

Mental Illness and Intellectual Disability

A Comparison of the Positive
Behaviour Supports Model and the
Strengths Based Recovery Model

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

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PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Individuals with an intellectual disability are at risk to experience mental health problems
- Although epidemiological studies vary widely in prevalence rates, experts agree that individuals with an intellectual disability are more susceptible to mental illness than the “normal” population

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Most individuals who are referred to clinicians are referred because of challenging behaviour
- These individuals are then diagnosed with a mental illness
- Important to note that they were not referred because of concerns regarding potential symptomatology of mental illness

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- It should also be noted that individuals exhibiting challenging behaviours are frequently subject to restrictive practices
- As a result, they frequently have very little to do and very limited social opportunities
- Diagnostic systems have been developed for individuals exhibiting problems in a typical environment

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Diagnostic systems also examine the topography of behaviour rather than the function of the behaviour.
- Another potential obstacle is that individuals exhibiting challenging behaviours often have limited communication skills so self-report of feelings and internal thoughts may not be accessible

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- As a result, caution regarding diagnosis is necessary
- However, no one would question that individuals exhibiting challenging behaviours have real problems
- Again, it's important to remember that the initial referral was because of challenging behaviours

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Current best practice for the treatment of challenging behaviour is a positive behaviour support strategy
- PBS is a strategy that helps people by changing the world they live in and helps them learn new skills
- The goal is a richer life

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Positive Behaviour Supports is an applied science that uses educational methods to expand an individual's behaviour repertoire and systems change methods to redesign an individual's living environment to first enhance the individual's quality of life and second to minimize his or her problem behaviour.

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Primary goal of PBS is to help an individual change his/her lifestyle in a direction that gives all relevant stakeholders the opportunity to perceive and to enjoy an improved quality of life
- An important but secondary goal is to render problem behaviour irrelevant, inefficient and ineffective

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Make challenging behaviour irrelevant by changing antecedent conditions
- Make challenging behaviour inefficient by teaching replacement skills
- Make challenging behaviours ineffective by changing consequence conditions

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Critical features of PBS
 - Lifestyle change and quality of life
 - Life span perspective
 - Ecological validity
 - Stakeholder participation
 - Social validity
 - Systems change and multi-component intervention
 - Emphasis on prevention

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Three principles of PBS
 - Clinically significant change occurs in social systems and not just in individuals
 - Producing change is not simply a matter of implementing specific techniques; change involves the reallocation of resources such as time, money and political power
 - An individual's behaviour is the result of a continuous process of adaptation reflecting the interface between competence and context

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- The principle of recovery is a cornerstone of the National Mental Health Plan and is defined as “. . .a way of living a satisfying, hopeful and contributing life. Recovery involves the development of new meaning and purpose in one’s life as one grows beyond the catastrophic effects of psychiatric disability” (Australian Health Ministers, 2003, p.11)

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Principles of the Strengths model
 - Focus is on individual strengths rather than pathology
 - Community is viewed as an oasis of resources
 - Interventions are based on client self-determination
 - Aggressive outreach is the preferred model of intervention
 - People suffering from mental illness can continue to learn, grow and change

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Key propositions of the strengths model
 - The quality of niches people inhabit determine their achievement, quality of life, and success in living
 - People who are successful in living have goals and dreams
 - People who are successful in living use their strengths to attain their aspirations
 - At an one point in time, people who are successful in living have at least one goal, one relevant talent, and confidence to take the next step
 - People who are successful in living have access to the resources needed to achieve their goals

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Key propositions (cont.)
 - People who are successful in living have a meaningful relationship with at least one person
 - People who are successful in living have access to opportunities relevant to their goals
 - People who are successful in living have access to resources and opportunities and meaningful relationships

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Strengths Assessment (current status, desires and aspirations, history)
 - Daily living situation
 - Financial
 - Vocational/educational
 - Social and spiritual supports
 - Health
 - Leisure/recreational

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Similarities between the two approaches
 - The importance of changing the context of the person
 - A person-centred approach where the individual and key stakeholders are very involved in the process
 - An inclusive approach where individuals are community participants
 - An emphasis on increasing meaningful activities and relationships based on individual preferences
 - A life span perspective

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Primary difference between the two models
 - The functional assessment is a critical element of a positive behaviour support approach
 - Not used in the strengths based approach

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- What are the options?
 - If an individual with an intellectual disability exhibits challenging behaviour and is diagnosed with a mental illness, a positive behaviour support approach would be indicated as it also includes the components of a recovery model

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- If a person with an intellectual disability exhibits no challenging behaviour but is diagnosed with a mental illness, an approach emphasizing strengths assessment and implementation should be the intervention of choice

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Psychotropic medications?
 - Some medications are very effective for some people some of the time.
 - Unfortunately, “some” has not been defined well with the field
 - The same medication often will have very different effects for two individuals diagnosed with the same condition
 - The same medication often doesn't work when prescribed to the same person at a later time

PBS/Recovery (cont.)

- Medications should be used cautiously. In the past, polypharmacy has been the rule rather than the exception
- When prescribed, it is recommended that
 - An evaluation system be established to determine effectiveness and to monitor side effects
 - Frequent systematic reviews should be scheduled

Thank You!

