Serving an Underserved Population: Peer Support, Disability, and Mental Health

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The Population

- **Adults with disabilities reported mental distress 4.6 times as often as those without disabilities;**

- **Veterans and Retirees without disabilities were 20% less likely to report mental distress than nonveterans and individuals who were employed; no differences were found by veteran and employment status for people with disabilities.**

- Cree RA, Okoro CA, Zack MM, Carbone E (2020). Frequent Mental Distress Among Adults by Disability Status, Disability Type, and Selected Characteristics – United States 2018. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR). Page last reviewed: September 10, 2020

Definition of Disability

- **Having a physical or mental impairment that limits a major life activity; a person who has a history of such an impairment, or a person who is perceived by others as having an impairment.**

  - *Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990*

- **Medical: any condition of the body or mind (impairment) that makes it more difficult for the person with the condition to do certain activities (activity limitation), and interact with the world around them (participation restrictions).**

  - *Centers for Disease Control (CDC)*

FIRST STEPS IN COPING

How to Help

- **Encourage the peer to get an appointment with their Primary Care Doctor to get a full physical exam, including blood work. Other evaluations may also be needed such as vision and hearing.**

- **When talking with the peer, use active listening skills**
    - **Paraphrase**
    - **Reflection of feeling**

- **Help the peer to prioritize their concerns**

Navigating the System

- **Call the customer service phone number on the back of your insurance card and get an in-network list**

- **Get on the waiting list at the Community Mental Health Center for your area, if that is relevant.**
  - **Understaffed**
  - **Waiting Lists**
  - **Catchment Areas**

5 Stage Recovery Process

Appalachian Consulting Group

Peer Specialist/Peer Support

Participant Manual

Stage 1: Impact of Illness

- **Characterized by being overwhelmed by the power of the mental illness**

- **Often unable to function day to day.**

- **Danger**
  - **Defined by the disabling power of the mental illness**
  - **Limited future**

- **Peer Support Role:**

      Help reduce mental distress

      Help reduce symptoms

      Instill a sense of hope that there is life beyond diagnosis

Stage 2: Life is Limited

- **Characterized by giving in to the disabling power of the illness.**

- **Danger:**

  - **Giving up and accepting a limited life**

  - **Person does not realize there is anything they can do to improve their life.**

- **Peer Support Role:**

  - **Instill hope and a sense of possibility**

  - **Help to rebuild positive self-image.**

Stage 3: Change is Possible

- **Characterized by questioning the disabling power of the mental health challenge**

- **Danger:**
  - **Afraid to or discouraged from taking necessary risks to change their life**
  - **Stay in life is limited stage**

- **Peer Support Role:**
  - **Help the person to see that they are not as limited by their mental illness**
  - **Help the peer to see that in order to make things better, they will have to take some risks and get out of their comfort zone**

Stage 4: Commitment to Change

- **Challenging the disabling power of their mental illness**

- **Danger:**

  - **Person does not learn necessary skills or have access to the resources and support they need in order to move forward**

  - **Person does not succeed**

- **Peer Support Role:**

  - **Help the person to identify strengths and needs in terms of skills, resources, and supports**

Stage 5: Action to Change

- **Characterized by moving beyond the disabling power of the mental illness**

- **Danger:**

    - **Begin to doubt their ability to function on their own**

    - **Begin to doubt their ability to trust their own decisions**

    - **Go back to a life lived in the system**

- **Peer Support Role**

    - **Help the peer to trust their own decisions**

    - **Help the peer to take more and more responsibility for their life.**

Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change (TTM) Prochaska & DiClemente
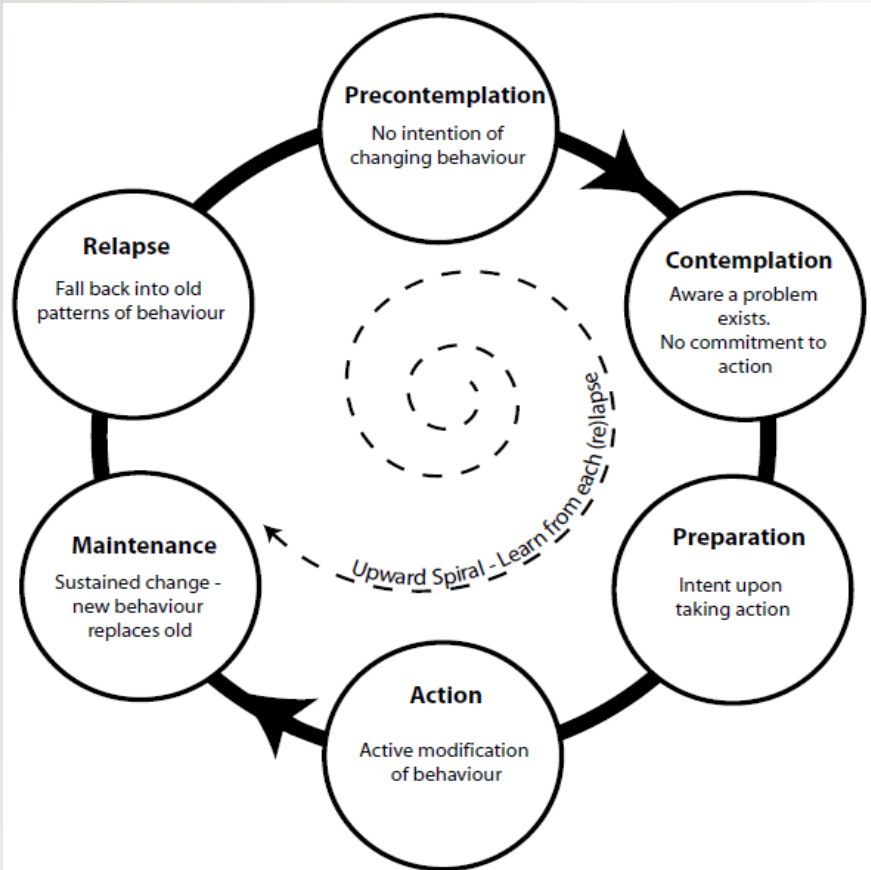
- Prochaska, J. O., & DiClemente, C. C. (1983). Stages and processes of self-change of smoking: Toward an integrative model of change. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 51*(3), 390–395

- Prochaska, J. O., & DiClemente, C. C. (1982). Transtheoretical therapy: Toward a more integrative model of change. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice, 19*(3), 276–288

Questions?

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