

# Success Stories



During mid-life I had an extended period of dark days that lasted about three years. Because during that time I was acting in ways that were dangerous to myself, my family had the wisdom to coordinate with a judge and mental health providers and had me committed to inpatient treatment. There I received the diagnosis of schizophrenia and substance abuse.

Inpatient treatment was a trauma to me because I had always imagined that I needed less medicine and more aerobic exercise. Included in the regimen of hospital programs were opportunities to access 12-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous and spiritual praise and prayer. The concepts of surrender and acceptance were difficult for me, and I bristled at the idea. I was at rock bottom. I could not imagine a new life at the time, and it was with my defenses up that I went with the program. I knew nothing but stigma about major mental illness. But, there in the hospital for three months, the whole world of health and recovery began to be opened to me through educational sessions, briefs, rehabilitative programs, and appropriate social activities. Thank God for Mississippi's state hospital system!

For four more years it took continuing economic adaption and plenty of outpatient treatment, lots of 12-step honesty, open-mindedness, and willingness to get me to believe in recovery and begin to work with the system to define a new vision of my future. I still held to my strengths-based identity as a musical and creative performing artist. Thanks to the resiliency of cognitive processing, work rehabilitation, some college credits, plenty of volunteering, commitments to a partner in a relationship, and religious ministry, the good is really shining through!

In 2014, I gained a career position with Mental Health Association of South Mississippi, which is continuing to go well. I continue to grow as a creative and musical artist, which is near and dear to my heart. One of the accomplishments I'm proud of is working with the Mississippi Department of Mental Health and becoming a Certified Peer Support Specialist in 2012. Membership with the National Alliance on Mental Illness and volunteering in several consumer programs has helped me a great deal to believe in the possibilities of the present, and to respect that mental illnesses are medical illnesses that may have environmental factors.

I've been doing really well now for about four years. With a sober mind and body, I've made some amends and realized a new level of reconciliation. I've learned that reality does not always match fantastic imaginings. I've remained compliant and invested in mental health treatment outcomes. It has required a firm commitment, but recovery is real! Life is new on the other side of the limiting power of mental illness!

- Chris Marcell, CPSS

**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.