Developing a Recovery Message
Barriers and Strategies

Knowledge Domain

A recovery message is a person’s account of their experiences with substance use disorder and their journey to recovery. Studies have shown that sharing difficult experiences with others can improve health and well-being by building supportive bonds and discussing lessons learned from the experience. It can also help the individual make more sense of their own story. Writing it down and talking about it can make recovery seem more real — and challenge stigma. You can help by providing support to an individual who has expressed interest in sharing their story.

Recommended Group Activity

Practice developing a recovery message. Keep these points in mind:
• Choose your audience. Are you advocating to government officials? Talking to people with SUD? Educating family or friends?
• Make sure the story is personal.
• Keep it simple and in the present tense.
• Focus on recovery, not the disease.
• Use the term “long-term recovery” to indicate that you are no longer using any substances.
• Include some things that you do to remain on your recovery path.

To Learn More

SAMHSA Storytelling Guide

Your Recovery Story: How and Why You Should Share It

Did You Know
Recovery is more than no longer using a substance. It involves changing your outlook on life, behavior, and sometimes your environment. It is important to understand that recovery is personal, based on someone’s individual experiences and goals.