

# Personal Medicine

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## “Joe” from Kansas said:

“I think there’s a lot of other things that’s medication that’s maybe not considered medication. There’s things - things that you can do that does change what your body does and it may not be medicine . . . I still think one of the best mood stabilizers there is in life – maybe not for everyone – but for me, is math.”

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## Recovery Defined

“A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.”

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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## Recovery’s Four Dimensions

- I. Health – Managing or overcoming symptoms
- II. Home – Safe and stable environment
- III. Purpose – Meaningful activities, independence, and resources for participation
- IV. Community – Supportive relationships

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## Guiding Principles of Recovery

- 1. Recovery emerges from Hope
- 2. Recovery is Person-Driven
- 3. Recovery occurs via Many Pathways
- 4. Recovery is Holistic

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## Guiding Principles of Recovery

- 5. Recovery is supported by Peers and Allies
- 6. Recovery is supported through Relationships and Social Networks
- 7. Recovery is Culturally Based and Influenced
- 8. Recovery is supported by Addressing Trauma

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## Guiding Principles of Recovery

9. Recovery involves Individual, Family, and Community Strengths and Responsibility
10. Recovery is based on Respect

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## Today's Objectives

1. Gain an understanding of Personal Medicine concepts.
2. Examine the specific use of Personal Medicine with Substance Use Disorder & co-occurring conditions.
3. Identify Personal Medicine strategies that may be personally useful.

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## Dawn Farm's Rationale for Personal Medicine

- A Higher Percentage of clients are presenting concerns beyond addiction
- Early psych diagnoses are frequently inaccurate
- Post Acute Withdrawal Syndrome
- Client safety in psych matters is our first concern
- Chronic Pain and Sleep Disturbance are common
- Dr. Patricia Deegan's Personal Medicine Model offered hope

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## What is Personal Medicine?

- Things we do that help us feel well and limit unwanted symptoms.
- Things we do that put a smile on our face and give life meaning and purpose.
- Things we do to help us avoid unwanted outcomes like loss of work, homelessness, jail, hospitalizations, or losing custody of our kids.

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## Personal Medicine Examples

- Working out regularly
- Joining a house of worship
- Singing in the choir
- Cognitive Rehearsal
- Regular Fun Activities
- Daily Meditation
- Cooking for Family/Friends
- Develop Social Supports
- Using Affirmations
- Fishing on Sundays
- Providing for my family
- Limit Caffeine & Nicotine
- Practice Self-Compassion
- Painting or writing poetry
- Go to an AA/NA meeting
- Daily Journaling

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## Characteristics of Personal Medicine

- It's what we DO to be well, not what we take. It's active not passive.
- It helps limit unwanted symptoms and maximizes our enjoyment of life.
- It's something we do NOW, in the present. It is not a future goal.
- It's an ACTION we take, not a feeling or state of mind.

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**Which of these is Personal Medicine?**

1. I will use St. John's Wort for depression.
2. I will play Frisbee with my dog after work to relieve stress.
3. I will release stress by swimming laps four days a week when I get out of the hospital.
4. I will use self-harm strategies to calm myself and to help manage my flashbacks.
5. I will use controlled breathing exercises when I get anxious.

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**Everyone has the potential to identify, develop and use Personal Medicine in their lives.**

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**Why is Personal Medicine Important to SUD Recovery?**

1. Simply taking pharmaceutical medicine for co-occurring conditions is not enough to make us well.
2. Meds can do a lot to manage symptoms, but we have to be proactive and build a worthwhile life.
3. Effective recovery often depends on finding the right balance between pharmaceutical and behavioral strategies, and this balance maximizes our chances of identifying and creating the life we want.

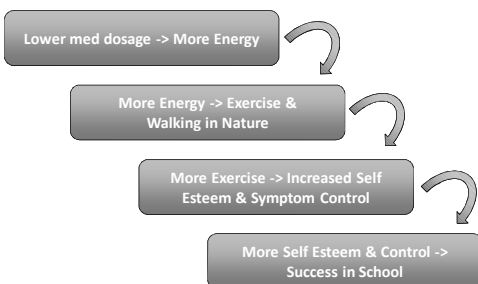
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**Pat Deegan's Experience**

At 17 years old, she received a diagnosis of schizophrenia. She was told that the most important thing she could do is to take her prescribed meds exactly as directed.  
So that's what she did . . .

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**Cascading Effects of Combined Meds & Behaviors**

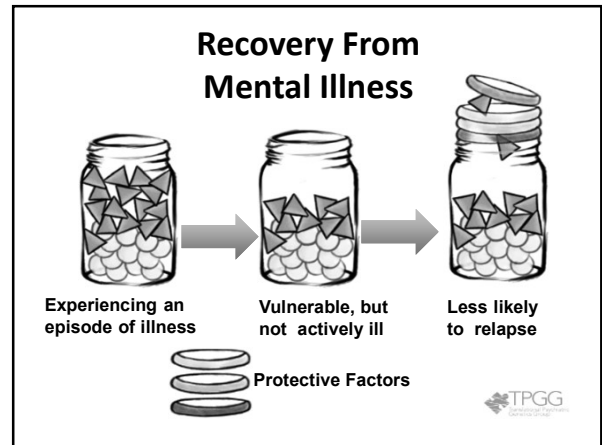
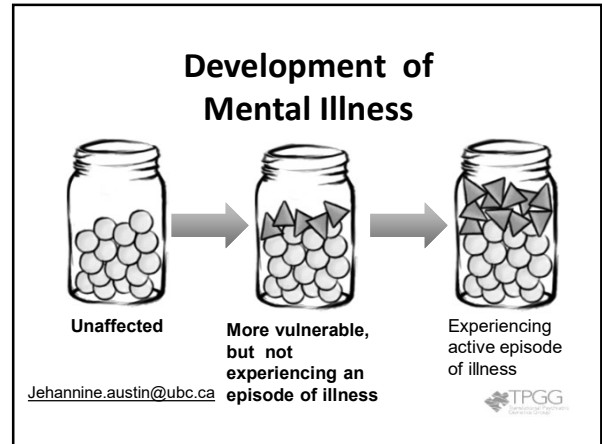
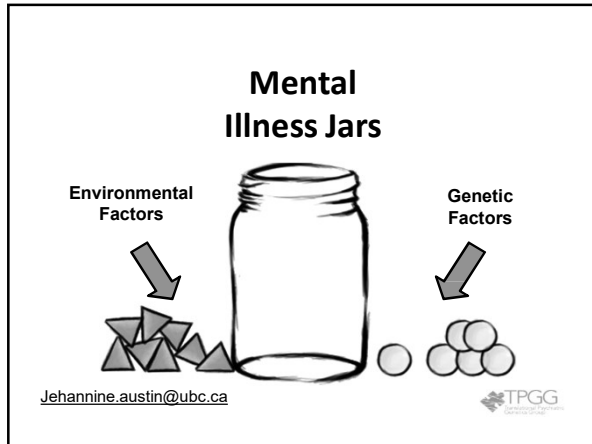


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**"I will live my life, not my diagnosis. My dreams are the stars that guide my journey of recovery. I will pursue my goals today!"**

Dr. Patricia Deegan

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### Personal Medicine Worksheet

| Personal Medicine   | Active Ingredient (How does it help?)   |
|---|---|
| Something I do to feel better is:                         | Walking in the Park<br>Connects with Nature and improves my mood  |
| Something I do to feel better is:                         | Go swimming for 30 minutes 4 times a week<br>Lifts my mood and makes me less angry                          |
| Something I do that makes my life meaningful is:          | Feed and care for my dog<br>The caring/responsible relationship helps me stay sober                         |
| Something I do that helps me feel good about being me is: | Pray & meditate for 5-10 minutes a day<br>Calms me down   |
| Something I enjoy doing on a daily basis is:              | Call my sponsor<br>I get affirmation and support  |
| Something I do that helps me when I feel bad is:          | Call my brother<br>He makes me laugh  |
| The most important thing in my life is:                   | Working a program of recovery – meetings, Steps and a sponsor<br>Staying sober gives me hope for the future |

### Personal Medicine is “Personal”

| Personal Medicine Strategy | Active Ingredient – How it helps                                |
|----------------------------|---|
| Walking in the Park        | Time to talk with my friend                                     |
| Walking in the Park        | Get out and avoid isolation                                     |
| Walking in the Park        | Connect with nature, get grounded, connect with my Higher Power |
| Walking in the Park        | Feel connected to the people of the neighborhood                |

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### If you find yourself working with someone who doesn’t have any Personal Medicine . . .

Generally everyone has something that brings them happiness or makes them feel better – not necessarily big things. If you’re having trouble identifying these, meet the client in a different environment and get to know the client in their world. Clients frequently demonstrate surprising strengths in their world.

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### If you find yourself working with someone who doesn’t have any Personal Medicine . . .

Help the person cultivate their Personal Medicine. This can be done by using peer supports who can make suggestions or share some wisdom from their own experience, strength and hope. Also, the Personal Medicine Cards developed by Pat Deegan’s organization can be helpful in developing ideas.

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### Personal Medicine Card Example

#### Personal Medicine: *Depression*

#### Talk with Friends

Isolation can make our depression worse. If we call or visit friends, it breaks isolation and helps us feel connected and cared about. And we don’t always have to talk about our depression and ourselves! Sometimes talking with friends about a variety of subjects such as sports, hobbies, news and TV shows can help heal our depression

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### Personal Medicine Card Example

**Personal Medicine: *Depression***  
**Special Instructions for My Personal Medicine**

I will call \_\_\_\_\_

The phone number is \_\_\_\_\_

The phone number to the help line is \_\_\_\_\_

Did the Personal Medicine work? -> Use it again  
 It didn’t work? -----> Try another strategy

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### Personal Medicine Fidelity Standards

1. Helps me feel better and strengthens my recovery.
2. Is something I do NOW in my life.
3. Is NOT a feeling or state-of-mind.
4. Is NOT something I take like vitamins, herbal supplements, alcohol or recreational drugs.
5. It is personal and unique to me as an individual. No two people’s Personal Medicine will be exactly the same.

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Personal Medicine and pharmaceutical medicine are sometimes woven together when developing a plan for recovery from the co-occurrence of a substance use disorder AND conditions like mental illness, chronic pain, a mood disorder, or sleep disturbance.

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There are two compelling statements which drive the application of Personal Medicine concepts with SUD Clients:

**“Skills Not Pills”**

**“I am an Active Agent in my own Recovery”**

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#### **Dawn Farm Personal Medicine Goals:**

1. To reduce client suffering, increase self-efficacy, and enhance recovery.
2. To provide a framework that engages clients in actively monitoring and managing their psychiatric/co-occurring conditions.
3. To provide an immediate response to psychiatric symptoms that does not interfere with our ability to determine the nature and course of their psychiatric symptoms.

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#### **Dawn Farm Personal Medicine Goals:**

4. To increase global quality of life for clients dealing with psychiatric symptoms and chronic pain.
5. To establish Personal Medicine as part of Dawn Farm’s treatment culture—becoming fully integrated into our thought, language and practice.

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#### **Essential Elements of Dawn Farm Personal Medicine Groups**

1. Client identification
2. Client education on co-occurring condition and its relationship to alcoholism/addiction
3. Exploration of behavioral strategies associated with effective management of the co-occurring condition
4. Clients develop a weekly plan on a Diary Card, discuss the success or failure of the plan at the next group, and develop a new or revised plan

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#### **Developed Topics for Groups**

**Anxiety**  
**Depression**  
**Sleep Disturbance**  
**Chronic Pain**  
**Tobacco Recovery**

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### The P.L.E.A.S.E. Skills

**PHYSICAL CARE** – Take care of your body. Practice health promoting activities like good personal hygiene, dental care and safe sex.

**iLLNESS (Treat It)** – If you are sick or injured, or have an ongoing medical, dental or psychological condition, get proper and timely treatment. Take prescribed medication as directed.

**EATING EFFECTIVELY** – Eat a healthy diet of balanced meals and snacks. Limit foods that encourage you to feel overly emotional or irritable like caffeine and sugar.

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### The P.L.E.A.S.E. Skills

**AVOID ISOLATION, DRUG & ALCOHOL USE** – Isolation promotes anxiety and depression. Alcohol, non-prescription medications and street drugs make your mood unpredictable. Limiting nicotine promotes better sleep and a calm mood.

**SLEEP IN A BALANCED WAY** – Don't sleep too much or too little. Get a regular bedtime routine and schedule for sleep. Seven and a half to eight hours of sleep is recommended.

**EXERCISE REGULARLY** – Get some exercise, as this will improve your body image and release feel-good endorphins. Build up to 20 minutes a day. Just getting started? Brisk walking is good or try Yoga!

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### Anxiety Strategies

- The Relaxation Response
- Mindfulness Meditation
- Controlled Breathing
- Regular Exercise
- Cognitive Rehearsal
- Self-Soothing with the Senses
- Just Noticeable Change (JNC)
- Examine Thinking Patterns
- Journaling

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### Depression Strategies

- Meditation
- Regular Exercise
- Practice Gratitude
- Nurture Relationships
- Help Others
- Self-Compassion
- Pursue Fun Activities
- Behavioral Activation
- Challenge Negative Thoughts
- Affirmations
- Cognitive Rehearsal

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### Sleep Strategies

- Limit Caffeine/Nicotine
- Regular Exercise
- Manage Sleep Space
- Consistent Sleep Schedule and Routine
- Use Calming Strategies
- Examine Negative Sleep Thoughts
- Soak Up Some Sun
- Relaxation Response
- Mindfulness Meditation
- Plan for Worry Thoughts

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### Basic Principles of Chronic Pain

- All Pain Is Real – Pain Theory
- Our Thoughts and Emotions about pain drive our experience of it
- Opioids are ineffective for Chronic Pain
- Focus on improving function, not reducing pain
- Expectations Count

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## Chronic Pain Strategies

- Pain Monitoring
- Progressive Relaxation
- Pain Cycle and Pacing
- Managing Depression
- Sleep & Exercise
- Communication & Pain
- Acceptance & Pain
- Pain Coping Skills

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## Tobacco Recovery Strategies

- Learn about Co-Addiction
- Learn the long-run benefits
- Identify your “Why?”
- Know your Triggers
- Plan for Triggers
- Change your routines
- Assess need for NRT
- Develop a tapering schedule
- Develop social supports
- Set a “Quit Date”
- Meditation for Stress
- Reward yourself
- Cognitive Rehearsal
- Affirmations

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## For Further Information

- “Recovery, Rehabilitation and the Conspiracy of Hope”  
<https://www.patdeegan.com/pat-deegan/lectures/conspiracy-of-hope>
- “Integrating Personal Medicine into Service Delivery: Empowering People in Recovery”  
<http://psycnet.apa.org/record/2013-42745-005>
- Personal Medicine & Recovery, Patricia E. Deegan, PhD  
<https://www.patdeegan.com/commonground>
- Dr. Jehannine Austin, Translational Psychiatric Genetic Group, University of British Columbia.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4QZSQRpmv8&t=831s>

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