

Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)

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Wellness describes the health, both physical and mental, condition of our bodies. Recovery is the act of recovering from an event or situation. The wellness recovery action plan (WRAP) is a plan to help us to recover or maintain our physical and mental wellness. In the world of Mental Health a WRAP is an individually developed plan to help a person maintain his/her recovery journey and improve his/her resiliency in response to his/her mental and physical health.

In her book, *Wellness Recovery Action Plan*, (Peach Press:1997, revised 2002) Mary Ellen Copeland, PhD, describes the Wellness Recovery Action Program as a structured system for monitoring uncomfortable and distressing symptoms and, through planned responses, reducing, modifying or eliminating those symptoms. It also includes plans for responses from others when your symptoms have made it impossible for you to continue to make decisions, take care of yourself and keep yourself safe.

Dr. Copeland explains that this system was developed by people who have been dealing with a variety of psychiatric symptoms for many years and are working hard to feel better and get on with their lives. She further defines the WRAP as a system for monitoring, reducing and eliminating uncomfortable or dangerous physical symptoms and emotional feelings.

The WRAP includes a wellness toolbox and a six part monitoring and response system, is developed by the person who experiences symptoms, and usually includes input from his/her choice of supporters and health care professionals. Although the focus of the WRAP is psychiatric symptoms, it can be adapted for use with other disorders and/or symptoms.

The Wellness Toolbox is a list of things you have done in the past, or could do, to help yourself stay well and things you could do to help yourself feel better when you are not doing well. These are tools that you will use to develop your WRAP. This nine piece tool box includes 1) information that defines what you are like when you are well, 2) a list of those symptoms that indicate others need to take over responsibility for your care, 3) the names of your supporters and their roles, 4) a list of those medications which, if necessary, are alright with you, those which are not, and the reasons why, 5) a home, community care or respite center plan to use, if possible, in lieu of hospitalization, 6) a list of treatment facilities which, if necessary, are alright with you, those that are not, and the reasons why, 7) your list of treatments which, if necessary, are alright with you, those which are not, and the reasons why, 8) an intensive description of what is wanted and what is not wanted from your supports when symptoms become intense, and 9) information for supporters to use in determining when you no longer need to use your crisis plan.

The six part monitoring and response system includes the following:

A Daily Maintenance Plan – this three part plan includes a description of how you feel when you feel well, a list of everything you need to do every day to maintain your wellness, and a list of things you might need to consider doing that day.

Triggers – this two part section 1) identifies those events or situations which, if they occur, might cause uncomfortable symptoms to begin and 2) provides a plan of what to do if any of these triggers occur.

Early Warning Signs – involves the identification of those subtle signs that may indicate the situation is beginning to worsen and provides a plan of what to do if any of these early warning signs are noticed.

Worsening Situation – deals with symptoms that occur when the situation has gotten much worse but has not yet reached a crisis, you can still take action on your own behalf, and provides a plan of what to do if any of these symptoms occur.

Crisis Plan – identifies those symptoms that indicate you can no longer continue to make decisions, take care of yourself and keep yourself safe. This plan is developed to be used by supporters and health care professionals on your behalf as the person who developed the plan.

Post Crisis Planning – a constantly changing plan based on how you heal. This plan is designed to help you move from the crisis plan back to your daily maintenance plan and other parts of your WRAP.

This information is taken from Dr. Copeland's book which is available at the office of the Mental Health Association of Lebanon County. As part of our mission of education on and advocacy for Recovery, the Mental Health Association provides WRAP classes to assist individuals in developing her/his WRAP. The next class will begin on June 17, 2010; the class meets each Thursday evening, 6 – 8 p.m., for six weeks and costs \$30. There are still a few slots available for this class. Another session of classes will start on October 14, 2010. For more information or to register, please call the office at 717-273-5781.

You can also visit our web site at www.mhaleb.org for information about the WRAP classes, our support groups, and our fund raising events.

The next column will focus on Advanced Directives for persons with mental illness.

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