

Taking Flight

A Briefing from Project GREAT

Georgia Recovery-Based Educational Approach to Treatment

ANNOUNCEMENT

July is the beginning of a new academic year for MCG residents. Congratulations to our graduating psychiatrists and psychologists.

A RECOVERY STORY

From www.whatadifference.org

Mitch writes that he suffered from recurring episodes of depression for decades. He saw different doctors and tried different medications. Some worked very well and some did not. At one point, he was depression-free for 12 years. But his medicine lost its effectiveness, and he ended up leaving his job. Mitch writes:

“I have a master's degree and, prior to leaving my job, I had worked for the same company for 33 years. With the exception of this last bout of depression, I was unwilling to discuss this illness. I had difficulty understanding it, and I was convinced others couldn't as well.

“I am married with two grown daughters, and my family has been very understanding. However, it has been difficult to explain my hurt.

“I am now working part-time at a bank and have the opportunity to begin a second career. I was very fortunate to have a doctor who was committed to my well-being. I joined the local Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance group, which is extremely supportive. I've always felt that this illness can only be understood by others who have struggled or are struggling with it.

“I am writing this to give hope to others.”

LEARNING POINTS

Mueser et al (2002) pointed out in a review of 40 studies that when individuals are taught to better understand and cope with their psychiatric disorder then they have better success in the use of medication, have fewer relapses, and are able to reduce the severity and distress related to symptoms. But Mueser et al (2002) also noted that recovery is hard work and the switch from being a passive recipient of care to an active partner can be quite challenging. Even learning about how others have coped successfully with their illnesses can pose the risk of believing that one has “personally failed” when efforts to adopt such coping strategies do not stop continuing symptoms. Fortunately, consumer driven programs such as the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance group referenced in Mitch's recovery story have been found to be places where consumers can share, care, find understanding and recognition that are often not available in the society at large. And, the outcomes for these consumer driven programs have been promising in bringing about a positive identity, a proactive approach to one's care, and general improvements in quality of life (Nelson, Ochocka, Janzen, & Trainor, 2006).

Mueser, Corrigan, Hilton, et al (2002) *Illness Management and Recovery: A Review of the Research*. *Psychiatric Services* 53:1272-1284.
Nelson, Ochocka, Janzen, & Trainor (2006) *A longitudinal study of mental health consumer/survivor initiatives: Part 1 – Literature review and overview of the study*. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 34: 247-260.