family and Concerned Significant Others (CSOs).

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2. Describe the major problem areas – physical, emotional, social, spiritual, intellectual, occupational, financial – you have experienced as a result of a substance use or mental health disorder. Challenges that diminished the overall quality of your life.

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3. Express the frustrations, painful thoughts and feelings you have about these struggles – shame, guilt, anger, fear, anxiety, loss, grief, isolation, etc.

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4. What have you done to try and change or stop unwanted behaviors? Has it been effective?

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5. Which problem areas would you like to focus on now as part of your recovery?

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## STEP 2: ENGAGEMENT

The introductory meeting with a CRAFT Connect Coach serves many purposes. In addition to presenting the opportunity for engaging family/CSOs and building a recovery partnership, the meeting provides an overview of the program. During the meeting:

- The Coach resents and discusses family/CSOs self-assessment results.
- Family/CSOs share written underlying positive feelings for one another.
- Decide who are the family members and CSOs that will be part of our group.
- Outline goals and objectives.
- Why family/CSOs are crucial to recovery and have specific roles.
- Program is based on CRAFT Connect principles and skills.
- Build positive expectations on the basis of scientific support.
- Place responsibility for recovery on those with behavioral health disorder.



### **STEP 3: WEEKLY RECOVERY MEETING**

This regularly scheduled 50-minute weekly meeting helps family/CSOs groups identify and capitalize on opportunities to bring about ongoing intentional, incremental change. It addresses recovery related issues in an open, collaborative and caring manner that helps strengthen relationships between family/CSO members. Meetings include learning skills and concrete strategies to deal with chronic behavioral health conditions, manage emotions and have a life worth living. The We Recover Program is clear and easy to use, don't skip a section, reading or activity. During Weekly Recover Meetings group members are encouraged to:

- Collaborate by showing mutual respect for each other
- Engage in two-way sharing of information
- Be honest and clear in their communication
- Work on mutually agreed upon goals
- Share planning and decision-making

#### **Group facilitator role**

We Recover Together groups work together as a council, there is no teacher or expert – just a “Facilitator”. Facilitators do not prepare lessons, lecture the group, or speak more than other they just follow the materials as written and trust in the group. Facilitators rotate weekly among members, so every family/CSO has an opportunity to guide the group. Groups work best when everyone is actively present; shares their ideas; completes the activities; loves and supports each other; works on their commitments during the week and shares what they learned in the next meeting. Facilitators are responsible for creating a positive, respectful, and enjoyable learning environment. They celebrate the progress of group members and help them feel successful. A CRAFT Connect Coach functions as a supportive observer during the first Weekly Recovery Meeting. The Weekly Recovery Meeting format includes Check-In, Skills for a Life Worth Living and Commit & Celebrate sections.

#### **Check-in section**

We Recover Together meetings start with a brief deep breathing and relaxation Mindfulness experience that gives group members an opportunity to recharge. Then everyone shares something they have been grateful for this week. The Check-in section ends with the family member with a behavioral health disorder reviewing their recovery related activities for the past week and setting goals for the coming week. The How Are We Doing Worksheet is one way to organize this kind of sharing. It can be completed before or during the meeting.

### **Skill for a Life Worth Living section**

The Check-In section is followed by learning a Skill for a Life Worth Living. This section starts group members sharing what they liked most about last week's meeting and how they benefited from using last week's life worth living skill. Learning a new skill each week makes recovery feel doable by treating it as a continual process of improvement -- progress not perfection. The week before you meet pick a skill module from 35+ life skills that are being built out as part of the We Recover Together program. Pick skills that group members want to work on, one's that helps everyone become their best self.

- Financial skills --Satisfaction with current and future financial situations.
- Social skills --Developing a sense of connection, belonging, a well-developed support system.
- Emotional skills--Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships.
- Spiritual skills--Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life.
- Physical skills-- Recognizing that emotional health is connected to our physical well-being.
- Intellectual skills --Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge and skills.

### **Commit & Celebrate section**

Recovery is a verb, not a noun; all the small actions that we may think don't matter will eventually add up. If group participants are to change, they must act on commitments made in the Skill for a Life Worth Living section. In-between We Recover Together meetings group members can reinforce each other by:

- Calling, texting, or emailing each other during the week.
- Talking about what they learned in the group.
- Encouraging each other to keep commitments.
- Counseling together about challenges.

To reinforce others, you may tell them they did a good job, smile at them, thank them, and give them positive reinforcement. You can do the same thing with acknowledging recovery efforts. Start making time every week for recreational activities you can share with others that reinforce and celebrate recovery. Accumulating these kinds of pleasant activities helps keep family/CSOs close and can become a buffer for negative interactions that can be part of any relationship. The Celebrate Recovery Handout includes activities that can be done together. If you do not live near other family/CSOs group members find someone you can celebrate with.

## Weekly Recovery Meeting Format Handout

CHECK-IN section – Maximum time 20 minutes.

Mindfulness: Take a break from what you have been doing, breathe deeply, relax and recharge.

Step 1: Find a comfortable seated position with both feet grounded on the floor. Put a hand on your stomach. Close your eyes.

Step 2: Take a deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. Notice your thoughts and feelings and any tensions in your body.

Step 3: As you inhale and exhale, breathe deeply so your belly fills and empties with air. The hand on your stomach helps you practice belly – not chest breathing.

Step 4: For the next two minutes make breathing in and out your only focus. Let your thoughts come and go without trying to control them. If you find an area of tension in your body, relax it and let the tension go.

Step 5: At the end of the two minutes slowly open your eyes. Gently bring your presence back to your surroundings.

Our purpose: This group has come together because each of us wants to be our “best self”. As a group we will work together, learn from each other and give each other support. We will combine our faith, courage and ideas to help each other. To create a safe place for honest sharing of our lived experience we use appropriate language and behavior. We are empathetic, nonjudgmental, genuine, warm, steer clear of confrontation and imposing our own solutions. We encourage hope and compassion for all. We want to reframe and energize our family/CSOs connections into a “recovery partnership” that leads to progress and healing for everyone. There is a lot we can learn from one another.

Gratitude: Taking time every day to be grateful can help our health, relationships, emotions and happiness. What is something you are grateful for this week? *(Everyone in group shares.)*

Review “How Are We Doing?” Worksheet. *(Led by loved one with behavioral health disorder.)*

- Past week’s recovery activities.
- Goals for next week.

SKILL FOR A LIFE WORTH LIVING section – Maximum time 20 minutes.

Discuss: How did you benefit from working on last week’s commitments? *(Everyone in group shares.)*

## COMMIT & CELEBRATE section

This week I will commit to:

- *(Commitments vary based on this week's Life Worth Living Skill and are included in sessions.)*
- Reinforce and celebrate recovery by sharing a pleasant recreational activity with members of my family/CSOs group. See "Celebrate Recovery Handout" for ideas.

Benefits from keeping commitments:

- *(Benefits vary based on this week's Life Worth Living Skill and are included in sessions.)*
- Sharing pleasant recreational activities helps keep us close and can become a buffer for negative interactions that can be part of any relationship.

## How Are We Doing? Worksheet

Those with a disorder are at the center of all recovery related decisions and are accountable for updating family/CSOs on their recovery, place a check mark before each activity that reflects your recovery during the past seven days ending \_\_\_\_\_.

What worked well? What felt solid, encouraging, positive?

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- Took my medications.
- My diet, exercise and sleep this past week will enhance my physical health
- It was a good week emotionally for me.
- School or work was a positive experience.
- Spent leisure time with others in recovery this week.
- Set personal positive goals for myself this week.
- Enjoyed time with friends this week who support my recovery.
- Successfully avoided people, places and things I associate with my maladaptive behaviors.
- Applied recovery concepts to my daily life this week.
- Read recovery-related literature this week.
- Called or visited someone in recovery this week.
- Followed mutually agreed household rules.
- Tried to do something positive to improve my relationship with family/CSOs this week.
- Tended to any physical problems I experienced this past week.
- Completed Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) this week.
- Attended at least one recovery support group (as applicable) this past week.
- Had individual contact with my sponsor (as applicable) this week.
- Interacted with a professional member of my treatment team.

After reviewing my activities this past week, what could I enhance? What could I adjust, reframe, revise.

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## Celebrate Recovery Handout

Here are some ideas for activities you can do with others to celebrate your recovery. What recreational activity are you going to do during the seven-day period ending \_\_\_\_\_.

When, where and with who are you going share this activity with?

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- |   |   |
|---|---|
| Bicycling   | Planning a surprise for someone   |
| Bowling   | Playing board games or cards  |
| Camping   | Playing catch   |
| Cooking or baking   | Playing golf  |
| Doing a creative hobby together (e.g., painting, drawing, knitting, scrapbooking, model building) | Playing music/jamming together  |
| Doing community service/volunteer work  | Playing video games   |
| Eating out  | Playing with pets, walking the dog                                      |
| Gardening   | Sharing a meal  |
| Getting a manicure  | Shopping  |
| Getting massage   | Shopping for a gift   |
| Getting your hair or makeup done together   | Skiing, snowboarding  |
| Going for a drive   | Surfing   |
| Going for a walk/run  | Take a yoga/exercise class  |
| Going for coffee  | Taking a trip in an RV or cruise ship                                   |
| Going out for ice cream/ yogurt   | Taking an art class   |
| Going to a game (e.g., baseball, basketball, football, soccer)                                    | Talking about future plans together                                     |
| Going to a museum   | Talking about when you were little                                      |
| Going to a park   | Talking about your day  |
| Going to a show or concert  | Teaching the other one something new (e.g., in technology, photography) |
| Going to an amusement park  | Telling family stories  |
| Having a barbecue   | Vacation  |
| Having some quiet reading time together   | Visiting relatives or friends together                                  |
| Joking around/being silly   | Walking by the beach  |
| Listening to music you both like  | Watching a favorite TV show or movie together                           |
| Looking at/showing your favorite website  | Watching live sports  |
| Looking thru photos   | Working out/going to the gym  |

## **35+ LIFE SKILLS TO CHOOSE FROM**

Recovery is helping people maintain behavior change, prevent relapse and consolidate gains secured during treatment where they made overt, observable lifestyle modifications. Life Worth Living Skills modules are designed to give family/CSOs the skills and confidence that chronic behavioral health conditions can be positively managed as regular part of life. We are currently building out 35+ life skills as part of the We Recover Together program. They include:

### **Financial skills --Satisfaction with current and future financial situations:**

- Managing Money
- Needs vs. Wants
- Creating a Budget
- Sticking to a Budget
- Understanding Debt
- Getting out of Debt

### **Social skills --Developing a sense of connection, belonging, a support system:**

- Communication, “I” Statements
- Communication, Changing “You” to “I”
- Reflective Listening
- Building Healthy Relationships
- Strengthen Others
- Addressing Challenging Relationships

### **Emotional skills--Coping effectively with life and creating satisfying relationships:**

- Validation
- Don’t Try to Fix
- *More Emotional skills to come*

### **Skills in development**

- Spiritual skills--Expanding our sense of purpose and meaning in life.
- Physical skills-- Recognizing that emotional health is connected to physical well-being.
- Intellectual skills --Recognizing creative abilities and finding ways to expand knowledge

## Sample Social Skill “Communication, ‘I’ Statements” Module

Think: Am I communicating my needs and concerns and encouraging others to openly express their needs and concerns in ways that are not controlled by another?

Communication problems are routinely found in family relationships. For many of us, communication can be negative and filled with strong emotions. We are going to learn an effective pattern for communication called “I” Statements that has proven to help build positive relationships. There are seven principles to positive I communications.

Principle 1, Be brief. Resist the urge to bring up too much. Principle 2, Keep it simple. Be specific and clear. Focus on one thing. Principle 3, Be positive while communicating what you want. Avoid blaming, name calling and over generalization. Principle 4, Label your feelings. Describe the emotional impact on you in a calm, nonjudgmental, non-accusatory way.

Principle 5, Offer an understanding statement. Try seeing it from the other person’s point of view. This lets others know that we understand them and care about their feelings. It makes it much easier for them to hear what we are saying without becoming defensive. An understanding statement can help turn the negative “Don’t ever let me catch you yelling at the kids like that again, you bully.” into a positive I statement “*I know the kids can be frustrating, please help me set a good example by talking to them calmly.*”

Principle 6, Accept partial responsibility. Share a small piece of the problem. By communicating in a way that demonstrates a willingness to share responsibility, others are also more likely to hear what we are saying. “Even though you are not the cause of the problem, you are intimately involved with it and do have an effect on it” (Meyers and Wolfe, 2004, p. 137). Thus, it may make sense, whenever possible, to share a small piece of the problem for things that can go wrong in any loving relationship. We simply need to let others know that we see ourselves as part of the ‘big’ picture. Principle 7, Making a “How can I help?” offer is seen as a non-blaming, supportive act that others are more inclined to respond positively to.

Discuss: What do you notice about the principles of positive communication that might be different from how you have been communicating with others?

Look for the seven principles of positive communication as you review this sample “I” statement.

I... (HOW DO YOU FEEL?)...was embarrassed  
when you...(DESCRIBE THE BEHAVIOR OR CONDITION)...spoke to me that way in front of my  
friends.  
because... (WHY DO YOU FEEL THIS WAY?)...it made me feel like a child.  
I would like... (WHAT DO YOU WANT TO HAPPEN?)...to discuss this in private next time.



I know... (YOU UNDERSTAND THE OTHER'S POSITION)...talking about these kinds of things can be hard.

Let's try to... (YOUR WILLINGNESS TO SHARE RESPONSIBILITY.)... set aside a time to talk when we are both feeling better.

(HOW CAN I HELP?)

### "I" Statement Worksheet

There are seven principles to positive I communication:

1. Be brief. Resist the urge to bring up too much. Keep it simple.
2. Be specific and clear. Focus on one thing.
3. Be positive while communicating what you want. Avoid blaming, name calling and over generalization
4. Label your feelings. Describe the emotional impact on you in a calm, nonjudgmental, non-accusatory way.
5. Offer an understanding statement. Try seeing it from the other person's point of view.
6. Accept partial responsibility. Share a small piece of the problem.
7. Offer to help.

Write down a verbal/text or email interaction between you and a loved one.

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Using this sample write what you might communicate with a family/CSO the next time the same situation occurs, in a way that limits defensiveness and does not lead to an argument. Be sure to refine and practice your I statement before using it.

I... (HOW DO YOU FEEL?) \_\_\_\_\_

when you...(DESCRIBE THE BEHAVIOR OR CONDITION) \_\_\_\_\_

because... (WHY DO YOU FEEL THIS WAY?) \_\_\_\_\_

I would like... (WHAT DO YOU WANT TO HAPPEN?) \_\_\_\_\_

I know... (YOU UNDERSTAND THE OTHER'S POSITION) \_\_\_\_\_

Let's try... (YOUR WILLINGNESS TO SHARE RESPONSIBILITY) \_\_\_\_\_

(HOW CAN I HELP?) \_\_\_\_\_