Recovering through everyday life activities

Findings from a participatory photovoice study with people experiencing mental health issues

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You’re doing collecting and cleaning your clothes and cooking your meals and keeping the house tidy, so, you know, and then there’s going out for coffee or stuff like that. You know, all these normal sort of things…

I think recovery is about finding a job… because when you are not working, what are you doing with your life?

I think just doing stuff you enjoy really helps recovery…

Now I’m cooking my own food and trying to eat well…

Getting into routine…

… another thing I like to do is to go to the Botanical Gardens and go for a walk, walk around the park. And looking at all the cyclist and the rowers and I like that…

I started to find friends, you know, I started to find girlfriends. Not too many, but just one for your life…

For me recovery would be waking up and looking forward to the day…
Outlines

• Background and aim:
  Recovery journey and the role of everyday life activities

• Methods

• Key findings

• Implications for research and practice
Research Questions

1) How do people experiencing MHI choose their everyday activities?

2) How these activities support recovery journey?

Methods

• Participatory grounded theory research

• Mind Australia (Melbourne)
  o Recovery College
  o Peer Recovery Communities

• 21 participants

• In-depth individual interviews
  o Occupational history
  o Perspectives on recovery

• Photo-Voice Course
  o Co-facilitated by a peer-worker
  o Taking photographs
  o 5-weekly group discussions
Methods of data gathering

Photo-Voice course

- Individual interviews
- Session 1: Introduction, Orientation to Photo-Voice
- Session 2: Photo-Voice discussion, Recovery and activities
- Session 3: Photo-Voice discussions, Activities and choices
- Session 4: Photo-Voice discussions, Deciding on the 5th session
- Session 5: Photo-Voice analysis, Conclusion

- Everyday lives and activity engagement
- Recovery
- Take photographs about yourself
- Take photographs about your activities
- Take photographs about your choices
- Label and describe the photographs
Key findings

Striving for a good quality life

Choosing to recover

Life Journey

Learning and navigating strategies

Living a life on hold
Living a life on hold

- Living an aimless life
- Being stuck
- Taking a break
- Seeking safe haven

**It’s just sort of trying to go with the flow a little bit. So I feel a little bit slack sometimes doing it, but I know that’s actually what I need to be able to**

(Lucy)

**[Image of a recipe]**

I totally stop shopping and cooking and all the things that I used to do. And that was after a head ECT. It just makes me frustrated because I used to do it so readily (Jane).

**[Image of bikes]**

If I’m struggling with depression and I can’t sleep I’ll go out at one o’clock in the morning and start working on the bicycles and divert the attention. I think it gives me a break from myself, a kind of a rest period (Anthony).

**[Image of a suitcase with medication]**

I’d be on holidays holidays... to be away from my house, from the grind, the dirt, the filth and the mess (Catherine).
Choosing to recover

Taking action
- [image of a basketball] Don’t think that doctors gonna prescribe you a drug and that magically make you better. You also need to make a personal effort yourself for that (Kyle).

Gaining the momentum
- [image of sunrise] ‘A brand-new day’ There is always going to be a new day, you know. As bad as today feels, there will be another day (Anthony).

Assuming responsibility
- [image of exercise equipment] Every day [emphasis] I go to the pool. I don’t enjoy it; it’s my job, my part-time job [emphasis] that I do it every day (Xena).

Connecting to the context
- [image of a handshake] Even with the treadmill, even with TV or the radio, even with my guitar music, even with my books, it is still not enough. I need that human contact (Fred).
Learning and navigating strategies

Knowing myself

Understanding mental health issues and recovery

Developing strategies

Finding my people

[image of a tennis court]

Sport is a big thing for me... because I am not able to do much [tennis], I watch it a lot, I follow it a lot... (Lucy)

[image of fruits]

It’s self-awareness... just the matter of understanding your illness and how it works (Catherine)

[image of botanical gardens]

I made the worst decisions with some friends and, you know, actually talking to people that aren’t actually getting help (Black Angel)

[image of a 20-dollar note]
Striving for and maintaining a good quality life

A life on track

I think recovery is about finding a job, because if I’m not working, what am I doing with my life? (Maxim)

Living in the real world... (Damon)

Enjoyment

I love clothing and fashion and stuff; I think just doing stuff you enjoy really helps recovery (Gold)

Overcoming stigma

Being brave enough to overcome disability, shortcomings and disadvantage and not having people run me down because I have a mental illness (Jane)

Fitting in

I love looking after disabled people (Jane)

Finding good things in the community [one] can help with is very important (Damon)
Conclusion and implications

Recovery is a unique and ongoing journey that involves a range of every-day experiences

✓ Providing opportunities

✓ Encouraging reflection and action

✓ Innovative methods to encourage participation, partnership and empowerment
Thank you

I wish to thank my supervisors, Prof. Ellie Fossey and A/Prof. Tracy Fortune; Prof. Lisa Brophy and Louise Mountford; Staff at Mind Recovery College and Peer Recovery Communities, and; the participants who shared their stories with this study.

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