

Community-Based Recreation Therapy and Mental Health Recovery: A Mixed-Media Participatory Action Research Study

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What Is the Purpose of this Study?

- To understand how community-based recreation therapy can support mental health recovery, from the perspectives of people diagnosed with mental illness.
- To guide the development, delivery, and evaluation of recovery-oriented mental health services.

What Is the Problem?

- The concept of personal recovery, as defined by mental health service users, emphasizes the importance of lived experience of mental illness. Few studies about recreation therapy in community mental health settings have involved partnerships with people who use mental health services.
- Recreation therapists who strive to provide recovery-oriented services do not have enough evidence, informed by the lived experience of mental illness, to understand the role of therapeutic recreation in the recovery process.

What Are the Findings?

- Community-based recreation therapy can support the recovery process by providing a safe and fun environment that encourages self-determination in leisure while promoting hope and building confidence.
- Service recipients' unique preferences and perspectives must be integral to service development, delivery, and evaluation to provide services that are truly recovery oriented.

Who Should Care Most?

- Mental health service providers (particularly in community-based settings).
- Senior administrators in the mental health sector.
- People who use mental health services.
- Recreation therapists.
- Mental health researchers.

Recommendations for Action

- Involve mental health service users in service development, delivery, and evaluation.
- Provide paid and volunteer peer support positions.
- Listen to service users and provide personalized services according to each person's unique preferences.
- Offer open access to a wide variety of recreation/leisure supplies at community-based mental health facilities and maximize opportunities to express personal choice.