

News You Can Use

Your monthly resource for news and information about behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disabilities in western North Carolina and beyond

From the doctor: With Chief Medical Officer Dr. Craig Martin



Were you raised to believe in the Golden Rule? Not the one that says “He who has the gold rules,” but the version endorsed by most spiritual traditions, which says, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

September is National Recovery Month, and I’ve been reflecting on recovery and rules. Recovery is the process in which people live, work, learn and participate fully within their communities. So, what about rules?

The Golden Rule, in my thinking, is truly expressed by our peer support specialists, who help guide others through the maze of rules or challenges that individuals in recovery frequently face. Someone who has walked the path has true credibility and can help build resiliency – qualities that enable us to rebound.

Perhaps the most important task of a healthcare giver or recovery ally is to convey the light of hope when someone’s candle is burning low. People attending last year’s recovery rally at Lake Junaluska saw the joy in the faces of children and families playing on slides and trampolines, dancing to music and feasting on a picnic lunch served by law enforcement. The event demonstrated how we can respect our diversity and build communities of health. Together, we are stronger.

Recovery is non-linear. When someone takes a step back, it can be difficult to see the progress already made and hold on to the probability of future success. Recovery rallies are “stigma-busters” and demonstrate the many paths to recovery. One person’s path may be very different than the one a supporter may choose. Maybe, instead of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you, we should “do unto others in a way that is respectful of their healthy choices on the road of recovery.”

At Smoky, we spend funds wisely to bring the most benefit to the greatest number of people in need. However, we must do more. Over time, we hope fewer dollars will be necessary to treat the end phases of illness, and more money can be invested in prevention and early intervention. This goal will offer the light of a better future for all. Peer support specialists, in all that they do, highlight the success of this approach.

To me, peer support specialists at Smoky and elsewhere are not only golden – they rule!