

# One day, seeing a mental health practitioner will be as common as going to a personal trainer.

## Personal Growth Culture Fosters Recovery

By Brad Zimmerman

**CARING FOR OUR MENTAL ATTITUDE, OUTLOOK AND WELL-BEING WILL BE A DAILY ROUTINE LIKE EATING A HEALTHY DIET AND EXERCISING.**

**A TRIP TO OUR FAMILY DOCTOR WILL BE SEEN AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO INCREASE OUR MENTAL, SPIRITUAL, PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL WELL-NESS.**

**CREATING PERSONAL GROWTH CULTURES IN OUR ORGANIZATIONS, WILL MAKE US PRACTICING EXAMPLES OF RECOVERY; MORE EFFECTIVELY MENTORING CONSUMERS.**

**“PERSONAL GROWTH” WILL REPLACE THE TERM “RECOVERY” AND BE APPLIED TO ALL PEOPLE; NOT JUST THOSE FORMERLY LABELED MENTALLY ILL.**

**W**e live in an age where technology is advancing at such a rapid rate that keeping up with it is a daunting task for even the most intelligent, and innovative. The resulting acceleration in the pace of change in our society and our economy makes obsolete the knowledge, methods and viewpoints that were so effective just a few years ago.

Evidence of this can be seen in the level of stress that we all exhibit trying to keep up with the pace of everyday life. Many of us feel insecure in our jobs, as well we should, our organizations themselves are being rendered obsolete at an unprecedented pace. Unemployment is rising among groups of people whose skills are outdated; which has become a chronic condition rather than a temporary set-back.

If we don't address this issue, the pace of our own obsolescence will result in more depression, anxiety, and unemployment. The rift between the classes will be dramatically amplified and we will be faced with ever increasing demands on the safety net system. In order to address the issue, we must be clear about what is at its core. The core issue is that we have not developed the ability to learn fast enough to keep pace. I don't just mean memorize or

assimilate new knowledge, it is much more ingrained behaviorally than that. We need to redesign the way that we look at the world; to generate



new mental models, new viewpoints and approaches. And we must develop this ability to evolve those views continuously.

Human beings are really quite remarkable in our ability to learn. We develop *unconscious competencies*; things that we are so competent at, that we know longer have to consciously think about how to do them. The most obvious and often used example of this is learning to ride a bike. One has to be very conscious about figuring out how to balance the bike, spin the pedals and steer the bike...until you master it. At which point it all seems to flow without thinking. This happens with our ability to drive, use a computer, and use whatever skill you have honed in your profession. And the unconscious motivations that drive our behavior; the

need to take control, strive for perfection, be interactive or stabilize situations... are just as automatic. ***The automatic relegation of learned viewpoints and behaviors to an unconscious level, for easy access is a huge strength... but it is also a huge limitation.*** As soon as learned behaviors and motivations become unconscious we become constrained by the fact that we do not consciously choose them, it is as if they choose us. *We get stuck in past based viewpoints and behaviors and can't access a different option.*

**Our society needs us to take the lead; caring for one's mental well-being and generating new, more effective mental models must be seen as routine, like eating a healthy diet and exercising.** Creating learning organizations; utilizing a personal growth culture is one way to address this need. ***PERSONAL GROWTH IS THE LEARNED ABILITY TO IDENTIFY OUTMODED OR INEFFECTIVE VIEWPOINTS AND BEHAVIORS, AND DEVELOP NEW WAYS OF BEING, OUTSIDE OF ONE'S COMFORT ZONE.*** So, "personal growth" is the equivalent to those of us in the workforce as "recovery" is to those we have labeled mentally ill. Leaders who are focused on the personal growth of their people, must utilize a whole host of new tools and

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skills; i.e. *performance appraisals* become methods to support staff development, just as *treatment plans* do for consumers, and helping *staff generate new mental models* is akin to *cognitive behavioral therapy*.

In a personal growth culture, people at all levels take initiative and are willing to accept the temporary discomfort of change. Team members come to-

gether to generate innovative approaches outside their comfort zone to address issues or challenges facing the organization; responding to funding cuts, improving productivity, leadership succession, integrating primary and behavioral care...

When the leaders of our behavioral health organizations learn to develop cultures that foster personal growth for managers and staff, then, and only then will we be the model of recovery our clients' need us to be...and be more effective at rising to the daunting challenges we face.

## Makes My Head Spin

By Karen Sopronyi-Tompkins, CEO  
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We are in the midst of *moving to a recovery model*, co-locating with an FQHC to provide *integrated care* while **building a new building** and our legislature is now debating **further fund reductions** on top of last year's cuts...my head is spinning.

We have been working with Brad & Mark (PMP); being coached and practicing the PMP distinctions for 3 months. The change in the culture is really remarkable; and a work in progress. Here are some of the highlights.

Like all people who have worked together for many years, we have issues within the leadership team. We would either avoid issues, or talk about them for long periods without resolution. When we

did agree to do something, many times we didn't follow through and complete it. We now have a shared vision, are willing to be open and vulnerable, knowing we have one another's support. Our communication has become more productive; we talk about an issue, really listen to one another and come to a united decision. When we say we will do something, we are very aware we are making a promise and do whatever is in our power to complete it. That has built much credibility and trust with staff.

In the past we blamed poor productivity on staff and focused on the numbers without identifying core issues. We are now leading and coaching staff; helping them to grow, identify barriers and remove

them, then celebrate their successes. As a result productivity in one of our biggest departments has moved from 93% of expected to 104% in just 3 months and we are just getting started. As you can imagine, staff morale has improved.

We can all see how our growth mirrors the recovery model we have been working to create with consumers. We are just beginning to actively develop new approaches and tools; Our performance review is being re tooled to become development focused like a treatment plan not just a review of past performance. Our treatment /recovery plans will include inspirational goals to help motivate and provide hope to our consumers. This reframing is removing stigma; we see that all people need support in their development, not just the mentally ill.

Change and progress is challenging but worth the temporary imbalance of a spinning head.



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