



Your Personal
Recovery Journey

PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

Empowerment



Welcome back.

Review of today's topic:



Empowerment

- What is empowerment?
- Why is empowerment important to my recovery?
- How can I empower myself?

Review: What should I do if something triggers me during this module?

We encourage everyone to honor their own needs as they participate in this program. If at any point you feel triggered, overwhelmed, or just in need of a moment to care for yourself, please feel free to step out, take a breath, or use any self-care methods that work for you. Returning to the group is always welcome and there is no pressure to explain. Our priority is creating a safe and supportive space for each of us. Please also let the facilitator know if you need any additional support.

So, let's get started!



What is empowerment?

Feeling empowered is important to us all. But what exactly is empowerment?

Empowerment is defined as the "process of gaining freedom and power to do what you want or to control what happens to you."¹

Believing in our ability to influence what happens in our lives and to overcome obstacles helps us to achieve our goals and enhances our mental health and life satisfaction. It also helps us to become resilient. When we empower ourselves, we nurture a sense of self- trust and autonomy. And we feel better able to get through challenges with confidence.²

It's important to note that empowering ourselves is not just about **believing** in our ability to choose, but it is also about converting those feelings or intentions into **action**.

1. Cambridge Dictionary, online.

2. Laura Copley, PhD, Discovering Self-Empowerment: 13 Methods to Foster it. Positive Psychology.com, February 21, 2024

Think of all the things you have control over in your life right now, such as:³

- It is your choice how much time you spend watching TV.
- It is your choice to use your phone or not.
- It is your choice to make changes to your support system if it is not working for you, depending on the circumstances.
- It is your choice how you start your morning.
- It is your choice how to handle change.
- It is your choice whether to talk with your psychiatrist about your medication.

When we recognize that we have control over these kinds of decisions in our day to day lives, we can start to understand what it means to be empowered. And as we continue to make other purposeful decisions and act on them, we can feel successful and confident, and responsible for the directions we are taking in our lives.

Certainly, there are some contexts which make it easier to practice empowerment and can contribute to us empowering ourselves, but ultimately, it is only ourselves who can take action. We need to use our voice to empower ourselves.

3. List of choices inspired by The Recovery College (Greenwich)/Bridge 86 Ltd 2020. CHIME Workbooks, Empowerment Workbook.
www.therecoveryplace.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/5.-Empowerment-Workbook.pdf

EXERCISE

What does empowerment feel like?

Let's reflect on this art work and write down some of our thoughts on the next page.



Artwork Title: **Empowerment**
Artist: **Nigel Bart**

EXERCISE

What does empowerment feel like?

Let's talk about this piece of art... What do you see in this artwork that gives you a feeling of being empowered? If you can't feel empowered right now, what do you **imagine** or **remember** it feels like?

Why is empowerment important to my recovery?



Empowerment is essential to recovery from mental illness because it builds our confidence and helps us to advocate for ourselves! In a recovery context, empowerment is all about the choice and control that we can exercise over our lives and over our illness. It is also about taking responsibility for our personal health and well-being but knowing also when to ask for support or help.

As the Recovery Place, Greenwich states "At some point, most people who recover realize that no one else can do it for them...that they have to take charge of their own recovery. Taking one's own risks, setting one's own goals and path, and learning one's own lessons are essential parts of recovery⁴". It is up to you to make things happen!

Sometimes our experiences within the mental health and health systems, and other experiences can leave us feeling weak and disempowered. We also know that some people feel more disempowered than others for various reasons. Perhaps a health care provider's communication style or their view that we are not the experts in our own recovery journey can contribute to a feeling of disempowerment. These are challenging situations to be in. To regain their sense of empowerment, some people have said that they find it helpful to focus on what they can control and to think of ways that they might be able to influence certain situations, including advocating for themselves.

4. The Recovery College (Greenwich)/Bridge 86 Ltd 2020. CHIME Workbooks, Empowerment Workbook.
www.therecoveryplace.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/5.-Empowerment-Workbook.pdf

Let's watch a video by Pat Deegan about medication empowerment.



Video to be played by your facilitator during the module.



VIDEO

Created by: Pat Deegan (PhD) and Associates LLC

Video link: player.vimeo.com/video/1093145319

Discussion: What does empowerment mean to you? What within this video resonates with you? Are there situations that you can think of in which you would like to empower yourself? How would it feel to empower yourself?

An alternate video titled Self-Awareness by Greg Hodge may also be shown. Please see video in Additional Resources section.

So, what can I control and influence?



We each have a wide range of things happening in our lives and things that we think about or worry about, such as our health, money, our children, war, etc. And when we are experiencing a mental illness, there are many additional issues to think about or worry about – our symptoms, our medications, side effects, social isolation, struggling with motivation, etc.

Let's face it...there are some things/issues that we have no control over – things that we can do nothing about. But there are other things that are within our control – things that we have total control over. And there are also things that we may not completely have control over, but that we may be able to do something about – we may be able to influence them.

If we consider and reflect on our own circles of influence and control, it can help us start to gain control over our lives by focusing on the things/issues that we do have control over. We may also be able to reflect on what things/issues we may be able to have more influence over.

Steve Maraboli:

"Incredible change happens in your life when you decide to take control of what you do have power over instead of craving control over what you don't."

EXERCISE

Circle of influence and control.

Inspired by Stephen Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People.

1. Make a list of some of the things that are on your mind right now...include any issue that is of concern or worry to you.
2. Now go through your list and plot them on the diagram where you think they belong (control over/no control over/influence over).
3. Think about choosing to re-direct your time and energy on those things that are within your control. What will that feel like?
4. If you want, you can also think about taking responsibility for changing the things that you might be able to influence.



How can I empower myself?



Now that we have a good sense of what we can control and influence in our lives right now and what we cannot, we can empower ourselves to focus our energy and time on those things that we can do something about. But how exactly can we empower ourselves?

Here are some ideas for you to consider:⁵

Imagine yourself taking a more active role in your treatment and recovery by advocating for yourself

Everyone's experience with mental illness is different, so you are the expert when it comes to yours. Learn as much as you can about your illness and your rights and start to actively participate in your own healthcare. See Additional Resources section for more resources on medication empowerment.

Imagine yourself speaking up and although it may be difficult, try to speak up and communicate what you need

You have the right to ask for what you need from your healthcare team, at home, in your workplace, etc. By stating your needs and your opinions clearly, you can build a healthy relationship with your support system and other people around you.

5. Some of the points in this section were inspired by the Eisenberg Family Depression Centre, University of Michigan. Empower Yourself. www.depressioncenter.org/outreach-education/depression-toolkit/want-stay-mentally-healthy/empower-yourself

Build your ability to cope and bounce back from difficult situations and stress

This is called building resilience and there are many ways you can build resilience: by taking care of and being compassionate with yourself, by building your coping skills through exercise, meditation, talking with a friend, or engaging in a hobby. Imagine what it would feel like to bounce back a little easier from difficult experiences! Please see additional readings on how to build resilience in the Additional Resources section at the end of this workbook.

Set realistic expectations

As you empower yourself, keep in mind that recovery is a journey that does not happen overnight. Expect that there will be setbacks, expect that there will be people who will not understand your illness or your journey, but also expect that there are many aspects of your recovery journey that you are in control of. To the degree that you can, try to remain optimistic and refer to your circles of influence and control to stay focused on those things that are within your control.

Don't forget to connect!

Empowerment is all about you and your choices, but connections with family and friends and others can help provide support when you need it. Peer supporters can be an amazing support to you in your journey to empower yourself. As they have been through a similar journey, they can guide you in knowing your rights, provide you with information, and support you as you make choices and decisions.

Empowerment is a process of knowing yourself, identifying your goals and the direction you want your life to take, building up some small wins in your day-to-day life, being confident, and claiming your space and place in this world!

Let's watch a personal recovery story video about empowerment.



Video to be played by your facilitator during the module.



VIDEO

Created by: Schizophrenia Society of Canada, ColCon Productions

Video link: player.vimeo.com/video/1063645481

Discussion: Share thoughts about the video if you wish. For example, how did hearing Becky's story about empowerment make you feel? What inspired you about Becky's story? How does this video fit with your experience of empowerment or struggling with self-empowerment?

EXERCISE

Feeling empowered.

Can you think of something that you did or said that made you feel empowered? What did that feeling of being empowered lead you to do? OR What actions were you able to take because you felt the way you felt?

After reviewing today's content, can you think about something that someone did or said that led you to feel empowered? How did that feel?

Wrap up and “what did I get from this module?”



Closing reflections and outstanding questions.

Reminder to take some time to review your circles of control and influence.

Reminder to take some time to review the ways that you can empower yourself that we learned in today’s module.

Additional reflections you can do at home.

If you have access to photos on your phone or elsewhere (e.g. in a magazine, etc.), find a photo that reflects empowerment. Hang it somewhere where you can see it daily. Draw/paint a picture of what empowerment feels like to you and put it on your wall...etc.



See below for additional resources and support:



How to be More Resilient: 8 Ways to Build Your Resilience

Learn what resilience means, how it impacts our stress and emotions, and the common barriers to being resilient.

VISIT WEBSITE



Empower Yourself

These strategies can help you gain a greater sense of control over the decisions and actions that impact your health.

VISIT WEBSITE



Reclaiming Your Power During Medication Appointments with Your Psychiatrist

Learn to think differently about medication.

VISIT WEBSITE



Self-Awareness

A video about self-awareness and empowerment by Greg Hodge.

WATCH VIDEO



These resources can be accessed electronically through the online participant workbooks available at your yourpersonalrecoveryjourney.ca

Thank you for participating in this module.

Please **fill in an evaluation** at the end of each module!

Your facilitator will provide you with an evaluation form at the end of each module, or send one to you electronically following each module.

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