Recovery Made Simple

A Guide to Self-Tracking Recovery.

A simpler and faster way to recovery
from mental health and addiction concerns.

Gearóid Carey

CONTENTS:

- Introducing Recovery Trackers
- How to use Recovery Trackers
- How to help a friend with a Recovery Tracker
- How to be a Tracker Mentor
- How to use Team Trackers
- How to use Trackers in a group setting
- So many great ways to use self-tracking recovery tools
- How to create your own recovery tracking tools
- Self-tracking as a protective factor for people engaging with mental health and addiction services.
- Introducing Wellbeing Trackers and how to use them
- How to use Trackers for Community Wellbeing Surveys
- How to create your own wellbeing tracking tools
- The relationship between recovery and wellbeing
- Beyond recovery
- Harness the power of your mind
- A little wisdom

Introducing Recovery Trackers

As soon as you have charted your first score you have started your recovery process. You have identified where you are at and where you want to get to. You now have a simple process through which you can achieve recovery. All you have to do is work on improving your score a little each week. I have helped hundreds of people with this process and it works!

Recovery Trackers are tools to help you manage your recovery. They allow you to track, share and reflect on your progress. They help you to find a path to feeling well again. They can help you to succeed in important areas of your life that are now very difficult. Using a self-tracking recovery tool can make your recovery process simpler, faster and more reliable.

Recovery Trackers give you a straightforward way to understand and achieve recovery. However, recovering from a difficult time in your life, such as a mental health or addiction concern, is not always easy. Each person's journey is unique and some parts of it can be very challenging. Recovery Trackers make to process simpler, but it can still be hard with many challenges. You a still have to put in the work that is required to succeed. You still have to face and grow from the challenges that await on your recovery journey. Your journey may not always be easy and using a Recovery Tracker will help you find your way.

Recovery Trackers help you do two things: (1) measure your progress and (2) increase the strengths, resources and supports you are connecting with. Doing both these things is a research-based approach that will help you have a successful recovery.

There are many Trackers to choose from. The key is to find the ones that feel right to you and to use them in a way that works for you. Here is an overview of some of them.

- The Recovery Tracker. This tool allows you to track your progress in three important areas of your life: (1) your personal wellbeing, (2) in close relationships and (3) how you are doing in social settings. This is a powerful tool for recovery. It allows you to monitor and reflect on your progress each week. There is a standard and a brief version, so choose the one that works best for you.

- The Recovery Process Tracker. This tool helps you monitor how supported and how stressed you are feeling on your recovery journey. When you are feeling supported and you stress levels are not too high you are on the right track for a successful recovery.

- The Engagement Tracker. This tool can be used for any meeting you attend that supports your recovery, for example, it could be a support group, a mentoring session, a therapy group or a counselling session. This tool can help you connect with supports that are a good fit for you.

- The Addiction Recovery Tracker. When you are recovering from an addiction it is helpful to chart your progress each week. The Addiction Recovery Tracker allows you to do this by tracking the frequency of your use and how negatively it is affecting you. This Tracker can be used for a lot of different concerns such as an addiction to alcohol, heroin, gambling, over-eating, pornography and online shopping. Working on reducing use and negative impact week-by-week works for a lot of people. All I can say about this tool is that I have seen it work for a lot of people and it has helped them to regain control of their life.

- The Mental Health Recovery Tracker. This tool helps you recover from a mental health concern by allowing you to track your symptoms and the impact they are having on your life. This helps you to reduce the frequency of symptoms and how negatively they affect you.

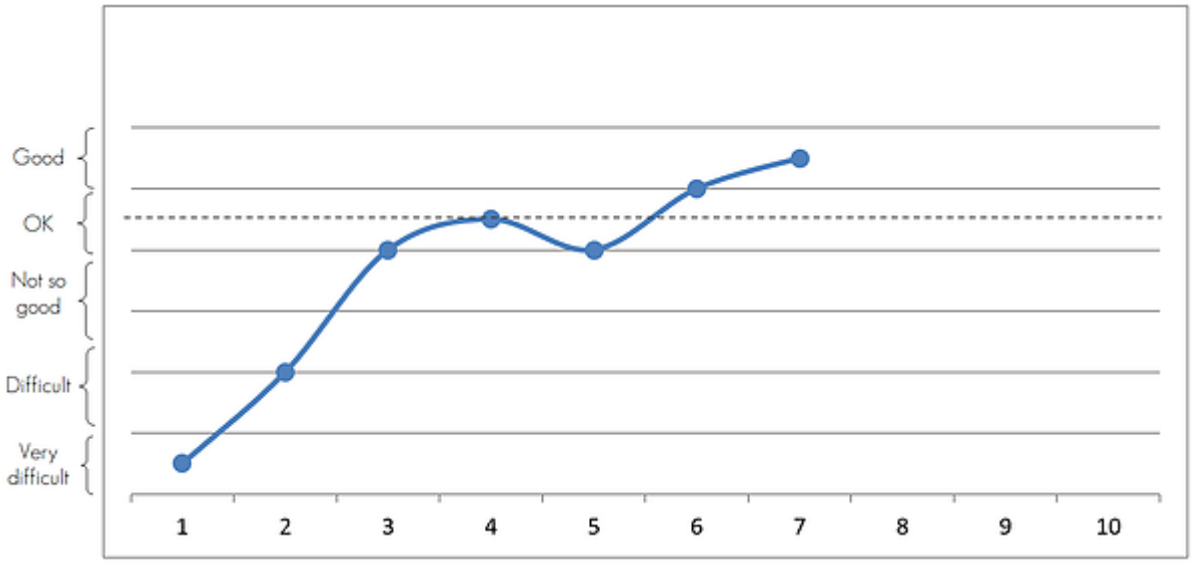
Recovery Trackers are great tools for people in recovery from a difficult time in their life. You can use them by yourself, you can share and discuss your chart with a friend or supportive family member, and you can use them in a group or as a team. Recovery Trackers can be used by peer mentors, community volunteers and recovery organisations. They are dynamic self-tracking tools that work in a wide variety of settings.

How to use Recovery Trackers
Trackers are simple to use. Here are the 3 steps to follow:

Step 1: Answer the questions on the Tracker and plot your total score on the chart.

Step 2: Think of a small, practical step you can take to improve your score.

Step 3: Repeat steps 1 and 2 each week.



Example Recovery Chart

That is all that there is to it. The key is to use Trackers in a way that feels right to you. Consider sharing your Tracker with a supportive friend or family member to discuss your progress each week. When you are feeling better look at the selection of Wellbeing Trackers and consider progressing on to one of them.

If you visit my website - www.WellbeingTrackers.com - there are stories there from people that have used Recovery Trackers. You might find it helpful to read them. My story is there. I have experienced three significant episodes where I struggled to function in life due to mental health concerns. For two of these episodes I was able to use Recovery Trackers. My experience is that self-tracking made my recovery simpler and faster and gave me a process I could believe in. I feel very fortunate that I was able to use these tools.

Also, take a look at the recovery tools that are available to download from the site: "Healthy Stress Coping Skills", "3 Steps To Recovery" and "2 Keys To A Successful Recovery". These might prove to be helpful resources for you.

The more strengths, resources and supports you have for your recovery the better things will work out. So check out different things and find what will work for you.

The validity of Recovery Trackers relies on a "study of one". This means that whether or not the Tracker is a good recovery tool depends on how the person using it experiences it. If they find it is helpful then it is a good tool for them. The same Tracker may not be helpful to another person. So each person needs to see for themselves what tools will facilitate their recovery.

How to help a friend with a Recovery Tracker
Use these steps to help a friend or family member with a Recovery Tracker:

1. First, learn about Recovery Trackers yourself. Use a few of them and get comfortable with how they work.

2. Then, explain how Recovery Trackers work in a way that feels comfortable to the friend or family member you feel may benefit from using them.

3. Ask them which Recovery Tracker they would like to use. It is fine if they would like to try out a few.

4. Pick a time and place to meet once each week to work on the Tracker they have chosen.

5. When you meet with them help them to:
    a. Answer the questions on the Tracker,
    b. Plot the total score on the chart,
    c. Reflect on their progress and
    d. Develop a small practice step to improve their score.

6. Repeat step 5 once-a-week until they are feeling better again.

7. When they are doing well on their Recovery Tracker ask them if they would like to look at some Wellbeing Trackers.

How a person scores on a Recovery Tracker is not meant to define them. The purpose of a Recovery Tracker is to generate a productive conversation and helpful feedback about an individual's journey. So, when someone plots a point to their chart ask them if that feels right to them. It is important that they feel the chart reflects how they are doing in their recovery.

When helping someone with a Recovery Tracker it is important that they feel it is a safe conversation. It is important that they feel accepted, respected and listened to. So, check in with them from time to time to make sure they are comfortable with the process.

When you are introducing Recovery Trackers to a friend or family member it can be helpful to let them know that it is okay if they don't want to use them. Let them know that they can learn how self-tracking recovery works and then they can decide if that is something they want to do. You can let them know that it is okay if they would like to use a Tracker with someone else or if they would like to use it on their own. Letting them know that all these options are okay creates a safe environment. This approach empowers your friend or loved-one with new options without putting them under pressure. If they need to use a Recovery Tracker it means they already are struggling and feeling distressed, this is pressure enough. The point of Recovery Trackers is to give them some new options to help them deal with the pain and difficulty they are experiencing.

How to be a Tracker Mentor

A Tracker Mentor is someone that is familiar with using Wellbeing and Recovery Trackers and sets time aside to help others in their community with them. A Tracker Mentors can also be called Community Counsellors, Recovery Companions, Self-Tracking Chapions or whatever name seems to work best for that community or organisation.

In addition to using Recovery Trackers, a Tracker Mentor uses the Engagement Tracker at the end of each support session. The Engagement Tracker allows the Tracker Mentor to collaborate with the person they are helping to make sure the sessions are working well and to make adjustments as needed.

Here are the steps for helping someone as a Tracker Mentor:

1. Follow the steps outlined in "How to help a friend with a Recovery Tracker" in order to help them use Recovery Trackers.

2. Use the Engagement Tracker at the end of each session. Here are the steps for using the Engagement Tracker:
    a. Ask the person you are helping to answer the questions on the Engagement Tracker. Be sure to do this a way they feel comfortable with.
    b. Plot their total score on the chart.
    c. If the score is "below the line" on the chart, collaborate and come up with some ideas about how to improve the score in the next session.

That is how to be a Tracker Mentor and volunteer your time to help others in your community. Be empowered. Be bold. Be part of something that creates recovery and wellbeing in your community. Being a Tracker Mentor is a great way to make friends, develop new skills and participate in something meaningful.

How to use Team Trackers

Team Trackers are a great way to work together as a team to promote recovery and wellbeing. Here are the steps for using Team Trackers:

Step 1: Decide which Tracker you would like to use as a Recovery Team.

Step 2: Each member of the team completes their Tracker individually.

Step 3: Add up the total scores of each person and divide this by the number of participants.

Step 4: Plot this number, the average total score of the team, on the Team Tracker Chart. If the team feels it would be helpful you can also plot the highest and lowest scores.

Step 5: Consult as a team and think of a small, practical step you can take to improve the team's score.

Step 6: Repeat steps 2 through 5 each week.

Being part of a recovery team is a great way to help improve your focus and motivation. Being part of a team increases the supports you are connecting with while also giving you the opportunity to support others on their journey.

How to use Trackers in a group setting

You can also use Trackers in group setting. In this way each person completes a Tracker of their choosing, discusses it with the group and asks the group for ideas about how they might improve their score.

So many great ways to use self-tracking recovery tools

As you can see there are several Trackers to choose from and several ways to use them. You can use them individually, with the support of a friend, with a Tracker Mentor, in a group setting or as part of a team. So have a think about it, try some things out and see what works best for you.

How to create your own recovery tracking tools

There are three types of recovery tracking tools. The first type charts your progress in the following areas of your life: (1) personal wellbeing, (2) close relationships and (3) in social settings. The research shows that it is in these areas that people show improvement when they recover from a mental health or addiction concern. Charting your progress in these areas is very helpful. The Recovery Tracker is an example of a self-tracking recovery tool based on this idea. To create this type of recovery tool for yourself just think of helpful ways of asking about these three areas. You could also add another question that re-asks about them. This type of question is checking for internal consistency. A question checking for internal consistency on a tool like this might be a broader question about how life is going in general.

The second type of recovery tracking tool charts the frequency of your concern and how negatively it is affecting you. The Addiction Recovery Tracker and Mental Health Recovery Tracker are examples of this type of tool.

The third type of recovery tracking tool relates to your experience of the support you are getting. Research shows that the more positive your experience of the support you are getting the better your recovery will be. The Engagement Tracker is good example of this type of tool.

The Recovery Process Tracker is interesting as it combines both the first and third type of tool. It measures your progress in recovery, i.e. the degree of distress you are experiencing, and how well supported you feel.

Now that you are empowered with the knowledge of the types of self-tracking recovery tools you can make customised tools for yourself and create ones tailored just right for the needs of your team, organisation, community or project. Be empowered, go create some wonderful recovery tracking tools!

The tools you create are your own personalised tools for recovery. Designed by you, to be use by you. So give yourself the freedom to design a tool that feels right. You can change how frequently you use the tool. You can change the questions and find the ones that work best for you. You could develop a tracking tool as a team or recovery community. Design one that the team or community feels is a great fit for them.

In the Self-Tracking Recovery Toolkit there are several templates you can use that make it easy to create your own tools. This toolkit is free to download from my website: www.WellbeingTrackers.com

When creating your own tools be mindful of copyright. This is not legal advice, just my opinion about copyright issues. You cannot copyright an idea, but you can copyright the expression of an idea. So, for example, the idea, or concept, that it is good to track the frequency of your symptoms and how negatively they are impacting you cannot copyrighted. But a specific expression of this concept can be copyrighted. The same dynamic of copyright applies to the idea that it is good to track recovery progress in (1) personal wellbeing, (2) close relationships and (3) social role functioning. So be creative in your expression of the idea or concept. For example, the specific types of scales, questions, form design and chart you create need to be original and not copied from someone else's work. The good news is that being original is not hard to do. All you have do is let your creativity flow and develop your own scales, charts, questions and form designs. Also, you can use the templates in the Self-Tracking Recovery Toolkit to develop your tools as permission is given to use, share and change them. These free templates make it easy to design and develop recovery and wellbeing self-tracking tools that are just right for your needs.

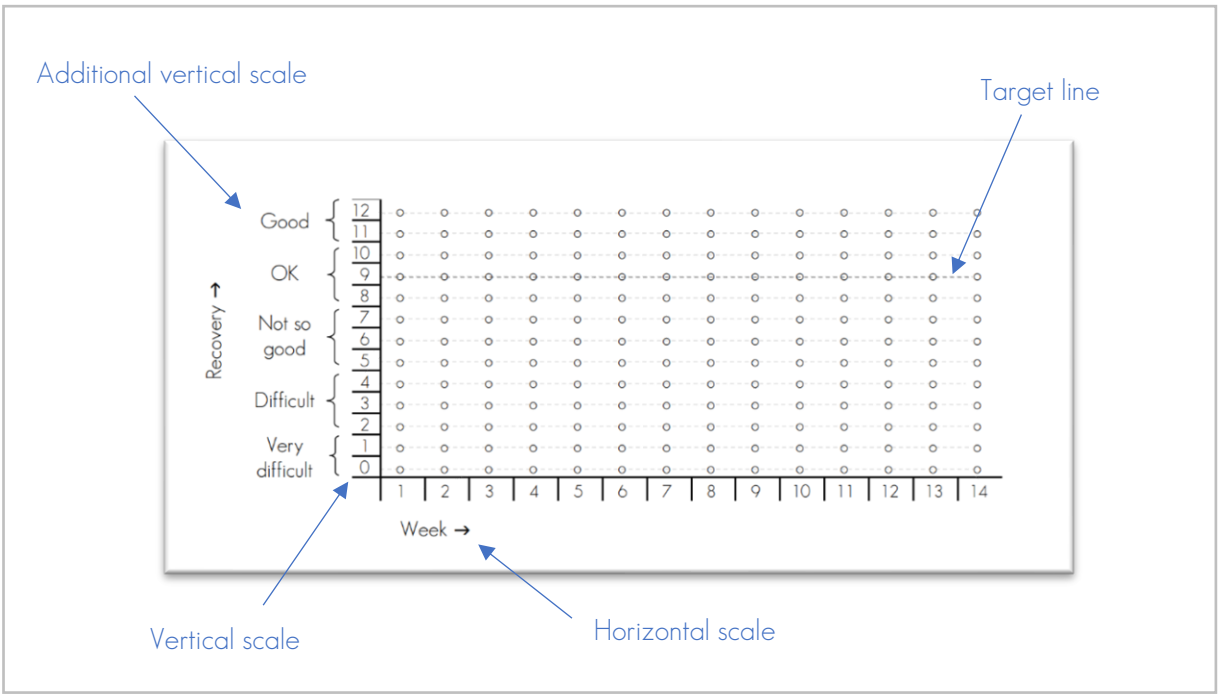
When constructing your chart consider the following elements:

1. A vertical scale that goes from the lowest possible total score to the highest.

2. A horizontal scale to show how frequently the tool is to be used, for example, every day, week, month, session, meeting or review.

3. You may also wish to add a "target line" on the chart. This is a line that you want to get to or go above. When you are below this line it indicates that you have work to do. Sometimes we talk about a score being "below the line" – this refers to being below the "target line".

4. Also, consider adding an additional, non-numerical vertical scale indicating progress.



The cool thing is that with the level of technology that humanity has reached you can create wellbeing and recovery tracking tools and share them with the whole world. I use MS-Word and MS-Excel. You could use these tools or free ones like those available from OpenOffice. Android Studio is also free. So you could get it, watch a few tutorials and create a phone app.

When you have created your tools it's time to share them with the world. I use a Facebook, YouTube and Meetups to promote the tools I created. You could use these websites, and others, to share your creations so the world doesn't miss out!

I love all this technology because it allows us to democratise access to these tools, i.e., anyone can get them, use them, create them and share them. Technology also allows us to democratise the knowledge they are based on, giving everyone access to this information. This is a very good thing!

Self-trackers as a protective factor for people engaging with mental health and addiction services.

When recovering from a mental health or addiction concern it is important to connect with support and services. Doing this skilfully is important as services are far from perfect. Tracking your progress while connecting with professional support will help you make the best of the support that is available.

Not everyone that engages with professional services benefits. For example, a lot of dropout, deterioration and dependency occurs in services. Self-tracking your progress regularly can help you avoid this.

Along your recovery journey you may connect with several professional services. And the data recorded about your progress will be documented disjointedly across these services. Collecting all this data and piecing it together would be a very complicated, time-consuming and difficult thing to do. Self-tracking solves this problem with ease and simplicity as the record of your progress stays with you.

Introducing Wellbeing Trackers and how to use them

There are many dimensions to your wellbeing. All of them can be developed with Wellbeing Trackers. Improving all these aspects of your wellbeing will give you a deeper and richer experience of life. Here are some of the Wellbeing Trackers:

- Relationship Tracker
- Student Wellbeing Tracker
- Career Tracker
- Family Tracker
- Healthspan Tracker
- Experience Tracker
- Highest Possibilities Tracker

You can download the Self-Tracking Recovery Toolkit from my website to get the full range of Wellbeing Trackers.

Wellbeing Trackers are simple to use. Here are the steps:

1. Pick a Wellbeing Tracker that you like.
2. Answer the questions on the Tracker.
3. Plot your total score on the chart.
4. Think of a small, practical step you can take to improve your score.
5. Repeat steps 2-4 regularly and reflect on your progress.

Tips for using Wellbeing Trackers:

- ✓ Go explore! Find the Wellbeing Trackers that will enhance your life.
- ✓ Consider discussing your progress with a friend. It's good to share your successes and get support with your struggles.
- ✓ Consider using a Team Tracker and working together as a Wellbeing Team with some friends.
- ✓ When you are doing well on a Wellbeing Tracker consider switching to a new one. By doing this you will grow, learn and improve many aspects of your wellbeing.

How to use Trackers for Community Wellbeing Surveys

Community Wellbeing Surveys help people to collaborate to create the reality they want to experience. A community could be a class, a school, a workplace, a team, a geographical area or whatever you consider to be a connected group of people.

Here are the steps for implementing a survey.

1. Pick a Tracker everyone in the community feels good about.
2. Complete the survey regularly. This simply involves inviting the community members to complete the Tracker. The community may find it helpful to complete the survey every month or every three months. Community members may wish to share their scores anonymously. Or members may be happy to be named on the Tracker so their readings can be recorded over time - this makes it easier to identify any community members that need more support.
3. Plot the average total score on a chart. It may be helpful to also include the highest and lowest scores on the chart. There are other options too for charting the data, for example, a scatter chart.

4. Work together as a community to improve the score on the chart.

The important thing is to keep the survey simple and something that people feel good about. Around 2 or 3 questions is usually the best.

It might be nice to change the questions being asked in the survey every year so new aspects of wellbeing can be focused on. When developing these questions think of universal aspects of wellbeing that apply to everyone. For example, everyone wants to feel safe, supported and accepted. And everyone wants to have a strong sense of meaning, purpose and belonging in their life.

How to create your own wellbeing tracking tools

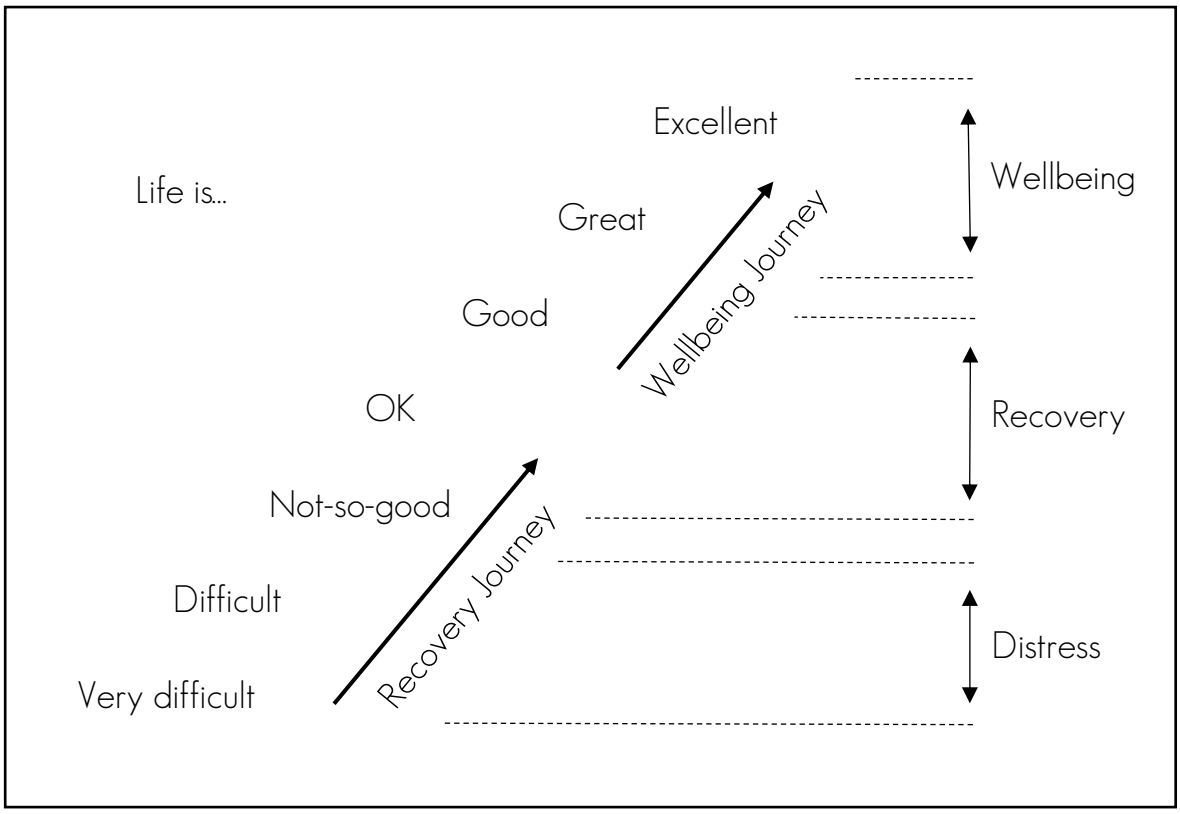
It's not as hard as you might think. You see, we are all human. We all want to feel safe. We all want to feel accepted. We all want a sense of meaning in our lives, in our study, in our work. Creating wellbeing tracking tools is all about discovering universal aspects of wellbeing. These are things that apply to everyone.

Most importantly when creating a wellbeing self-tracking tool you must realise that enhancing one person's or one group's wellbeing does not require another person or group to suffer or be harmed. If a tool brings harm to someone it is no longer valid – stop using it!

Here are 3 things to keep in mind when developing a wellbeing tracking tool. Try to develop a tool that measures wellbeing consistently, comprehensively and with adequate frequency. If it does not measure things consistently then the chart it generates will not be meaningful. If it does not measure wellbeing comprehensively then the chart may not be truly representative of what it is happening. That is to say, the chart may be improving but some significant aspects of wellbeing may actually be worsening. And if the tool is not used frequently enough is may not facilitate meaningful change.

The relationship between recovery and wellbeing

This illustration shows the relationship between recovery and wellbeing. As your recovery journey comes to an end your wellbeing journey beings.



Beyond recovery

Our culture revolves around people being stable social and economic units. Social and economic stability is a good thing, but it is not wellbeing. Wellbeing goes far beyond this. In wellbeing we have a more wonderful and rewarding experience of life than is normal in our culture.

The advertisements all around us promise fulfilment and a peak experience of life if we purchase a certain good or service. But all that happens when we buy them is our emotions are momentarily uplifted. This is not a fulfilling experience; rather, it leaves us feeling empty as something is missing. What we truly seek is wellbeing in all the aspects of our life, for example, physical, emotional, relational, career, community and spiritual.

Trackers help us to set new targets for our lives and avoid being trapped by the rules and routines that surround us. They help us to create an environment of wellbeing in our families, schools, workplaces and communities. Wellbeing Trackers help us to

escape the norms of our culture which only aspire to facilitate social and economic stability.

Harness the power of your mind

Regularly using a Tracker trains your mind to focus on what you want to achieve. This reprograms your mind. Creating wellbeing becomes a habit. Ideas spring spontaneously to mind. You focus on building a positive life. Your energy increases. Your unconscious mind works to support your consciously chosen goals. Through the power of intention and repetition you create new patterns in your life. You are elevated to a new experience of life.

When you stop using a Tracker your subconscious mind will continue to support you to achieve its goals. This is because you have internalised the Tracker's code. A key to this process is having an open and welcoming posture towards this new code. Through this process you are consciously deciding for yourself the code you want to live by.

A little wisdom

Recovery Trackers are not intended to save, cure or fix anyone. Their purpose is to contribute to a person's recovery process alongside many other strengths, resources and supports.

Recovery Trackers are not magical tools that work for everyone. Many people find them helpful, and many more people see them as an essential part of their recovery. If you don't find them helpful, don't be discouraged. Continue to look for the tools and resources that will make a positive contribution to your recovery. Keep believing!

Disclaimer:

1. The creator of this informational booklet, i.e. "Recovery Made Simple", is not responsible for, and expressly disclaims all liability for, damages or harm of any kind arising out of use, reference to, or reliance on it.

2. The information on this document, including any recommendations, only represent the author's opinion and is not to be taken as professional advice.

3. Any reliance you place on this information is strictly at your own risk.

4. You should not rely on this information as a substitute for, nor does it replace, professional advice, diagnosis or treatment. If you have a mental health, addiction or physical health concern you should consult with the appropriate professionals for support and guidance.

5. No guarantee is given that this information is correct, complete or up-to-date.

6. No assurance of any kind is given that the information in the document will improve a person's wellbeing or help them recover from a mental health or addiction concern.

7. This information in this document is only an expression of the author's opinions.

Copyright © 2018 Gearóid Carey