

# 'Moving On': A Self-Management Programme for Individuals

by Jan Woodward

The inner resources of a person with mental health issues can actually be depleted by service provision when it takes over completely their sense of autonomy over their own life. While this can be appropriate when a person is very unwell, it can have negative consequences if care does not evolve to respond to changing situations. The aim of support should be to help the person reclaim and equip themselves for their future growth and potential, when they may feel they have lost confidence in their own skills.

'The Whole Life – Moving On Programme' has been developed precisely in order to support a person's belief and confidence, and the need to regain control of their life. It was compiled on the basis of a personal coaching programme, where the staff member/coach is a resource to be accessed to support the service user's identified need – not to determine in advance what this need might be. This is undertaken within a partnership approach, with the service user as the expert on their own life, and the expertise of the staff member as a resource to be utilised by them.

The personal coaching concept was developed out of the Whole Life Programme under the auspices of the National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE), who had noted information from the World Health Organisation (WHO). According to this, services in Britain and other developed countries do less well compared to other countries in the developing world, around Recovery, social inclusion and return to work for those with mental health issues. The NIMHE project involved a range of mental health stakeholders from England visiting European countries to compare mental health services. A frequent observation concerned

the amount and level of control and responsibility that service users in other countries maintained for their mental Well-being. This meant ensuring that, throughout any intervention, those with mental illness were able to maintain the skills and resources they already had, so as not to disrupt existing social or community-based support mechanisms – be they the church, friends, family, or a supportive partner.

## Goals of personal coaching

Personal coaching facilitates a change in the beliefs, values and culture of mental-health services towards a Recovery-orientated service, which encourages and supports service users in taking control and responsibility for their mental Well-being. The hypothesis behind this is that despite the closure of large mental health institutions in Britain, professional response still has its roots in an institutional model of care. The geography might have changed, but had the ideology?

The programme also aims to validate and appreciate the interventions made by professional staff in order to encourage independence for service users, but to increase awareness that some of what we do creates professional dependency. Service users now live in the community, but they can feel as if they are observers on the sidelines, as they watch those around them having meaningful roles with a sense of identity, purpose, structure and belonging as they go about their daily routine. They observe others around them who live with control and choice, and who are part of the throb and pace of mainstream life; whereas service users can feel marginalised, that they are on the edges of society and not fully part of it: that they are not socially included.

The Whole Life – Moving On Programme gives service users of Hertfordshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust the opportunity to create their own personal development plan, which will cover all aspects of their life, address their needs holistically and deal with more than just their symptoms. Service users are invited to participate in a 15-module personal development course that looks at all aspects of their life. The programme begins with the service user's self-assessment of where they feel they are in their life at present, where they want to be, what support they need for this, and what skills they might need to acquire. The Whole Life staff worker spends time around the service user's own agenda, and does not focus on their mental health issues. The programme has introduced hope and the belief in Recovery from mental illness, and this has empowered and equipped service users to move toward self-management of their life.

Modules in the programme (see end of section) include *"You Can Have Dreams and Aspirations – Creating New Horizons"*; *"Your Journey – Choose the Destinations – Explore Options"*; *"Managing Time, Change and Disappointment"* as well as modules on personal skills required to achieve their specific goals such as assertiveness, stress management, etc. (see Programme Outline). The skills and tools needed for goals are resourced in mainstream services in the community, with the Whole Life worker and service user. This encourages social inclusion and self-motivation to aid them in their journey of Recovery.

The programme has dignified and validated participants as contributors to society rather than passive recipients of care. It has also provided a structured programme for staff to undertake

with their service users. This has enabled professionals to combine support around mental-health issues, but also focus on the abilities and strengths of service users.

As staff have supported people in realising their hopes and expectations in life, they have changed their beliefs and values around Recovery from mental illness. Whole Life staff are drawn from a range of professions; Community Psychiatric Nurses, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers, Employment Consultants, Community Support Staff; and representatives from Community Mental Health Teams, Assertive Outreach, Supported Employment Services, Drug and Alcohol and Community Support Teams.

This project is radical. It is not just trimming the edges of the services we offer, which are good and professional, but has gone to the core and heart of what we do. What does a service user of our mental health services require to live a fulfilling life in the community as we ourselves would want? Its focus is not on an institutional response with professionals in charge, directing service users' lives, but using our professional input to support them to develop their own skills and resources to manage their lives, including their mental health.

It is giving service users hope and a belief in their future; a future of fully participating in the community, being socially included, a paid up citizen, not stigmatised and excluded.

### It is becoming a Rally for Recovery!

Quotes from service users who have undertaken the Whole Life Personal Coaching Programme: *"The WLP is not just 1.5 hours a week for me; I live the project every day. I use the ideas it gives me in every day life and I am improving both personally and mentally every day".*

*"It has helped me understand myself more and identify areas in my life that I need to improve and develop."*  
*"It has helped me write songs and helped motivate me to get onto my National BTEC Diploma in Music Course."*

*"It has made me feel like me again."*

And the following: *"I have been attending the Whole Life Programme since August last year, and I am writing to inform you of my personal experience, and to express how beneficial I find the programme to be."*

*"I have suffered with depression and anxiety since I was 16, and have tried many forms of psychiatric therapy, none of which proved to be helpful or even appealing to me. I consequently found it difficult to commit myself to these types of therapy."*

*"From my first Whole Life session, I felt confident that I had finally found something that could help me move on with my life."*

*"For me, other talking therapies I have tried (such as counselling, psychotherapy, and life coaching) centred too much around working out why I feel the way I do, or what happened in the past to make the way I am. With the Whole Life Programme it's refreshingly different. You focus on realising your strengths, who you are and where you would like to be –*

*and then make realistic plans to achieve this. This approach has been tremendously effective in helping me to battle my mental health problems."*

*"However, if I have felt the need to discuss my past, sensitive issues or express intense emotions, I have done so with ease. This is probably because my Whole Life worker is a qualified counsellor who has been able to offer me appropriate advice, understanding and support."*

*"The programme has helped me identify my aspirations, prioritise my goals, and realise what I can realistically achieve. Before Whole Life, I'd never been so enthusiastic and optimistic about the future."*

*"Since working with him, my confidence has increased along with my self esteem, and I have felt confident enough to stop taking my medication completely."*

*"Steve has referred me to an employment programme designed for people like myself, and so now I'm*

*planning and preparing a return to work."*

*"I'd like to think that the Whole Life Programme could be offered to everyone with a case similar to mine. If it can help me, surely it can help others, too?"*

### Conclusion

Service provision should build on the individual's inner resilience and coping strategies and not on interventions that suffocate, undermine and stifle these innate qualities of hope and potential.

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## Moving On Programme Outline

- > **Module One**..... You can have Dreams and Aspirations  
– Creating new horizons
- > **Module Two**..... Your journey: Choose the destinations  
– Explore options
- > **Module Three**..... Physical Environment
- > **Module Four**..... Communication Skills
- > **Module Five**..... Assertive Behaviour
- > **Module Six**..... Self Esteem
- > **Module Seven**..... Action Planning (including goals and decisions)
- > **Module Eight**..... Managing Time, Change and Disappointment
- > **Module Nine**..... Health  
– Anxiety and Stress  
– Including relaxation, lifestyle choices etc
- > **Module Ten**..... Physical Health  
– Diet, weight, exercise, sleep
- > **Module Eleven**..... Understanding and managing money
- > **Module Twelve**..... Examining my beliefs and values  
– What I believe about myself and others  
– What I believe about life  
– How my beliefs and values help and hinder me
- > **Module Thirteen**..... Pathways to education and work
- > **Module Fourteen**..... It's ok to have Fun  
– Leisure interests and improving social life
- > **Module Fifteen**..... Personal Relationships  
– Emotions  
– Resolving relationship problems  
– Friendship  
– Anger Management