The Recovery Workbook

Improving mental health through doing



Debbie Bub (B.Sc. Occupational Therapy)

What I do is important for my mental health.
It matters.
It makes a difference.

A few examples of doing are the way I
eat, sleep, wash, work, speak, clean, drive, relax, cook, learn
and on and on and on.



STOP AND THINK!

This book asks me to stop and think about;
what I do
and
the consequences of what I do.

We need to understand that all these things we do,
even if they are small, matter.

My doing is very personal to me
and reflects all the
different parts of myself.

I can tell a lot about myself if
I look at all I do.

How Do I Do ?



My doing shows who I am:
physically,
psychologically,
socially and politically,
culturally and
spiritually.

Altogether my doing makes up how I live my life.

If there is something I want to improve in my life
then
I have to improve what I do.

Every time I do something I give myself a message



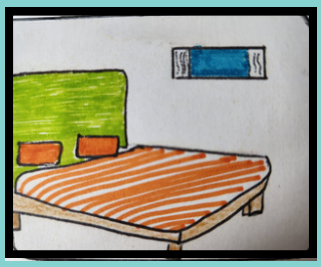


And it is not only what I do but also how I do it.



Making my bed

or



Making my bed

I am in a nonstop conversation with myself, giving myself messages every time I do something. Over and over again these actions and messages get repeated and then reinforced.



If I often do things that give me positive messages,
I begin to feel better about myself.
If I often do things that give me negative messages,
I begin to feel worse about myself.

This may sound simple but it's not.
Changing what I do is not easy.
There are so many reasons why I do the things I do.

The negative messages that I give myself because of what I do
can come from past hurts and conflicts that I have not dealt with.
Often I am unaware of this.
I may discover that I treat myself (and others) the way I was treated.
We can unknowingly begin to parent ourselves the way we were parented.

Difficult things that have happened to me in my life,
even if I no longer remember them, can interfere with how I do things.
My state of mind greatly affects what I do.



Then



Now

Also, if I am living with a mental illness this too will affect what I do.
The symptoms of my illness will show up in my doing.
This is also true of other illnesses.

However!
What I <u>do</u> can positively affect my state of mind.
If I start to recognise that small activities can make a big difference,
and I choose the right activities, which I start to practice,
I begin to get better.

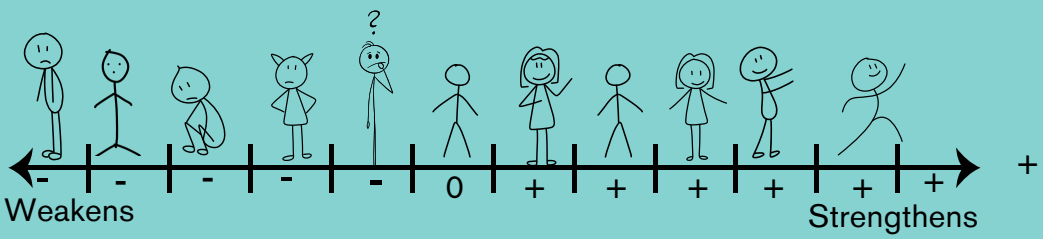


Therefore,
what I do can be divided into two categories:

Strengthens me +	Weakens me -
What I do strengthens me.	What I do weakens me.
What I do gives me a positive message about myself.	What I do gives me a negative message about myself.
What I do improves my relationship with myself.	What I do damages my relationship with myself.



We experience the
consequences of the choices we make.





Neglecting myself



Taking care of myself

If I track what I do over time I can see that:

The more often I do things that weaken(-) me, the weaker I become.
I struggle to take good care of myself and so become less able.
I may avoid doing things.
I can feel overwhelmed.
I can be confused and feel disempowered.
I do things that weaken me and even more so when I feel angry or stressed.
I may be socially isolated.
My relationship with the world suffers.
My relationship with myself suffers.

The more often I do things that strengthen (+) me, the healthier I become.
I become more able to care for myself.
I become more independent.
My relationship with myself gets stronger.
I find ways to cope when times are difficult. I feel better.
My relationship with the world improves.
My experience of myself and my life improves.

How do I know if an activity weakens or strengthens me?

I can ask myself:

Does doing this weaken me?

Does doing this give me a negative message about myself?

Does doing this put me off balance?

Does doing this have any negative (short or long term) consequences?

Do I hide this from people?

Do I say to myself I will never do that again?

Does doing this make me feel ashamed?

Does doing this hurt me or others?



If the answer to any of these is Yes, then this activity is weakening me and results in me feeling bad about myself.







I can also ask:

Does doing this strengthen me?

Do I get a good feeling when I do this?

Does doing this give me a positive message about myself?

Is doing this good for me?

Do I feel more in balance when I do this?

Does doing this have any positive (short or long term) consequences?

If the answer to any of these is Yes, then doing this is strengthening me and results in my feeling better about myself.







RECOVERY!

Getting better through doing is called Recovery.
It is understanding that choosing the right activities
to practice is like taking good medicine.
How do I choose the right activities for my Recovery?
I identify what I do that weakens me and
I begin to practice doing the opposite.

Recovery is doing what it takes to change.
When I do this, I take responsibility for myself.
In Recovery, I do what I need to do to grow and get better.



If I keep doing the same things I am going to get the same results.

I do better to get better

Recovery can benefit everyone.
This handbook explains how to get better by doing better.
It is for anyone who wants things to improve
and needs help working out how.

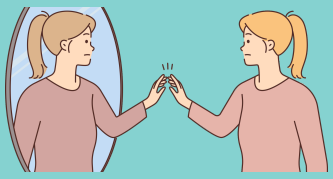


Think about your own life experience.
Can you find examples of people doing things
that show they are not okay?
Think about the bad news we see in the world.
Poor mental health has an enormously negative impact on
the lives of so many people.
Hurt people can hurt themselves and others.



Recovery means not wanting to add to all that suffering.
Recovery means wanting to limit the harm we are all capable of causing.
Recovery means adding to the health of our world.

Recovery understands that the only person I can change is myself.
My Recovery is my responsibility.

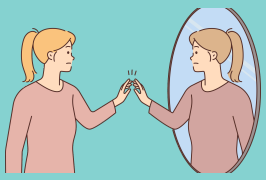


To give you an idea, here is an example of how this works:

Weakens me -	Strengthens me +
What do I do that weakens me?	How do I change this into something that strengthens me?
What do I do that gives me a negative message about myself?	What can I do to make that negative message into a positive one?
What do I do that damages my relationship with myself?	How do I improve what I do to build a better relationship with myself?

Here is the example:

I never drink water and then I get headaches	I drink a glass of water when I wake up and then another at lunch and at dinner.
I spend too much time scrolling on my cellphone at night, then I go to bed too late and am late for work in the morning	I stop using my cellphone by 10pm and at night I don't use my cellphone in bed. I read a minimum of 3 pages of a book in bed before I go to sleep.
I don't brush my teeth often enough which makes me shy to talk to strangers in social situations.	I brush my teeth when I wake up and I brush and floss before I go to sleep.
I say yes to others rather than taking time for myself.	I make specific time for myself and tell people I have an arrangement if they want something from me at that time.
I avoid people, even going shopping late at night.	I make an arrangement once a week to see a friend or family member.

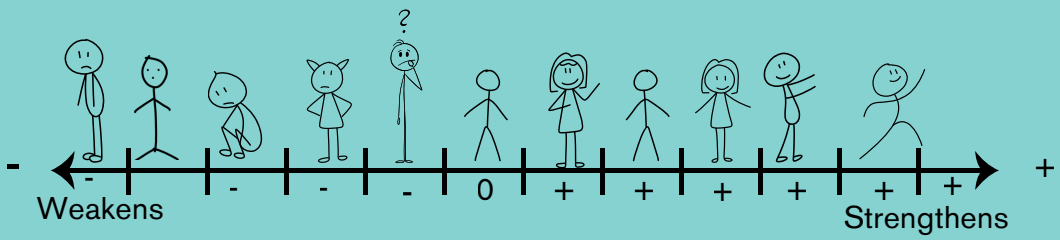


It's time to turn the focus on myself and make this personal.
Take time to fill this out by following the link:

Weakens me -	Strengthens me +
What do I do that weakens me?	How do I change this into something that strengthens me?
What do I do that gives me a negative message about myself?	What can I do to make that negative message into a positive one?
What do I do that damages my relationship with myself?	How do I improve what I do to build a better relationship with myself?

Every day I make lots of small decisions about what I do.
These daily decisions are important because they add up
and have such an impact on my life.
Even though they seem so small they are significant.

If I think of the strengthening doings as a plus (+) and
the weakening doings as a minus (-), I can see that
I am either increasing or decreasing my strength
which is constantly changing and depends on what I do.



My Recovery becomes strong when I regularly do enough strengthening
activities and not too many weakening activities.
I begin to lose my Recovery when
I don't do enough strengthening activities and
when I do too many weakening activities.

There are many things I have no control over so
I choose to focus on what I have control over which are the things I do.
And each moment provides me with the chance to start again,
to make a Recovery decision.
It is never too late to get better.

In Recovery I give myself a prescription of strengthening activities
in the same way I get a prescription for medication from a doctor.
Like a doctor gives me the right dosage of medication to get better,
I too need to decide how often to practice these
strengthening activities in order to get better.
Writing these activities into a weekly timetable and
practicing them means I am in Recovery.

Each person's programme will be unique.
Your programme is personal to you.

Below is an example of just one Recovery programme.
What will yours look like?
What do you need to practice?

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
				Make my bed ☐			Make bed ☐
Breakfast	Drink a glass of water ☑			Drink a glass of water ☐		Drink a glass of water ☐	Drink a glass of water ☐
Lunchtime		Drink a glass of water ☐	Drink a glass of water ☐		Drink a glass of water ☐		
						Contact a friend ☐	
Dinner		Drink a glass of water ☐		Drink a glass of water ☐		Drink a glass of water ☐	
		Cellphone off at 10pm ☐		Cellphone off at 10pm ☐			Cellphone off at 10pm ☐
	Brush teeth ☐		Brush teeth ☐		Brush teeth ☐		Brush teeth ☐
Bed time		Sleep by 11pm ☐			Read 3 pages of a book ☐		Sleep by 11pm ☐

If I say I am in Recovery it means I am following my Recovery prescription.
I am following my Recovery timetable.
Being in Recovery means <u>doing</u> the strengthening activities
I have chosen for myself.

My Recovery Programme:

Fill in your timetable. (Follow the link.)
What strengthening activities are you able to commit to?
Start small, even a few minutes of your time makes a difference.
Taking on too much is a common mistake.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breakfast							
Lunchtime							
Dinner							
Bed time							

Some days I will do better than other days, it is to be expected.
Remember that:
Now is always the best time to start again.

EXPECT RESISTANCE

So we come to a fork in the road and we have to make a choice:
What Do I Do?
Do I do this strengthening activity or do I do this weakening activity?
This seems like a simple choice but it can be an intense struggle.
My weakening activities may have been with me for a very long time and may be my automatic way of coping. It is not easy to just leave them behind.
My resistance to do what my Recovery needs me to do
can be fueled by difficult feelings.
Old and uncomfortable feelings that have been waiting patiently
can begin to be felt as I change what I do.
Overcoming resistance happens through
surrendering to doing what I know I need to do.
This can be the hardest part of finding Recovery.
This is why being able to ask for help is so important.
I need a support system that understands Recovery.



When I do what I <u>need</u> to do for my Recovery I begin to change.
When I do what I <u>want</u> to do, I stay the same.



How Do You Do is an ever increasing network of people supportive of their own and others' recoveries. Together we engage is a range of activities that support and enhance our own and other's recoveries.

If you want to get involved contact:
howdoyoudocapetown@gmail.com
or
contact (+27) 0792393134



I am an occupational therapist living and working in Cape Town.
This publication is a concise account of the principles
that underpin my work. It is my attempt to offer a guidebook for all,
especially to those who are seeking help but are unable
to access it, for any number of reasons.
My vision is to have a network of recovering people who are
able to support each other's recoveries and combat stigma.
Please feel free to get in touch.

Debbie Bub

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