



MISSISSIPPI STATE HOSPITAL

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WELLNESS RECOVERY ACTION PLAN INTRODUCES MSH PATIENTS TO RECOVERY

WHITFIELD— No matter the background or specific situation of patients who come to Mississippi State Hospital, they all have something in common: the desire to get well and stay well.

One way the staff at MSH is helping patients with that goal is by introducing the Wellness Recovery Action Plan – WRAP, as it's mostly known. The work of Dr. Mary Ellen Copeland, WRAP is based on the experiences of others who have lived with mental illness and focuses on helping those living with it to achieve long-term stability.

“It was created by Mary Ellen Copeland, who was a patient herself at various times in her life, and didn't really feel like she had a proven plan to get better,” said Corey Myers, an academic teacher in Adult Education who has been introducing WRAP to his students. “It's just now coming to Mississippi. We had our first workshop last month.”

The introduction to the WRAP principles and recovery concept all starts with a questionnaire that asks the patients about their attitudes regarding recovery and wellness.

“We just see how they engage and participate in that,” Myers said. “Then we kind of go into it chapter by chapter based on Copeland's book. It really just depends on if they're able and really wanting to try to recover, because that's the first part.”

It's related to the models often used for alcohol addiction – simply show people that even though they may have to live with a problem for the rest of their life, there is still hope, there are still people who will provide help and support, and dreams and goals can still be realized.

“It may be something you have to deal with, but you can recover from it,” Myers said.

Sometimes, all it takes for someone to realize that are some exercises anyone can do, as long as they make the decision to do it themselves and really embrace the notion that recovery is possible.

One of the things they do in Myers's class is creating a “wellness toolbox,” in which the participants write down their feelings and experiences from when they're well. It gives them something to look at and see how they once were, and give them ideas on how to get back to that point.

They'll make several copies of it and give it to people who can support them and help them in their recovery. If the patients begin to fall off the wellness track, Myers said, they'll now have people who can help them get right back on it.

It's not a therapist or psychology group; he simply facilitates the recovery program. It's for them, by them, Myers said.

He said he thinks the patients find it less threatening to get involved when the program is presented from an educational and self-help perspective.

He has only been offering the WRAP program for a few weeks, but he can already see a difference in the five patients who have been working with the program. Four of the five guys who have been participating usually come by his classroom three times a day.

They get to engage in conversation not only with Myers, but with other patients who may be in his classroom, even if those others are not actively taking part in WRAP. That can help spur on those who haven't decided to take that first step and get involved.

"They at least get to enjoy the conversation, and they provide insight into the conversation. One thing we've talked about with the WRAP is empowerment and confidence, and that's one thing they're able to work on with the other guys," Myers said.

"They can provide that confidence to other guys, and it gives them empowerment by providing that confidence to the other guys."

That's exactly how some of the patients using WRAP see it. They simply haven't approached their mental health from that perspective before.

"The wellness recovery action plan has helped me realize that recovery is possible and I can be empowered to act on my own plans," one patient said. "I don't have to be scared about a possible relapse when I go home because WRAP has given me the power to take control over my diagnosis."

Dr. Joseph Griebler, Director of Male Receiving and the Chemical Dependency Unit, said he is a firm believer in the concept of recovery and is very proud of the initiatives that are taking place on his unit.

"Every single individual, regardless of their psychiatric or cognitive circumstances, wants to feel hope, and they want to believe that there is some possibility that they can change their lives. This is universal," Griebler said.

The recovery concept is so powerful, he said, because it allows individuals to take an active, interested role in their care. Those concepts have also spread out to communication classes being offered by Thom Coates and in a choices class offered by Doris Macsherry, both adult education instructors on the MSH campus.

"Through Corey's tireless work, through the leadership and vision shown by Debbie Waller, and through the superb WRAP-grounded groups and classes being led by Thom Coates and Doris Macsherry, I believe that our Male Receiving clients are being given the gift of daring to believe in themselves again," Griebler said.



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Myers said he has actually been a little bit surprised at how strongly and quickly some of his students had taken to WRAP.

“They’re speaking more confidently about recovery and realizing that they can recover,” he said.

One patient put it as simply as possible:

“The WRAP lets you think about the good times in your life and how you can get that back,” he said. “WRAP works if you let it do that for you, but you gotta take the action.”

MSH, a facility of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health, was founded in 1855 and facilitates improvement in the quality of life for Mississippians who are in need of mental health, chemical dependency or nursing home services, by rehabilitating to the least restrictive environment, utilizing a range of psychiatric and medical services, which reflect the accepted standard of care and are in compliance with statutory and regulatory guidelines. The hospital is accredited by the Joint Commission.

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PHOTO ATTACHED:

A former coach, Corey Myers says he likes to use quotes to illustrate some of the principles he teaches to his patients. “It’s the coach in me,” he said.