

WHAT WORD COMES TO YOUR MIND?

Look at the partial word below. Notice the first word, image, memory, sensation or feeling that appears before you try to work out the intended answer.

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What came to mind first?

What does your response seem to connect with for you?

NOW REVEAL THE WORD

RECOVER

Recovery can mean many different things. It may follow illness, trauma, grief, burnout, addiction, an eating disorder, surgery, a relationship ending or a period when life has simply demanded too much.

Recovery does not always mean returning to exactly who you were before. Sometimes it involves learning what has changed, rebuilding around new needs and discovering a different way forward.

WHAT DOES RECOVERY MEAN TO YOU?

Recovery is rarely a straight line. There may be progress, pauses, setbacks, good days, difficult days and periods when change is hard to see. A difficult day does not erase the work that came before it.

When I think about recovery, I imagine...

Something that has changed for me is...

I feel pressure to 'be better' when...

A sign of progress I may be overlooking is...

Recovery is not a deadline

Other people may expect recovery to happen faster than your body, mind or circumstances allow. Healing and adjustment do not follow a universal timetable. It can be useful to distinguish between encouragement and pressure.

Setbacks are information, not failure

A setback can show where more support, rest, treatment, boundaries or adjustment may be needed. Instead of asking 'Why am I back here?', it may be more useful to ask 'What is happening, what do I need, and what have I learned since the last difficult period?'

BUILDING RECOVERY AROUND REAL LIFE

Recovery is often supported by small repeatable actions rather than one dramatic turning point. The right steps will depend on what you are recovering from, your health, circumstances, resources and available support.

Something my recovery needs more of is...

Something I may need less pressure around is...

A person, service or adjustment that could support me is...

An early sign that I am struggling is...

One realistic next step for me is...

Create a recovery anchor

Choose one small action or reminder that helps you reconnect with what supports you. It might be eating regularly, attending an appointment, resting before exhaustion, taking medication as prescribed, contacting somebody, going outside, using a sensory strategy or returning to a helpful routine.

Measure more than symptoms

Progress can also appear as asking for help sooner, recognising a trigger, recovering from a difficult day more quickly, communicating a need, setting a boundary or treating yourself with less criticism. Recovery can be present even when symptoms have not disappeared.

A MESSAGE FROM MAGGIE

Recovery is one of those words that can sound as though there should be a clear beginning and an obvious finish. Real life is usually much less tidy.

You may have days when you feel stronger and days when you wonder whether anything has changed at all. That does not automatically mean you have gone backwards. Sometimes recovery is happening in the way you respond, the support you accept, the boundaries you set or how quickly you recognise what you need.

I also think it is important that recovery does not become a demand to return to the person you were before. Experiences can change us. Sometimes the task is not going back; it is learning how to build a life around who you are now.

Notice the progress that is easy to miss. Small changes still count.

Maggie Learoyd MNCPS - Space to Breathe Therapy

THERAPEUTIC CONTEXT & FURTHER READING

Recovery-oriented practice emphasises hope, personal meaning, autonomy and a life that is not defined solely by symptoms. Person-centred therapy supports the individual's own experience and direction, while ACT can help people take values-led action alongside difficult thoughts, feelings or ongoing limitations.

Suggested reading: Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*; Russ Harris, *The Happiness Trap*; Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*; William Anthony, *Recovery from Mental Illness: The Guiding Vision of the Mental Health Service System in the 1990s*.

This resource is for reflection and psychoeducation. Recovery needs differ considerably. It is not a diagnostic tool and does not replace individual medical, mental-health or specialist treatment.