



Welcome to your Recovery for Life Group!

All of us who work with Recovery for Life (the folks at SC SHARE and all current and past group leaders and members of Recovery for Life Groups) are very glad that you have decided to join one of the groups. These pages will help you understand what the program is and what you can expect to happen over the next several weeks.

A great deal of work (and love) has been put into making the Recovery for Life Program. A couple of years ago, some of us at SC SHARE got together and decided that it would be a good idea to develop a program that would send some hope to people who live with mental illnesses and emotional challenges. Along with this hope, we wanted to send along some information about what it takes to begin a recovery.

Many people have thought for a long time that it was not possible to recover from serious mental illnesses. That notion started changing a few years ago and now many people know that there *can* be recovery. People who are in recovery from mental illness might still have symptoms and still take medications. But, they do not allow the focus of their lives to be their mental illness. They allow the things that they love about life to be the focus. They decided to ---*and did*---reclaim their gifts and talents. They reconnected to family, friends and community. Does that sound like a good way to live your life?

In the Recovery for Life workbook, you will find some very simple and practical information to help you begin (or continue) your life in recovery. This advice is divided into 10 lessons that are designed to give you simple tools to help you design your own recovery. The workbook begins by helping you understand the work of recovery and moves on to help you do the work.

Work; is key to recovery. You will find, as you follow the program, that recovery is not just about the information in the workbook. Recovery takes effort. Recovery takes willingness to change. Recovery takes support and encouragement. You must provide the willingness and effort. The program provides the information. And your group leader and other group members provide the support and encouragement.

Your group leader will be important to your recovery. Your leader has been in recovery for a while and is doing recovery work on a daily basis. Your leader will not have all the answers but will stand by you while you find your own answers. Your leader's main role is to provide structure for the group, to get you started and help you feel at ease in beginning this exciting journey.

You, as a group member will be important to other group members' recoveries as well. It is important that you remember what it takes to be a supportive group member. So, use the group to get what you need but don't take up too much time on your issues. If you are really struggling with something, see your counselor to get the individual help that you need.

Be accepting of other people. We share common ground but also, we are different in many ways. Part of recovery is about becoming more flexible and accepting of things that are not exactly the way we want them to be. This is a good time to start enjoying the differences among people instead of being irritated by them. Give group members the right to be where they are and who they are, and the same respect will be returned to you.

Also, please support your group leader. He or she is part of a network of folks who are dedicated to helping people live their lives to the absolute fullest. By being a *Recovery for Life* group member, you are becoming a part of that network, too. Taking an active role in the group will be very helpful to your leader.

There is a little bit of housekeeping---paperwork, that is. SC SHARE has information forms and consent forms that need to be filled out and returned to SHARE. This paperwork is important in order to help SHARE evaluate the benefits of *Recovery for Life*. Based on these forms and another form at the end of the program, SHARE will be able to know what is working and what is not. That way, changes can be made so that the program works as well as it possibly can. Thank you for taking the time to fill out the forms. Your leader will mail them to the SHARE office.

Hope this helps you understand a bit more about *Recovery for Life*. Your group leader will be your first resource should you have other questions or concerns. Also, your group leader can contact us at SC SHARE for support and further information. Finally, thank you for being a part of the recovery story in South Carolina. We are excited about the wonderful changes that can take place in all of our lives.