



"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has."

MARGARET MEAD

What Is Family Recovery? A Personal Story

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We all strive toward that elusive goal called "Recovery," the person with the illness and their family members. Here is a typical recovery statement:

"Recovery is a personal and life altering journey that provides hope for a better future by overcoming the barriers and obstacles that you may encounter."
Chesterfield Mental Health Recovery Statement

In 1979 we lost our 13 year old son and brother to suicide; in 1983 we lost a loving father, friend and husband of 20 years to delusions which were a part of his illness. There was no hope and no recovery; there was only anger, fear, grief, and misunderstanding. The whole family suffered.

Slowly we began to realize that it was the illness, not the people we loved who had caused our pain.

We each began to learn more about the illnesses known then as mental illness. It was none too soon, because over a period of five to ten years, my other four children began to have symptoms of various brain disorders. The crisis began but this time we had hope. Hope because we knew more about what we were dealing with, Hope because they could offer support to each other, Hope because of the new understanding about cause and treatment.

Times were not easy; we said and did the wrong things many times over. We struggled to find the best treatment and professionals for each individual. Everyone had to make their own determination of what was best for them and their families. This was perhaps the hardest part for me. Knowing that they were capable of making their own life decisions, I had to learn to offer support and guidance when asked. It was not up to me to control their lives, I had to let go.

It has been an arduous task. Do I still hold my breath when the phone rings in the middle of the night? Yes. Are there times when I grow tired of the illness? Yes. Has it been worth it to watch my children learn to deal with their illnesses and grow into responsible loving adults? Yes.

We have all survived, there are still minor crisis, but we know to watch and not let symptoms get out of control. My children are their own support team. They are on the recovery road.

My family is well, we share memories good and bad, and we celebrate birthdays and special occasions with our extended family. They hunt, fish, swim, camp, go to shows and dinner, and take care of themselves and those around them.

My "new" husband of 20+ years and I have our own lives, we travel when we can, make plans with our friends and lead a full and happy life.

This to me is what family recovery means.