Much like the fields of mental and chemical health in general, the recovery concept within each field grew from different roots, followed different growth patterns, and had different histories and advocates. In the past decade, however, practitioners from both fields have joined forces to find overlap in their respective recovery concepts, both as a way for individuals with co-occurring disorders to describe their recovery experiences and as a potential integrating mechanism for these traditionally divided fields.

As an example of an integrated model, Larry Davidson and colleagues developed what they called a “hopscotch” model of dual recovery. First developing separate models of recovery from reviews of first-person recovery literature in each field, then revising them based on feedback from recovery advocates, they found remarkable similarity of recovery phases and language in each model. Their dual model combines these common elements, showing where in some phases there seems to be a single recovery goal, and in others dual goals to be tackled simultaneously with “both feet”. Unlike hopscotch, the phases may be nonlinear and of flexible order.


“…the phases of recovery from serious mental illness and recovery from addiction have many parallels. In fact, the manner in which participants in different forms of recovery independently used the same or similar language to name and describe their own processes of recovery was striking.” —Davidson, et al., 2008, p. 235

Resources on co-occurring disorders

A version of Dr. Davidson’s “hopscotch” model is shown in a brief PowerPoint presentation, “Recovery as an organizing principle for integrating mental health and addiction services” at: <http://coce.samhsa.gov/products/cod_presentations.aspx>

The two-part essay “Recovery: The bridge to integration?” by William White and Larry Davidson argues that the recovery concept may be the key to integrating the addiction and mental health treatment fields. Click on the “Archives” link and the November and December 2006 issues of BehavioralHealthcare at: <http://www.behavioral.net/ME2/Default.asp>

“Recovery from addiction and from mental illness: Shared and contrasting lessons” by William White, Michael Boyle & David Loveland describes shifts in the recovery movement and the history of mutual aid groups. Click on the chapter title at: <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/addiction/recovery.shtml>
Five video clips in which people talk about their experiences of living with co-occurring disorders can be viewed on the website of the Co-Occurring Collaborative Serving Maine. In his clip, Michael explains that what a person in recovery needs is similar to what everyone wants from life. <http://www.ccsmetraining.org/movies/index.asp>

What is recovery from co-occurring disorders?

Davidson and colleagues reviewed first-person accounts of recovery from addictions and mental illness and asked members of advocacy networks in both fields for feedback on their summaries. They arrived at this simple conclusion: “In an age of evidence-based practice, this research suggests that recovery, be it from the hardships of addiction or problems of mental illness, rests on the same principles of human development as do other spheres of psychological and social functioning. Just like everybody else, people living with these problems require hope, a sense of self-efficacy and control, affiliation and connections with others, a sense of meaning and purpose, and the quiet integrity of leading a dignified life.” [emphasis added; Davidson, et al., 2008, p. 288]

Co-occurring glossary

- **Recovery:** “Recovery from alcohol and drug problems is a process of change through which an individual achieves abstinence and improved health, wellness and quality of life.” (Center for Substance Abuse Treatment: <http://pfr.samhsa.gov/rosc.html>)

- **Recovery:** “Mental health recovery is a journey of healing and transformation enabling a person with a mental health problem to live a meaningful life in a community of his or her choice while striving to achieve his or her full potential.” (Center for Mental Health Services: <http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/sma05-4129/>)

- **Recovery:** “Recovery refers to the ways in which persons with or affected by a mental illness and/or addiction tap resources within and beyond the self to move beyond experiencing these disorders to actively managing them and their residual effects to build full, meaningful lives in the community. Recovery is more than the elimination of symptoms from an otherwise unchanged life. It is about regaining wholeness, connection to community, and a purpose-filled life.” (Recovery: The bridge to integration, part one. See resources, p. 1)