

RECOVERY

*The official newsletter of the
Fletcher Group Rural Center Of Excellence*



Building Rural Recovery Ecosystems

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MONTH**

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RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE



The Fletcher Group Rural
Center of Excellence

by Founder and Chief Medical Officer Dr. Ernie Fletcher

Each September, National Recovery Month reminds us that behavioral health is essential to overall health, that prevention works, that treatment is effective, and that people can and do recover.

This year’s theme, “Join the Voices for Recovery: Celebrating Connections,” emphasizes the need to connect and inspire. That’s something we make a special effort to do in the rural communities we serve where shortages in healthcare and recovery resources can make some Americans feel left out and forgotten.

But the strength and resilience of rural Americans is as inspiring as ever and successful recovery stories abound everywhere in the lives of neighbors, colleagues, friends, and relatives.

National Recovery Month reminds us of one more thing: that stigma and punishment are giving way to understanding and support—a long overdue change and therefore all the more worthy of celebration!





Join the Voices for Recovery: Celebrating Connections

nationalrecoverymonth.org



NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH

Launched in 1989 by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), National Recovery Month has been celebrated every September for well over three decades. Its goals are to promote evidence-based treatment and recovery practices, support the emergence of a strong and proud recovery community, and publicize the dedication of service providers and community stakeholders.

A New Year, A New Theme

Recovery Month has a new theme each year and 2020's is "Join the Voices for Recovery: Celebrating Connections." The main impetus of Recovery Month will continue to be educating the public about substance use disorders and co-occurring disorders, publicizing the effectiveness of treatment and recovery services, and reminding us that recovery is indeed possible. But this year's theme also makes the point that no one can do it alone and, to succeed, we must work together. All of us—from celebrities and sports figures to co-workers, neighbors, friends, and family members—have our peaks and valleys, victories to celebrate as well as things we might have done better. The important thing to remember is that by celebrating our connections to people from all walks of life we have a much better chance of finding the support and courage we need to speak up for inclusion, respect, and opportunity. Strength and resilience come with the loving support of others.

Overcoming Stigma

Stigma and the misconceptions that cloud the public understanding of mental and substance use disorders can unfortunately discourage people from seeking the help they need. Stigma can be particularly hurtful because shaming, in many cases, was a powerful driver in the decision of some to turn to drugs and alcohol in the first place. This points to another important function of Recovery Month—the public recognition it gives to individual accomplishment and the encouragement it imparts to those thousands of courageous Americans who step forward each September to publicly share their stories of recovery.

Such visibility helps to counter stigmatizing attitudes that people may consciously or unconsciously be holding. Personal success stories show in no uncertain terms that recovery can be an expectation, not an exception, and available to all.

Reason To Believe

The fact is that there are millions of Americans whose lives have been transformed through recovery. Because their success often goes unreported by the media and unnoticed by the public, Recovery Month intentionally provides a vehicle for celebrating their gains and sharing their stories with neighbors, friends, and colleagues. An awareness and understanding of mental and substance use disorders helps society appreciate and support the investment and involvement needed to overcome the ravages of addiction.

In this sense, National Recovery Month continues to succeed by reminding us that, despite our differences, we are all in this together. With the support of one another, we can overcome our personal challenges, no matter how overwhelming they may seem in the moment.



HOW TO PROMOTE RECOVERY ONE DAY AT A TIME

All the following activities are therapeutic in and of themselves, but can also be used to connect with others by posting your associated thoughts, photos, and links on social media using the hashtag **#recovery**.

- Sept. 1:** Share your recovery story with friends and family.
- Sept. 2:** Take a walk or drive without distraction.
- Sept. 3:** Make plans with a friend and honor those plans.
- Sept. 4:** Share a reason you stay sober on social media.
- Sept. 5:** Spend some time outside, taking note of the sounds, sights, and smells around you.
- Sept. 6:** Meditate for five to ten minutes before going to bed.
- Sept. 7:** Share a way you engage in self-care.
- Sept. 8:** Do something kind for a stranger.
- Sept. 9:** Take some time to draw, color, or otherwise express yourself artistically.
- Sept. 10:** Share your favorite recovery-related quote on social media.
- Sept. 11:** Share a picture of a person who inspires you.
- Sept. 12:** Take 15 minutes to stretch in the morning.
- Sept. 13:** Turn off your phone for the evening.
- Sept. 14:** Dress up, even if you have nowhere to go. Taking care of yourself and dressing up can help lift your mood!
- Sept. 15:** Cook a meal from scratch and mindfully enjoy your creation.
- Sept. 16:** Set a mini-goal and achieve it. This goal can be in service of a larger goal, or taking care of something small that you have been meaning to but never got around to.
- Sept. 17:** Share a song on social media that inspires you.
- Sept. 18:** If you're able, call a family member or a close friend to check in and catch up.
- Sept. 19:** Take five minutes to practice gratitude meditation. Reminding ourselves of the things we do have can have a positive effect on motivation and mood.

- Sept. 20:** Set aside some time to read for pleasure. Remind yourself of how reading can be fun, relaxing, and a healthy way to cope.
- Sept. 21:** Dance or listen to music from when you were in high school.
- Sept. 22:** Practice deep breathing or progressive relaxation before bed.
- Sept. 23:** Volunteer at a local shelter or other non-profit organization.
- Sept. 24:** Sit down and write a list of five things you like about yourself.
- Sept. 25:** Share an activity that helps you maintain sobriety, be it exercise, meditation, talking to a friend, or attending a religious service.

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*Use the hashtag
#recovery*

- Sept. 26:** Take time to do some cardiovascular exercise. Whether it be a walk or run, try to exercise for at least 30 minutes.
- Sept. 27:** Eat a meal without phones, television, or music distracting you.
- Sept. 28:** Write a list of five people or things you are grateful for.
- Sept. 29:** If you're able and it's safe to do so, take time to hug a loved one or cuddle with a pet.
- Sept. 30:** Find and share a link to a local support group or organization focused on recovery. By raising awareness and providing resources to others that are struggling, you are paying it forward.