

## Selecting Stories

Contributions will be carefully considered before placing on the website.

### Things to think about:-

Does your Story come from a helpful perspective/viewpoint?

Does it show that you have reflected on your own experience?

You would need to agree in writing to your story being shared with a wide audience.

Any restrictions on distribution of your story in terms of confidentiality or identification would need to be explicit and achievable.

### Keep these considerations in mind when you create your story:-

- Consider the experience of emotional distress and mental disorder and what it feels like when going through it.
- Pass on any insights into what was helpful or unhelpful in your experience; things which could be useful to others, to make their experience less painful, or helpful to staff.
- Identify self help approaches which have been particularly meaningful or helpful for you.
- Try to offer hope to others and to identify achievements, however small.
- Look beyond self help skills towards self development, 'thriving' and living a good life and how this may be achieved.
- Show the whole person that you are, more than any label or diagnosis.
- Be honest and real in order to connect and 'speak' to a wide audience of readers/listeners.
- If written, keep within an agreed length appropriate to publication in a book or on a website. This will probably be less than 3,500 words. There is no minimum length.
- Use if available, and according to the media chosen, personal material which illustrates your story, e.g. photos, poems, sketches, paintings, etc.

Please contact us with your story by email: [recoverydevon@gmail.com](mailto:recoverydevon@gmail.com)  
or to talk about this on: 07779 729525.

Thank you for sharing your experiences of recovery and hope.

Recovery Devon is a community of people supporting mental health recovery and wellbeing.



# Exploring Personal Narratives

Choosing to Share  
Stories of Personal Recovery  
From  
Mental Illness

# Sharing Recovery Stories

## Helping Ourselves - Helping Others - Stories of Hope

**Do you have personal experience of mental health problems?  
Or do you support a person in recovery?**

**Do you feel able to offer hope and practical help to others?  
If so, we would value your reflections and insights.**

Many people struggle to overcome mental health difficulties. One in four of us will experience some form of mental illness at some point in our lives.

Recovery is possible. When we can choose a more meaningful life, even when we still have occasional or ongoing difficulties, we feel more in control. This gives us strength and gives hope to others.

Often small details, and people who take special care, make a big difference.

## We want to help people wishing to tell their own stories.

As people are more open about health and wellbeing issues, we learn together and the spirit of hope and the voice of Recovery grow stronger.

People who have overcome mental ill health are speaking up and speaking out.

By sharing stories of personal recovery, we offer help and renewed energy to others experiencing similar issues. We may also offer practical ways forward.

## We all have many Stories

Many things happen that make a difference to our journeys toward wellness. Though the facts remain the same, over time our understanding of them, can change. As we consider such events, we can make changes in order to reclaim and live more fulfilling and satisfying lives.

While you don't have to be fully well to share your story, you will need to feel at a safe distance and strong enough to reflect on your experiences, so that you can identify the people or things that made a real difference to your recovery.

In Devon we were inspired by Julie Leibrich's book, 'A Gift of Stories', where she and other people share their lives and show how they deal successfully with mental illness. Julie suggests that for some mental illness is a gift: for we can discover talents and inner resolve, unknown before.

# Many things affect our WellBeing and Recovery

**Connection** – belonging; community, friends, family; having meaningful activities; sharing, loving, being at one with ourselves and with others.

**Time** – for learning and healing; for kindness and forgiveness; to reflect and to make helpful choices, and to take control of our lives.

**Safe Places** – healing communities, environments where we feel safe; places where we can nurture our sense of self, be present in the moment; places where we can speak for ourselves, be heard and supported in ways that work for us. Places where we can begin to act for ourselves.

**Opportunities** – to make the changes we want; to build our self help skills, so we can enjoy our lives more fully, including leisure, education and work. This allows us self respect and a chance to give back.

## Choosing How You Tell Your Story

When we choose to share our story, we need to be brave and also able to share the lessons we've learnt and the hope we've gained.

There are many ways to share stories; e.g. through artwork, photos, video, music, poetry, written and spoken words and mixtures of these.

Sometimes, talking things through with someone we can trust, can help us think through what happened to give us hope. Who were the people and things that made a difference?

We hope you can choose a way to share your story that suits you. You may want to try out different ways of presenting your experiences. Choosing the words and pictures that feel right takes time. Don't feel you have to rush.

The Recovery Devon website has an area in the Creative Café for people to share stories, pictures, poems, etc. You can also download our book, 'Beyond the Storms - Reflections on Personal Recovery in Devon' ed. Laurie Davidson and Linden Lynn (2009), from the 'Resource Library'. It is a fine collection of many people's stories, poems and artwork.

**Visit the Recovery Devon website – [www.recoverydevon.co.uk](http://www.recoverydevon.co.uk)**