

The WRAP Story [Wellness Recovery Action Plan]
First Person Accounts of Personal and System Recovery and Transformation
compiled by Mary Ellen Copeland, Ph.D, 2008, Peach Press, Vermont

The WRAP Story, an anthology, has 82 stories written by people who recovered from mental illnesses: depression, anxiety, ADD, bipolar disorder or schizophrenia. These heartwarming accounts share strategies for recovering which Vermont psychologist, Mary Ellen Copeland, PhD studied, researched, developed, wrote about and taught, even when she had her own problems with depression and a bipolar diagnosis.

Story #1, in the first chapter, explains where WRAP came from. When Mary Ellen Copeland was ill, she struggled with symptoms; as her life unraveled, her family did not know how to help. After several hospitalizations and trials of strong and stronger medications, Mary Ellen asked her psychiatrist, 'How do people recover, get well and stay well?' Her doctor said there was no such information, but he learned that you do not say no to Mary Ellen Copeland. She wanted recovery information so badly that she developed it herself. She kept going when people said that her research methods would not work. She continued when people said that she could not get published or put on a workshop. She wrote and taught so well that patients started to recover and tell other patients. Her latest book, an astonishing compilation of recovery stories, shares Mary Ellen's recovery, her research and development of self-help tools and recovery strategies, her writing and methods for teaching patients to recover and pay forward what they learned.

My story appears as #7 in the chapter about using wellness recovery tools. After decades of problems with a bipolar II mood disorder, migraines, anxiety and other diagnoses, I was sick, suffering and deteriorating. My healthcare professionals offered quick labels and easy meds, but those shortcuts did not help. As a trusting patient, I was victimized by substandard care, misdiagnoses, mistreatments, lies and smiles. I wanted an accurate diagnosis and restorative treatments, then I needed tips and tools to rebuild my shredded life and keep well. Mary Ellen Copeland's books about living with depression and bipolar disorder proved exceedingly useful. Her WRAP concept encouraged me to develop a wellness recovery action plan. My wellness toolbox has four key strategies: bibliotherapy (reading to heal), orthomolecular medicine, networking and volunteering. My written recovery plan identifies trigger factors and early warning signs and outlines daily activities to maintain wellness. If a crisis looms or a relapse starts, I review my plan, adjust my doses of vitamins, minerals & amino acids (brain 'fuels'), check my medications, call my health professionals and reactivate my support network.

The recoveries in *The WRAP Story* anthology speak to the problems of psychiatry and offer self-help solutions which patients found safe and effective. Rather than trusting the tradition of nihilism in psychiatry [careless doctors who do nothing to heal], patients can develop wellness recovery action plans. Eighty-two people explain how they took responsibility for educating themselves about diagnoses, found effective treatments, identified vulnerabilities and sustained commitments to self-help. They recovered. While modern psychiatry focuses on quick labels and easy prescriptions, Mary Ellen Copeland offers self-help strategies to help sick, suffering and vulnerable patients recover and live well. Her *Wellness Recovery Action Plan* helped thousands of patients – the stories in *The WRAP Story* anthology tell readers that Mary Ellen's wellness recovery action planning concept has performed well under pressure and proven itself practical, safe, adaptable and flexible enough for everyday use by patients and health professionals.

The single-minded determination of Mary Ellen Copeland, herself a recovered patient and a PhD psychologist in Vermont, powered her series of 16 self-help books and WRAP plans, videos, workshops, trainers and facilitators across the United States. Thousands of recovered patients, worldwide, can thank Mary Ellen for teaching us how to recover using self-help tips and tools. If you or someone you know gets sick during episodes or has a chronic mental health problem, please remember that *The WRAP Story* comes with Mary Ellen's intriguing wellness recovery action planning concept and 82 inspiring stories written by patients who used her tools to plan, cope, recover and stay well. www.mentalhealthrecovery.com

Review by Robert Sealey, BSc (author of *Finding Care for Depression*, *90-Day Plan* and www.searpubl.ca)