

# Success Stories



The graph of my life is not a straight line pointing always upward toward the pinnacle of life's mountain, nor is the path perfectly straight on level ground. I seem to make a climb, lingering on a plateau long enough to catch my breath and adjust to the changes made by my newly-learned strategies and techniques. Sometimes I linger too long, and sometimes I don't linger long enough. I also decide now and then to go back down the hill to a more familiar comfort level for a spell, but it is not a relapse. I have not fallen so far back that I must start over. I am merely getting back to a safety zone until the brain submits once again to my own authority and control.

When a traveler pulls off to the side of the road to fix a tire, we do not consider that a failed trip, and we would not declare that the person will not make it back on the road. I have never heard of anyone who pulls off the road and decides to stay there. Traveling through life is like that. Sometimes we get a flat and linger at a plateau of recovery until repairs can be made. Sometimes we go too fast and pay the penalty. Other times, we limp along the shoulder until we can get to a rest stop and refuel. And then there are times when the road conditions couldn't be more perfect.

It isn't just the perfect road trip that we count as recovery. The entire trip is recovery as long as we keep our destination in focus.

Recovery encompasses an individual's whole life, not just the good times and happy moments, and not just the times when my mind is clear and no one is spying on me. Emotional ups and downs are normal. Everybody has them.

In my nearly 30 years of experience with mental health professionals, I have noticed they have one thing in common: the need to "stabilize" me. Who is stable? Why would anyone want to take my ups and downs from me? It's unnatural for a person to not be able to cry at a funeral, to laugh at a cute toddler, or to be pensive after watching a good documentary.

If stabilization means taking away from me the natural ups and downs of emotional life, I prefer to stay sick. How does making me behave unnaturally assist me with integration into my community? Are my emotions inappropriate sometimes? Absolutely! But this is not a sign of mental illness. It is a sign of being human.

I want my whole life to be in recovery, not just parts of it. Instead of stabilization, I would prefer "normalization." Let me be unique and accepted for who I am without pretense. Let me show you the insights and wisdom that grow from my adversity and challenges, my successes and uniqueness. Take me as I am. What I wholly am, and help me achieve more of the good stuff I have already gained.

~Melody Worsham

**RECOVERY:** A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.