

# What does recovery mean for harm reduction?

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4<sup>th</sup> November 2010



NATIONAL DRUGS CONFERENCE  
OF IRELAND 2010

# The conditions for starting a recovery journey (RETHINK, 2008)

- A safe place to live without threat
- Free from acute physical and psychiatric threat
- Basic human rights and choices
  
- The recovery model is a developmental one
- Agnosticism about needle exchanges, prescribing options, etc

# Common ground

- Empowerment
- Choice
- Community focus
- Reduced knowledge, status and expertise of psychiatry and medicine
- Hope based
- Personally defined goals
- Recovery as a process or journey

# Recovery views in the US

*“The journey to recovery requires great fortitude and a supportive network. As we celebrate National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month, we also express our appreciation for the family members, mutual aid groups, peer support programs, health professionals, and community leaders that provide compassion, care, and hope. Across America, we must spread the word that substance abuse is preventable, that addiction is treatable, and that recovery is possible”.*

—Barack Obama, Presidential Proclamation, National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month

# What do we mean by ‘recovery’?

- [\*The Road to Recovery: A New Approach to Tackling Scotland's Drug Problem\*](#) (Scottish Government, 2008) recovery is defined as:
- *‘a process through which an individual is enabled to move from their problem drug use, towards a drug-free lifestyle as an active and contributing member of society.’*
- *‘voluntarily sustained control over substance use which maximises health and wellbeing and participation in the rights, roles and responsibilities of society’* (UK Drug Policy Commission, 2008, p6)
- Betty Ford Institute Consensus Panel (2007, p. 222) defined recovery as *“a voluntarily maintained lifestyle characterised by sobriety, personal health and citizenship.”*
- *“recovery refers to the lived experience of people as they accept and overcome the challenge of disability... they experience themselves as recovering a new sense of self and of purpose within and beyond the limits of the disability”* (Deegan, 1998)

# CSAT (2009) Principles of recovery

- There are many pathways to recovery
- Recovery is self-directed and empowering
- Recovery involves a personal recognition of the need for change and transformation
- Recovery is holistic
- Recovery has cultural dimensions
- Recovery exists on a continuum of improved health and wellbeing
- Recovery emerges from hope and gratitude
- Recovery involves a process of healing and self-redefinition
- Recovery involves addressing discrimination and transcending shame and stigma
- Recovery is supported by peers and allies
- Recovery involves rejoining and rebuilding a life in the community
- Recovery is a reality

# Recovery precursors – RETHINK (2008)

- Safe place to live
- Basic management of physical and psychiatric distress
- Basic human rights and choices
  
- Recovery time course
  - Alcohol 4-5 years
  - Opiates 5-7 years

## Desistance rates

- CSAT (2009): 58% of life-course dependent users of substances will achieve lasting recovery



# Recovery studies in Birmingham and Glasgow

- Ready access to populations
- Untapped group of recovery champions
- Glasgow: predictors of higher quality of life:
  - More meaningful activities in the last month
  - Greater number of non-using peers in the recovery network
  - Different levels of recovery in abstinent and maintained groups

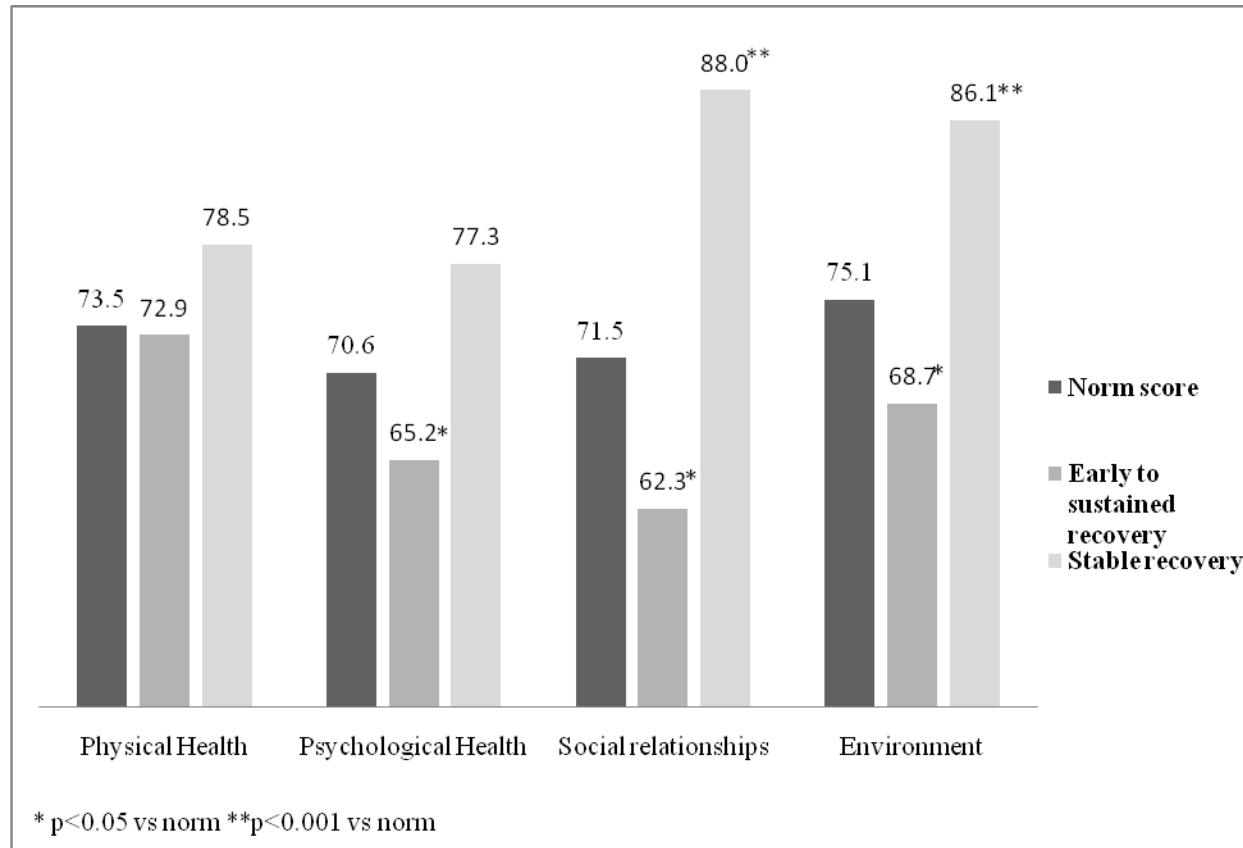
# William White: social qualities of recovery

- Emotional support – involving empathy, care, consideration, concern and encouragement
- Informational support – providing knowledge about recovery and the recovery support services and groups available
- Instrumental support – support in linking in to supportive housing and childcare services, development of leisure and sporting activities and to recovery groups
- Companionship
- Validation – sharing and supporting their recovery experiences

# Benefits of engaging in recovery groups

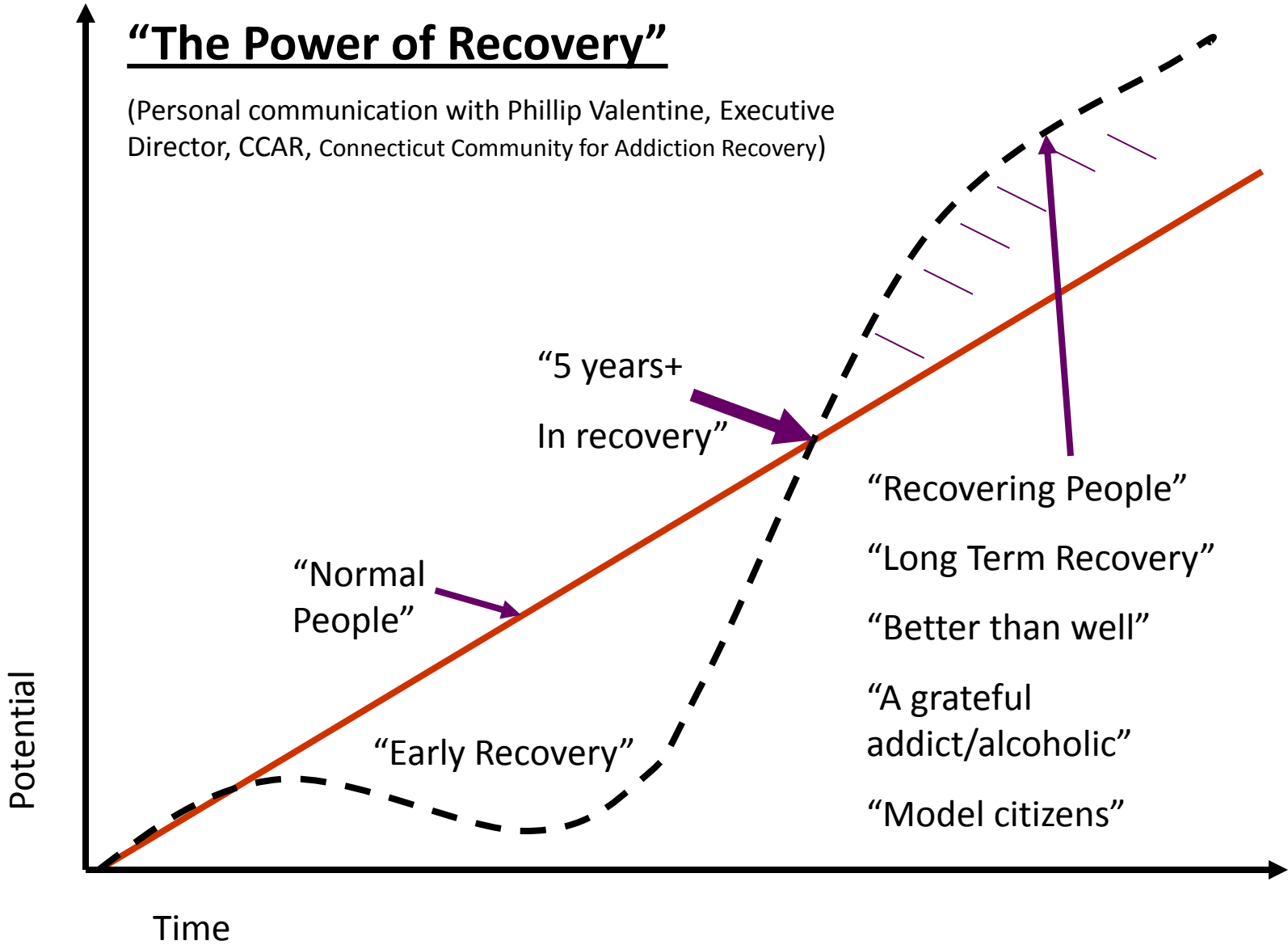
- Experience of acceptance and belonging
- Build esteem through identification with a large organisation
- Provide a belief system through which shame and defeat can be transformed into victory
- Provide a vehicle for the safe discharge of powerful emotions
- Provide a consistent set of rituals that facilitate emotional release and value-focusing
- Provide a forum for consultation on daily problem solving
- Provide rituals that allow the group to celebrate success

# Mapping the recovery journeys of former drinkers in recovery

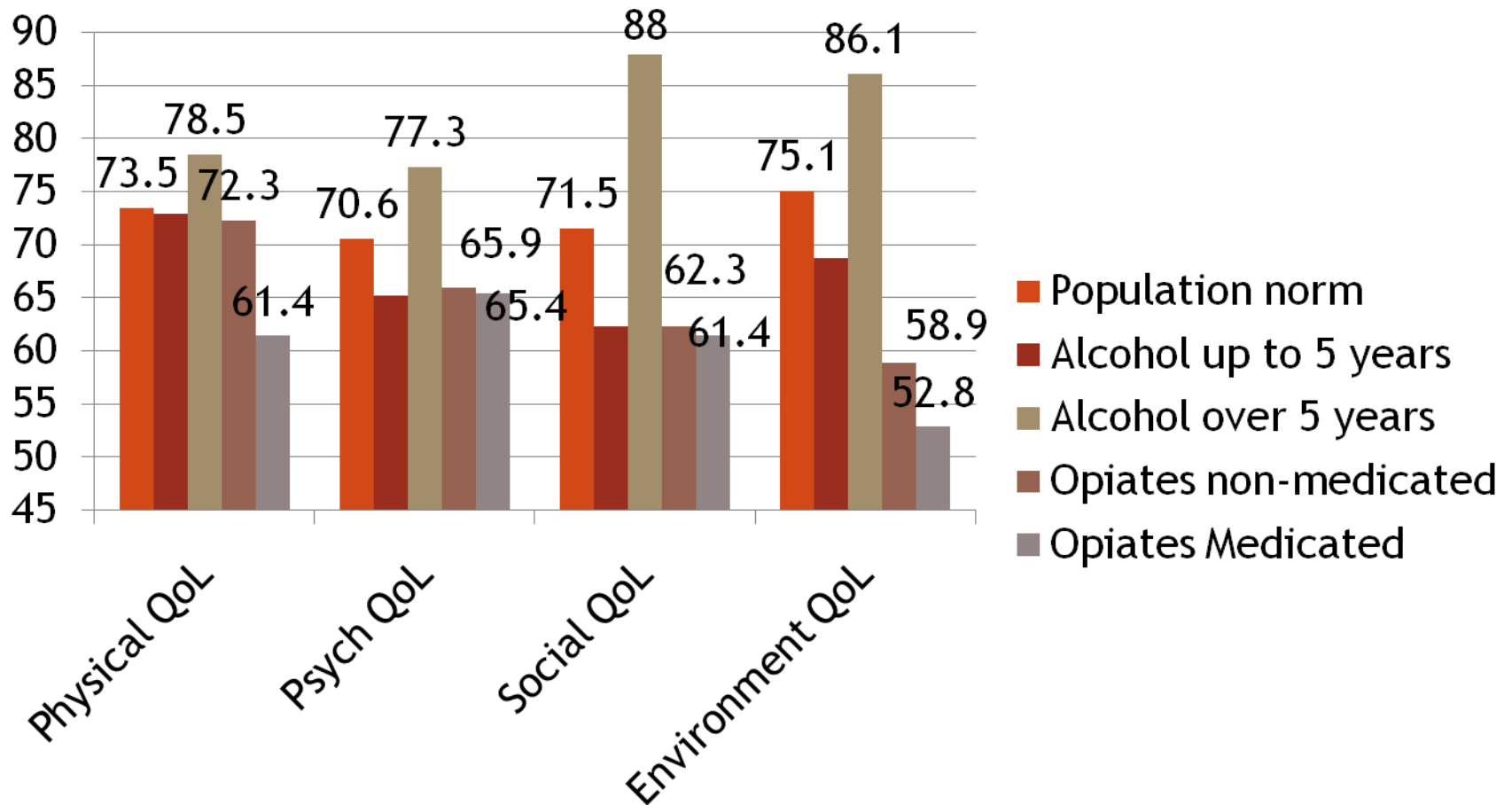


# "The Power of Recovery"

(Personal communication with Phillip Valentine, Executive Director, CCAR, Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery)



# Quality of life by recovery group



# Some problems with MM

- King and Best (2010): WASI with MM clients
- Average verbal IQ of 77; areas of deficit
  - Attention
  - Short-term memory
  - Decision making
  - Planning
- Only predictor of low verbal IQ was high methadone dose

# Recovery-Oriented Methadone Maintenance (ROMM)

- 'high-functioning clients'
- A Big Book of methadone recovery
- Dundee pilot experience
- Why are there no recovery groups in MM settings?
- Role of the worker?
- Role of the system?



# Types of recovery group

- Therapeutic
- Vocational
- Interest
  
- They are the basis for collective recovery capital
- Based on assertive linkage
- Embedded within recovery oriented systems

# What are recovery outcomes?

## Best and Gilman (2010)

- Improved quality of life and community engagement
- Improved family functioning
- Diversity and engagement with communities of recovery
- Emergent recovery champions
- Giving back
- Culture change

# How do we measure them at the individual level?

- Engagement in meaningful activities
- Quality of life and wellbeing
- Effective family involvement
- Safe housing
- Reduced burden on state, CJS
- Giving something back?
- Being a recovery champion?

# Building up recovery capital

- Keyworker is both the source of strength through the therapeutic alliance
- And the provider of supports and techniques to enable empowerment and change
- But you also have the power to link and enable access to communities of recovery
- Need for register of local activities and groups

# Solutions

- Shared aims
- Transparent process
- Action research methods and learning
- Use of common instruments and intervention approaches
- Effective and assertive linkage
- Learning culture

