

Skills



of Central Pa

## Skills Central Site Based Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program

### Recovery Conversation Starters – Workshop

#### Why use Six Word Memoirs

Some people who are referred for psychiatric rehabilitation services are not engaged with service providers, struggle to come up with personally meaningful goals, and have difficulty articulating their values, interests, and preferences. The activity described in this workshop, six-word memoirs, is one way to begin a recovery conversation. Exploring where a person has been (what his/her life has been like so far) can set the stage for conversations about the future (where s/he is going from here).

#### History Six Word Memoirs

Ernest Hemingway was once asked to write a novel in only six words. His response was:

*For sale: baby shoes, never worn.*

With this response, six word memoirs were born. In a six word memoir, people try to tell their life story in six words. Many people write tons of memoirs, focusing on different aspects of their lives in each one.

Millions of English classes across the country write six word memoirs as an assignment, but people who love to write often write them just to write them.

In just six words, people can often cope with issues they've been having, express their feelings about things that they never could before, and later remind themselves of how they were feeling at that point in time.

The magic of six word memoirs is that everyone interprets each one differently. In fact, someone could write one today, read it three years from now, and feel completely different about it. If you have never written a six word memoir before, I highly recommend that you do. Not only are they fun, but they can also be life-changing. This creative outlet created by Hemingway has completely changed our outlook on writing and reinforces the idea that sometimes, less is more.

### **How to Create a Six Word Memoir**

In the process of developing these personal statements, individuals meet in a group that is focused around identifying and exploring types of personal medicine.

During the group participants are educated on the history of six word memoirs.

Participants are first asked to think of their lives whether it be in the present, past or future aspirations.

They are asked to think about their recovery by identify strengths and supports or barriers.

Participants then begin to work with staff to brainstorm words that reflect what story they want to tell.

Once the words are chosen participants then work collaboratively with staff and peers to pick an image on the computer to their memoirs.

The participants work together to pick out music that will accompany their memoir. (Final decision is completed by a vote of the participants)

The pictures and words are then put into a slide show with music.

Participants also received a “hard copy” of the memoirs during which time another group was facilitated where participants discussed their current psych rehab goal and how their memoir related to it.

### **Helpful Websites**

Pintrest-[pintrest.com](http://pintrest.com)  
Pat Deegan and Associates-[patdeegan.com](http://patdeegan.com)  
Google Images-[images.google.com](http://images.google.com)  
YouTube- [youtube.com](http://youtube.com)

### Other Resources

- Davidson, L., Tondora, J., Lawless, M. S., O'Connell, M. J., & Rowe, M. (2009). *A practical guide to recovery-oriented practice: Tools for transforming mental health care*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Ridgway, P., McDiarmid, D., Davidson, L., Bayes, J., & Ratzlaff, S. (2002). *Pathways to Recovery: A Strengths Recovery Self-Help Workbook*.
- Simon, S., Howe, L., & Kirschenbaum, H. (1995). *Values clarification: A practical, action-directed workbook*. NY: Warner Books.
- Spaniol, L, Koehler, M., & Hutchinson, D. (2009). *The recovery workbook: Practical coping and empowerment strategies for people with psychiatric disabilities* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).
- Cohen, M., & Mynks, D. (1993). *Compendium of activities for assessing and developing readiness for rehabilitation services*. Available from BU Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation
- Farkas, M., Cohen, M., McNamara, S., Nemeec, P. B., & Cohen, B. (2000). *Assessing Readiness: Psychiatric Rehabilitation Trainer Package*. Boston, MA: Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation at Boston University.

Thank You! Skills Central Participants, Sara Mays and Kelly Shuler

### Contact Information

Skills Central Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program  
9 West Pine Street  
Philipsburg, PA 16866  
(814)342-9800

[kshuler@skillsgroup.org](mailto:kshuler@skillsgroup.org)

[smays@skillsgroup.org](mailto:smays@skillsgroup.org)