Taking Back Power for the Journey

Over the past few years, and then this week again, someone will say to me “You may be a person who has lived with mental health issues, but you are different now, and I could never do what you do!”

While that may sound like a nice statement, it is another form of labelling. It is another way of separating people to ‘us’ and ‘them.’

The fact is that we are all human beings. We are all on a journey. Sometimes we feel like we are moving forward but other times we feel that we are very stuck. Sometimes we even feel so much darkness around us that it does not feel like we can breathe.

What does make a difference is how we claim our power when we are experiencing those milestones in our journey.
Taking Back Power for the Journey

I have a choice to make each day. I have a choice to get up and come to work even when the pain is pretty bad because I believe that ever so gradually by keeping my routine and not cuddling under my warm blanket, that as I walk, as I engage with others, as I focus on the work to be done that the pain will gradually subside. Usually that works for me. When I can work, even in pain, I am taking back my power.

I have a choice to make when I am feeling stuck. I can play games of Solitaire and Mahjong on the computer as the time passes and go to bed wondering where all those hours disappeared. Yet I have another choice. I can journal and really try and understand why I feel so stuck (sometimes weather permitting I can even sit outside and surround myself with nature as I write) and usually, unless the pain is getting too bad, I can identify why I am so very ‘stuck’ and what I can do about it. When I reach that point, that feeling of being ‘stuck’ dissolves and slowly I can take my power back.

Then there are those moments, those moments when I am sharing my power with someone else and those are the moments that I choose to remember because when my life can touch someone else, that is what it is all about when we are travelling the journey of being human together that we are both blessed and given a chance to grow. Those are the moments, fleeting though they may be, that feed my soul and passion for why I make the choice to take my power back.

It is in the moment that I can share with another our mutual pain over the loss of a child and know that through my sharing my own experience that I have planted seeds to allow her to grow.

It is in the moment that we are asked to share with college students what it means to live with mental illness and to walk in these shoes, that I reach into my soul. It is in those moments that I can speak from the heart to share a journey of darkness and pain, of realizing the possibility of change because others were supporting me, that I was able to take the risk of exploring my inner self and values and being able to find purpose in my life once more.

Each person travels their own journey and finds their own path, but we discover that as much as we may want to be silent, the pain does not begin to dissolve until we can share that pain with another person, so that we can begin to take our power back!  

Kathyann E Corl
Our Second Recovery Book (continued from page 1)

(This is our first Recovery Book,
Our second book is Recovery In Our Own Words II)

That I was invited to share and be a leader in this conversation is why I wanted to put together questions to make it easier for us to tell our stories of Recovery. I ask not only consumers to express themselves on making an impact that some of us already have, but also all who are part of Keystone to express the impacts that they have made in the lives of the people they work with. I feel in order to be able to affect the outcome of what we are trying to do in relaying our recovery stories that you as a person think of you as a whole part of these stories.

The first book was a lot of work but now we will be able to enlarge our impact on the people that read about how everything has an impact on mind, body, spirit, and the communities we live in as a whole. We can all make a difference in one form or another because it’s not just as one but us as a whole being able to relay the fact that we are not just our illnesses but that we are and can play a key role in our communities as we already do. So come on and have some fun as we learn from each other and also explore in one what ways we do impact each other’s lives.

It’s made a big difference in how I view myself today. I continue to grow as a part of the total picture daily in knowing our recoveries can be real and satisfying. Come be a part of the experience, I know, I am. My community is where I spend and relate all the different parts of my Recovery. Why don’t you be a part of the whole? Tell your stories!!

Linda Co-Leader of Leadership Council

Note: If you do not have a copy, please contact the Keystone Partnership to purchase one. We are down to our last box.
What is Love to me...

Love is a gift we all receive some just open theirs earlier so to me I see love as the daily bread that feeds and nourishes the soul.

Love is warm, tender, and gentle always sharing. For true love can’t be measured or weighed only from pious actions displayed.

Love is inexpensive for it only costs devotion where everyone can afford it.

Love flows freely like a large body of water, a source of power moving emotions afloat.

As love has been a part of us since birth to connect with the heart on genuine feelings beyond the human eyes can see for love is not a mystery, but a four letter word that has many stories, but to be placed in one category by itself for with time love heals never hurting.

Love is a shelter that fosters many people volunteering sincerity whereas love is not racial no discriminate. Love has no color or odor.

Therefore, Love is power and the essential bully that fights and conquers wars and just like a newborn love can’t love itself it requires help...

by Basil “BooBee” Talib

Congratulations!

Telissa!
This year’s Christmas in July picnic consisted of Telissa being elected as CSP Secretary, CSP Co-chair nominations, Bingo, burgers and hot dogs for lunch with sides of macaroni salad and potato salad and desserts. There were also poems and volleyball. Lynn Thane

Congratulations Elle, Lancaster!
Elle participated in the PAPRS RESPECT Art Show. Her picture was shared at the Keystone Employment Committee and a picture of it is now at the Gateway Employment Services to inspire others as they look for work.

Congratulations to Linda Thomas, and Patti Uhrich, Harrisburg
For being invited to be part of the Conversations cross-disabilities on Civic Engagement being hosted by the Disability Rights Coalition.

Congratulations to Patti for her portrayal of Mrs. Hershey (Milton’s Mom) in the Hershey Theatre!
Embracing Growth

Come, My Grandmother said
Come and sit beside the fire with me.

I need to talk to you about becoming a man.

There are many choices in life as you continue to grow
But the voice that you need to search for is the voice within you
Let it guide you to your wisdom
and do not be afraid to follow where it leads you.

WRAP is an action program designed to help you in your Wellness and Recovery, no matter what the situation is. It is utilized to help you maintain a sense of mental stability when things seem to be out-of-whack. The only way that WRAP can be effective is if you participate in what you have written in that plan and make adjustments according to any situation that you are in. WRAP is a full program that gives you guidance at times when you feel there is no hope. It is a lifeline that allows you to gain these necessary tools to get through those situations. Personally, I can not stress how many times WRAP has been able to get me through unordinary situations that would normally cause me stress and discomfort but by utilizing WRAP and having it written down in a way that anyone can see that document can see it and help me stay in balance then it has been worth the time to write it and use it as an active document in the various situations that at times can be overwhelming.

WRAP should be written when you are in a state of well being and can be applied at any time throughout the day. The most important part of WRAP is you being active and taking action with your plan. Remember that it is important that each situation may be different and that you must be able to adjust to keep your WRAP plan flexible. As you grow through some situations, your flexibility allows you to change and grow. In the process you discover hope.

I just came to several situations in my life that would ordinarily cause me a great amount of stress. By utilizing my plan which gave me several specific tools to utilize I was able to remain calm, collected, and deal with the stress so that I could take the proper action to work and gain from the experience a positive mental attitude.

This helped me to maintain a balance, a sense of accomplishment, and satisfaction in being able to deal with the problems that would normally stress me out. I cannot re-emphasize enough how important it is to participate and work with your WRAP, as well as make the necessary changes that will facilitate your wellness in mind. The concept of wholeness on all levels of your being which encompasses mind, body, and spirit is very important. I encourage you to work with your WRAP everyday in order to be able to help yourself as well as to let others help you.

Dan Rios
On September 16, 2014 Keystone birthed the beginning of their second Recovery Book with a Virtual Recovery Event. The theme was “Spreading the Wings of Recovery across Keystone.” Shelley Bishop, of A Collective Journey, was our keynote presenter as she discussed how this is an opportunity for all of Keystone to grow like the butterfly through powerful metamorphosis and transformation; to adapt like the dragonfly to change and reaching deeper into the realm of possibilities and to have the resilience of the hummingbird being open with joy to the beauty this moment has to offer us.

Over lunch our partners in Lancaster, Delaware County, Franklin/Fulton and Allegheny Counties reflected on the definitions of Recovery offered by SAMSHA in 2012 with several teams focusing on Hope: how to see it in people’s lives, the opportunities and the obstacles and the definition of how hope is a catalyst for Recovery. Through the conversations, which were facilitated where possible be team leaders, there was an opportunity for individuals to grow toward each other, finding a common ground moving forward.

Leadership Council is in the process of collecting those voices and looking for the common themes that will be focused on moving forward.

The plan is to continue to distribute and follow up with storytellers in different regions and to have another cross-agency gathering in May 2015.
Elyn Saks, who today is a professor of law, psychology, and psychiatry and the behavioral sciences at the University of Southern California’s Gould Law School, opened with a brief recollection of her early experience with schizophrenia. “Yet here I am,” she said. “I have not only a great job but also wonderful friends and a most beloved husband, Will Vinet.”

But her journey to recovery, marriage, and career wasn’t easy. In fact, the two biggest obstacles she would face in her personal quest for recovery and a meaningful life were posed by the treatment process itself.

“Gravely disabled”: The first—the stigma associated with mental illness—“The stigma of mental illness is the belief that there is a fundamental difference between mental and physical illness, between a mental disability and a physical disability. This belief is that mental illness makes one less than a whole person,” she explained.

Elyn was involuntarily hospitalized. The reason given for holding her against her will was that she was “gravely disabled.” The principal supporting evidence for the claim, as she sees it, “was that I couldn’t finish my Yale Law School homework,” a remark that drew laughs and caused her to wonder aloud.

Three essentials for recovery: “Everything about this illness says that I shouldn’t be here in front of you today. But I am. And I am, I think, for three reasons. First, I’ve had excellent treatment. and that has been combined with psychopharmacology. Second, I have many close friends and family members who know me and who know my illness. They have given my life a richness and meaning. Third, I have a wonderful work environment. My law school is an enormously supportive setting and it not only accommodates but embraces my needs.

Moving beyond stigma: “Telling stories is hard and it’s risky. We all waited until we were very far along in our professional careers to tell our stories. Personal Observation: As we share our stories we learn a little more about ourselves and why we are here.

“Coming out as a person with a severe mental illness carried substantial professional and personal risks. And it will remain that way until people with these illnesses feel that coming forward and telling their stories is safe.”
A Time to Remember

Tuesday night

December 16, 2014

A Time to give us space to grow
A Time to honor those who have shared their wisdom with us
During life’s Journey.

6:00-7:30 pm 8182 Adams Drive Hummelstown PA
Large Conference Room

You are invited to bring a small momento to share as you discuss your story.

Leadership Council Meetings

Thursday, November 20, 2014 10:00 am-11:15 am
Teleconference and Webcam

Tuesday, November 25, 2014 6:00 pm-7:30 pm
Teleconference and Webcam available

Tuesday, December 16, 2014 6:00 pm-7:30 pm
A Time to Remember

Thursday, December 18, 2014 10:00 am-11:15 am
Teleconference and Webinar

We will try to switch the Thursday meeting to Friday as equipment and space becomes available the Spring of 2015.

Advancing the Human Spirit