

UIC Solutions Suite Podcast Series

Transcript for Action Planning for Prevention and Recovery Podcast

Recorded by Jessica Jonikas & Judith Cook

Announcer: Thank you for visiting the University of Illinois at Chicago's Health & Recovery Solutions Suite. The following recording comes to you from the UIC Center on Integrated Health Care and Self-Directed Recovery. Visit our online Solutions Suite to obtain free tools that promote health, self-direction, and employment for the behavioral health field.

JJ: Hello. My name is Jessica Jonikas. I'm here with Dr. Judith Cook, Director of the University of Illinois at Chicago Center on Integrated Health Care and Self-Directed Recovery. Today, we'll be talking about the workbook called *Action Planning for Prevention and Recovery*, which is available from the UIC Solutions Suite.

JJ: Welcome to our podcast, Judith. Can you tell our listeners about this workbook?

JC: I'll be happy to. *Action Planning for Prevention and Recovery* is a publicly-available version of Wellness Recovery Action Plan or WRAP for short. WRAP is an evidence-based prevention and wellness process that anyone can use to get well, stay well, and improve their quality of life. The *Action Planning* workbook is grounded in WRAP and was prepared by WRAP's lead author, Dr. Mary Ellen Copeland. It shows you how to make an action plan to manage your own wellness. Plans include simple and safe strategies such as going to bed at a reasonable time, listening to music, eating healthy foods, or writing in a journal.

JJ: That sounds pretty simple. Does it really help people?

JC: Yes it does. Action plans work well because they're easy to develop and simple to use. While people decide what they'll do in certain situations, plans also include reaching out to others for assistance and support, as needed. Many people have found that a written action plan renews their hope that things will get better, and gives them more control over how they feel and what they can do. The action plans people create can be changed over time as users learn more about what helps them to get well and stay well.

JJ: That sounds great. What kinds of things are in a person's plan?

JC: Action plans developed through the workbook include a Wellness Toolbox, which is a list of simple, easy strategies that people use to feel better. A Daily Maintenance Plan is also included, which summarizes the actions people are willing to take, every day, to stay well. People also develop a Triggers Action Plan to identify circumstances that produce uncomfortable feelings for them, as well as specific ways to manage these triggers. Another part of the plan is a list of Early Warning Signs that a crisis may be developing, and how to immediately address these signs in order to avoid a crisis. Another list, called How to Know When Things are Breaking Down, includes a few simple actions to take to avoid a full-blown crisis. Finally, people develop A Crisis Plan for how they'd like to be treated and supported if they're actually in a crisis, including preferred supporters, treatment facilities, and medications.

JJ: I see. And, what do people do with their action plan after they make it?

JC: People are encouraged to spend 15 to 20 minutes each day reviewing their plans. Many find that this is best done in the morning, after a healthy breakfast. During their daily review, users will consider how they're feeling, and activate the plans that match their current emotions and behaviors. If a crisis situation is looming, the plans help people more quickly realize that they need to reach out for assistance. They may even ask supporters to take over decision-making, using their Crisis Plans to select preferred treatment options. Over time, people learn how to use their written action plans without needing to refer to them each day.

JJ: So, I'm wondering then, who might benefit from using the workbook?

JC: It was designed for people in mental health recovery. But it's also been used successfully by people with substance use problems, those with chronic medical conditions, and people with other kinds of disabilities. We recommend that people who are interested in action planning look for a local WRAP® group that they can join. This is because the action planning method works best for most people when done in a group setting. WRAP groups are taught by trained and certified facilitators. The groups allow people to work on their plans together and give each other mutual support. You can find out more about WRAP and where local groups are being held by contacting The Copeland Center at www.copelandcenter.com. But, if there isn't a local group in your area, or you prefer to work on your own, the *Action Planning* workbook is a good alternative.

JJ: Do people need any special resources to use the *Action Planning* workbook?

JC: You'll need a computer, Internet connection, and printer in order to download and print the 13-page workbook. Other resources you'll need are a pen, binder, tabs, and blank paper to record and store the plans in a convenient location.

JJ: That's helpful. So, Judith, would you share one of your favorite stories about how these plans have been used?

JC: Sure. One person told us that when he used the workbook, he decided that walking his dog at set times in the morning and evening, and cleaning the kitchen sink each morning, should be in his wellness toolbox. He also put these tools in his daily maintenance plan and used that plan to set reminders so that walking his dog and cleaning his sink became part of his daily routine. He found that by thinking about and recording this information, he has continued to do these tasks even when he feels stressed or is in a crisis. He said that in the past he would have been hospitalized if he hadn't been able to rely on the tools in his wellness toolbox.

JJ: That's interesting. So, how have service providers used this workbook with service recipients?

JC: Some providers tell us they use the workbook during one-on-one sessions for people who are managing all types of stress and symptoms. Providers suggest that it's best to review each session of the workbook over the course of a few weeks or months, depending on the person's needs and preferences. Other providers have used it in small group sessions. In addition, they encourage peer programs to use the *Action Planning* workbook in mutual aid support groups.

JJ: Those are wonderful examples of how using an action plan can help people recover. Thank you, Judith. And thanks to all of you in our audience for listening today. We are pleased to offer *Action Planning for Prevention and Recovery* as part of our Solutions Suite to promote wellness and self-direction for people in recovery from mental health conditions.

Announcer: Thank you for listening. You can obtain additional Solutions Suite recordings, or download a transcript, by visiting the Center's web site.