

Recovery is Possible



#Recovery Month

September 30th: International Recovery Day *Recovery is possible*

International Recovery Day is celebrated every year on September 30 and is dedicated to promoting recovery efforts and spreading hope worldwide. The internet has allowed us to bridge the geographical and time zone differences and bring people in recovery from addiction together around the globe. Purple is the colour that symbolises addiction recovery. Organisations, cities, families, supporters, and peers around the world celebrate this day by launching a virtual celebratory firework, placing purple floodlights, or light the purple colour on noteworthy/symbolic buildings to stand in unity on this date. The initiative can be joined [here](#).

Many people are in recovery. Only in the United States alone, more than 23 million people are currently in recovery. It showcases that recovery is possible and probably. Most people recover and achieve stable remission and a good quality of life. By supporting recovery, we support not only people and families, but also make the communities a better place while increasing social and community capital. Still, many people do not believe that recovery is possible and drug dependence is ranked in the first five most stigmatised health conditions in the world. Stigma is a major issue and barrier for treatment for affected by substance addiction and their families. That is exactly the reason why we want to highlight the devastating effects of stigma on this important day.

The UK Drug Policy Commission defines stigma as “an indelible mark or a stain, and the term is generally applied to attributes that makes a person unacceptable in other people’s eyes”. Stigma can be extremely harmful and can lead to social exclusion. It does not only pose a major barrier to treatment, but it also creates negative domino effect for people in recovery to access housing, employment, education, care, and other services. It affects their families and children and drives social exclusion, marginalisation, and discrimination. Whereas for people in recovery, inclusion and the sense of community is extremely important to support their recovery journey and prevent relapses.

Social stigma also often results in self-stigmatisation, which is the internalisation of public stigma. Self-stigmatisation includes the following phases: 1) becoming aware of the stigma around their condition; 2) agreeing with stigmatising attitudes; 3) concurring that these stereotypes apply to him/herself; 4) leading to possible harm and significant decreases in self-esteem, self-efficacy, hopelessness, and loss of goals, including recovery. Self-stigmatisation disrupts the CHIME model as it creates self-discrimination and self-isolation, which interrupts connectedness. It also brings negative thoughts about the future, which leads to a loss of hope. Thirdly, it creates an identity which is negatively attributed by stereotypes, resulting in the loss of the positive identity. Fourthly, self-stigmatisation generates the feeling of uselessness, which translates to a loss of meaning. Finally, it leads to a decrease in self-esteem and self-efficiency, also identified as a loss of empowerment. All these factors lead to acceptance and expectation of failure and they can significantly undermine recovery journey.

There are three categories of stigma: personal, social, and community. Personal or self-stigma is the internalisation of adverse labels and negative identification. Social stigma is portrayed through social marginalisation, exclusion, and discrimination against those that are in recovery. Structural stigmatisation leads to difficulties and structural barriers to reintegration. As all categories of stigmatisation negatively affect people in addiction and those in recovery, tackling stigma must be one of our key goals. To do so, recovery needs to be beyond specialist treatment and become fully integrated in communities. There is a need for visible,

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identifiable, and inclusive communities which are supportive of recovery. Additionally, different [non-stigmatising nor punishing] terminology should be used when speaking about drug dependence and people struggling with or in recovery from it. Training should be provided to health-care professionals, as levels of stigma around addiction and recovery among professionals are high. By addressing this, we influence structural change. Influencing social change is very difficult but critical in this process, in which people in recovery can play a huge role by spreading the message that recovery is possible. Overall, professionals, service providers, recovery organisations, and peers as well as families and communities should focus on people's strengths and not their weaknesses.

Generally, we should put efforts in creating the right environment for recovery by reducing stigma and allowing recovery to grow and flourish. Recovery is possible, we do recover, and recovery needs to be visible, accessible, and celebrated always - especially today on International Recovery Day.

For more information:

- CND Side Event: Challenging Stigma Around Addiction & Recovery – Strength-Based Approaches ([Summary](#))
- Position Paper: Gender-Specific Treatment & Recovery ([link](#))