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Recovery Messaging Questions and Answers

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**Recovery
Advocacy Toolkit**

MAKING OUR VOICES COUNT

Tips to Remember When You're Answering Questions

- ⇒ Personalise your message
- ⇒ Stick to your message
- ⇒ Repeat your message when possible – repetition is effective
- ⇒ You are speaking for yourself
- ⇒ You represent the recovery community
- ⇒ You are the expert on recovery

These questions and answers are for people in recovery, family members, friends and allies. They are suggestions and aren't the only points that you can make.

Question: Tell me about your experience with your addiction?

Answer: My experience with addiction was a difficult time for me (and my family). More important is the fact that I am in long-term recovery today.

Recovery is not about the past; it is about the present and the future. Hundreds of thousands of people across the UK have, like me, have made better lives for themselves, their families and their communities through long-term recovery.

I am speaking out to show everyone in the UK that recovery *is* a reality. I want others to be able to achieve what I have.

Question: What is your personal experience with addiction?

Answer (*Person in Recovery*): My life was difficult until I got the help I needed. Addiction crept into every aspect of my life, just as recovery has now improved every aspect of my life.

I am now in long-term recovery, which means I have not used alcohol or drugs for X years. Through my recovery, I have gained stability in my life. I have been able to focus on my family and our lives together, my job and my community.

I am speaking out about long-term recovery because it worked for me, and I hope to help others to achieve it as well.

Answer (Family Member): Our family's life was difficult until my (son/daughter/husband/wife) got the help (he or she) needed.

(He or she) is now in long-term recovery and hasn't used alcohol or drugs for X years. This allowed our family to regain stability and hope for the future.

I am speaking out about long-term recovery because it worked for me and my family, including my (son/daughter/husband/wife), and I hope to help others to achieve it as well.

Recovery has allowed us to put the past in the past and to live a life that is better than what we could have imagined possible.

Question: What do you mean when you talk about your recovery as a family member?

Answer: I've learned to make healthy choices for myself and my family. Our family has not had to deal with the negative effects of addiction in our home for the past X years.

Our recovery has allowed us to live a balanced life that is better than what we could have imagined possible.

Note: If your family member hasn't found recovery yet, you can talk about your hopes for the future.

Question: What is long-term recovery?

Answer: For me, long-term recovery means that I haven't used drugs or alcohol in X years. It has brought stability to my life, and given me (and my family) new purpose and hope for the future.

I am now speaking out as a Recovery Advocate because long-term recovery works - and we need to expand treatment and recovery services and remove barriers to long-term recovery so others can achieve what I have.

Question: What do you say to critics who think that addiction to alcohol and drugs is a personal failing and that recovery simply requires more personal responsibility?

Answer: There are many reasons that people struggle with addiction. I am not here today to say how or why people face addiction. Instead, I am here to tell you what I know. People can and do recover from addiction, like I have, if they get the help they need.

Question: Should addiction to alcohol and other drugs be treated like other medical conditions?

Answer: There are many pathways to long-term recovery and we need to make sure that effective treatment and recovery support services are available so that people can get the help they need, when they need it.

Whether or not you think addiction is a disease or an illness, it is a public health crisis. According to the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) alcohol and other drug problems cost UK £36 billion.

While our addiction problem damages the economy, it's the human consequences that present the real tragedy. Drug and alcohol misuse fuels poverty and deprivation, leading to family breakdown and child neglect, homelessness, crime, debt and long-term worklessness.

Question: What about drugs and alcohol and crime?

Answer: Levels of drug use are high amongst offenders, with the highest levels of use found amongst the most prolific offenders. 64% of prisoners reported having used drugs in the four weeks before custody. Over half of prisoners (55%) report committing offences connected to their drug taking, with the need for money to buy drugs the most commonly cited factor.

87% of male offenders and 75% of female offenders reported drinking alcohol in the four weeks before custody. In 44% of violent crimes the victim believed the offender or offenders to be under the influence of alcohol.

Prison has a poor record for reducing reoffending – 47% of adults are reconvicted within one year of being released. For those serving sentences of less than 12 months this increases to 58%.

Drug treatment prevents an estimated 4.9m crimes a year, resulting in a saving of £96m in costs to the public, businesses, criminal justice and the NHS. Not to mention the benefits that it brings to the individual, their family and their community.

Question: Doesn't speaking out violate the 12-step tradition of anonymity?

Answer: Not at all. Everyone's recovery journey is different, and we recognise that speaking out is something that each individual must decide to do based on his or her level of comfort.

Personally, speaking out about long-term recovery is important to me because it has helped me change my life for the better, and I want to make it possible for others to do the same.

There also are many ways that people can support recovery behind the scenes. As we gain confidence in our recovery, we can be more visible and vocal to break down stigma, reverse discriminatory policies and protect the policies that help people achieve long-term recovery.

Question: Why are you involved in advocating for recovery?

Answer: By our silence, we let others define us. Today, I am here to break the silence to show that recovery is a reality.

I am here to advocate on behalf of others who are trying to stabilise their lives and achieve long-term recovery. I want to do my part to educate and mobilise others around the power and promise of long-term recovery because it is working for thousands of us across the UK.

Question: Why is it important for members of the recovery community to speak out with one voice?

Answer: It is the only way those of us in long-term recovery, our families, friends and allies will be able to effectively spread the word that recovery is working for hundreds of thousands of people across the UK.

When we speak out with one voice, it shows policy makers, our friends, neighbours and employers that we're no different than anyone else. I am committed to speaking out so that others can get the help they need to recover.

Question: Is it important for people in recovery to be advocates?

Answer: It is important to first understand that recovery is very personal, and everyone's experience is different. This principle helps guide people as they decide how or if to advocate for those things that matter to them.

We believe in the power of advocacy to help change public opinion and public policy, and break down barriers formed by the misconceptions that tend to surround recovery.

We believe that advocacy can help recruit people to get involved in whatever way they are comfortable to support recovery.

People in long-term recovery and their families are the experts when it comes to recovery and their voices need to be heard.

Question: What should local and national government do to support those in long-term recovery?

Answer: Policymakers at local and national levels should focus on reversing discriminatory laws that keep people from getting jobs, housing, education and treatment.

We need to expand treatment and recovery services and support other programmes that help people achieve long-term recovery.

Our elected officials need to understand that hundreds of thousands of us have made better lives for ourselves, our families and communities through long-term recovery.

The Faces and Voices of Recovery UK and/or (name of your organisation) will be working to ensure that politicians hear our voices and know where we stand.

Question: What's the difference between AA, NA and other 12-step programmes and what you're doing?

Answer: 12-step programmes like AA, NA or Al-Anon are one way that people work to sustain their personal recovery. Grassroots recovery community organisations around the country are doing something different.

We are bringing people together to educate the public about the reality of recovery, change public policies to support recovery and, in some cases, offer peer recovery support services.

Question: What is the Faces and Voices of Recovery UK and what do you do?

Answer: Our aims centre on Advocacy. Both in terms of policy advocacy - taking on issues of discrimination, social justice and service access - and functioning as a public and professional education movement which is intent on challenging stigma and promoting recovery.

We will work to achieve these aims by delivering messages of hope to the cultures of addiction within our systems and treatment. And by putting a face and a voice on recovery we will enable people to recognise there are viable and varied recovery pathways.

We will also continue to promote the visibility of recovery through the UK Recovery Walk.

Question: What is Recovery Month?

Each September here in the UK, hundreds of prevention, treatment, and recovery projects and services celebrate their successes and take the opportunity to share them with their neighbours, friends,

and colleagues as a way to educate the public about recovery, how it works, who it works for, and why our projects and services are so badly needed in our communities.

There are untold numbers of us whose lives have been transformed through recovery. Our successes often go unnoticed and unrewarded by the wider public, therefore Recovery Month UK provides us with a perfect vehicle to celebrate all of our accomplishments.

Recovery Month, here in the UK, has been gaining quite a reputation over the last few years but you might be surprised to learn that it is actually now in its 24th year across the world.

Question: Tell me about the UK Recovery Walk

Answer: Essentially The UK Recovery Walks are about Advocacy. Advocacy can be approached in a variety of ways, but most peer-led recovery organisations educate the public by seeking to put a positive face and voice on recovery.

The UK Recovery Walk does this by bringing together individuals and families willing to offer their commitment and stories as a demonstration that long-term recovery is a reality in their lives.

The focus of The UK Recovery Walk is a public education and outreach campaign that communicates by offering living proof of the reality of long-term addiction recovery. We also highlight the many pathways and styles of recovery to the public as a whole, policy makers, the media and local communities.

The UK Recovery Walk is intended to replace pessimism with the hope and healing power of recovery, helping to combat the stigma associated with addiction.

The UK Recovery Walk provides mainstream society with a highly visible and obvious solution to the overwhelming crisis many feel associated with alcohol and other drug addiction.

Question: Is your organisation only for people in recovery?

Answer: The Faces and Voices of Recovery UK and/or (your organisation) exist to support, organise and mobilise everyone in the recovery community, from those in recovery to friends, families, and other allies – anyone whose life has been touched by addiction and recovery.

Everyone is welcome to join us and help us to spread the word that recovery is a reality and that it is making life better for thousands of people across the UK.

It is our collective strength that will ensure our success, and it is our mission to bring the power and proof of recovery to everyone in the UK.

Question: Does everyone who is involved in recovery advocacy have to speak out? Are there other ways to get involved?

Answer: We encourage everyone to get involved in whatever way they feel most comfortable.

People can start up or attend recovery community organisation meetings in their local area, provide financial support for our initiatives, share their story, or simply tell us they support our mission.

We're an open and inclusive movement and respect the fact that people will want to get involved in different ways.

Just as there are many pathways to recovery, there are many pathways to supporting recovery.

Question: How can people get involved?

Answer: Join the Faces and Voices of Recovery UK and/or (name of local recovery community organisation).

The Charity exists to support, organise, and mobilise everyone in the recovery community, from those at the beginning of their recovery to friends, families, and other allies – in fact anyone whose life has been touched by addiction and recovery.

You can connect with others, get involved, and spread the word that recovery is a reality. Visit the Faces and Voices of Recovery UK website at www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org to sign up, membership is free and/or (information about local recovery community organisation).

Other Questions

Here are some other questions that you may be asked that you might want to think about:

Question: Where can people get help in your community?

Question: Were you arrested or did you commit crimes to support your drug habit?

Question: How can people find out about your organisation?

Question: Did you neglect your children and family while you were using?

Question: Were you discriminated against?

Useful Contacts

Faces & Voices of Recovery UK

www.facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org

e-mail: info@facesandvoicesofrecoveryuk.org

in2recovery

<http://www.in2recovery.org.uk/>

Faces & Voices of Recovery (America)

<http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org/>

MANYFACES1VOICE.org

<http://manyfaces1voice.org/>



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