

Insights in Recovery - Discussion Statements

The Moderated Conversation is inspired by the findings of the research project conducted by the Butterfly Foundation, supported by the NSW Mental Health Commission. The research project explored consumers perspectives on treatment and the health system forms the foundation for a moderated discussion.

The following statements for discussion are based on the recovery narratives of 104 individuals with experience across the spectrum of eating disorder diagnoses.

1. Acceptance

- **Listen to me without judging me**
- **Accept me as a person outside of my eating disorder**
- **Be positive and motivating without focusing on just my behaviours or my weight**

The most important feelings during my eating disorder were fear, shame and guilt. I don't think that everyone gets how low your self esteem goes with an eating disorder. If people didn't pay attention to what I had to say then I would take it on board that I wasn't interesting enough. Please be careful with the words you choose. Anything someone says about me can send me into total shame. It's easy to forget who you are in treatment. It really helps me to feel like a whole person when you ask about my thoughts, listen to me talk without expressing judgement, and value what I have to say. Please remember we are being very vulnerable in front of you. We need a real relationship not just instructions.

2. Focus of treatment

- **Help me to find myself, my interests and talents**
- **Don't just focus on food, weight or behaviours, focus on the 'why' of my eating disorder**
- **Make where treatment happens a comfortable, welcoming place.**

Recovery means breaking free of illness to be yourself and finding and liking who you are - not just your body but who you really are as a person. When you look at treatment programs you get the impression that recovery is all about weight and eating not about the thoughts but this isn't real. My eating disorder was born out of the need to cope with things I wasn't ready to cope with. Not feeling good enough is the underlying issue and I need help for this issue not just the eating behaviour. Take the focus off food and focus on the other things that are motivating to help me build a new life.

3. Integrate Choice

- **Let me know you get what I'm saying, even if you don't agree with it**
- **I want to make choices about what happens to me in treatment**
- **Explain upfront what I can and cannot have control of in treatment and negotiate these things with me**

It's important that I feel some control in my recovery. Psychologists and psychiatrists have such huge presence. You feel like you have to do what they say but this doesn't help you to learn to make choices and do things for yourself. As I recover provide opportunities for me to learn how to make safe and healthy choices. It used to shit me when people told me it was my eating disorder talking or my eating disorder behaviour when it was really just my personal preference. Like being told to eat sandwiches when I really don't like sandwiches. That bit isn't my ED, it's me.

4. Peer Relationships

- **Don't be scared of me having relationships with others with a lived experience**
- **Help me to use these relationships positively**
- **Support me to include my family, friends and peers in my recovery in ways that are right for me.**

Support healthy peer friendships within group treatment settings, match peer group members for similar stages of recovery and train peer leaders who have a variety of different experiences of illness. Instead of restricting my peer relationships teach me how to maintain safe boundaries when forming relationships and show me how to have safe online access to peer support where face-to-face support is not practical.