

# Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP): A Brief Overview

Established in 1997, the **Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP)** offers a **peer-based and self-management approach to sustaining recovery**<sup>1</sup>. WRAP is centered around the belief that individuals have a right to a fulfilling life while living in substance use recovery. The guiding objectives of WRAP are to help individuals identify the support services, systems, and personal strategies necessary to create an ecosystem in which they can sustain their recovery<sup>1,2</sup>.

WRAP typically is delivered through eight to ten weekly sessions. These sessions are designed to empower participants to sit in the driver's seat of their recovery through assuming responsibility for their wellness, identifying potential stressors, and determining which support systems best fit their lifestyle and needs<sup>1</sup>. This approach allows individuals to build confidence in their ability to manage their recovery, while blending peer support and self-management<sup>3</sup>.

**WRAP has several key features including peer support.** Building and fortifying an individual's sense of community and social connection can increase hope and optimism by allowing participants to share difficult lived experiences and develop **a sense of community and solidarity**<sup>3</sup>. This allows for the expansion of **social networks**. WRAP may support an individual's **recovery capital**. Increased social networks and recovery capital can result in increased opportunities for employment, improved social functioning, reduced inpatient admissions, and help to increase overall well-being<sup>3</sup>.

WRAP is also built upon a **self-management** approach. Self-management of illness symptoms has been accepted by the scientific community as a fundamental evidence-based approach to improve health outcomes and quality of life<sup>3</sup>.

**WRAP can help individuals to recognize potential triggers, mitigate risks, set goals, and make decisions in the best interest of sustaining their recovery.** WRAP provides these benefits by creating a partnership and bridge between the individual in recovery, their family or support system, their community, and their clinical providers.

These key features may help individuals rely less heavily on traditional or formal recovery services while continuing to thrive in their recovery journey<sup>2</sup>. Rather than replacing formal or clinical care, WRAP supports individuals in proactively managing their recovery and identifying when additional support services may be needed.

WRAP helps participants develop personalized wellness plans that identify wellness tools, daily maintenance strategies, triggers, early warning signs, crisis plans, and supports that can help sustain recovery.



The graphic shows a page from the 'WRAP Recovery Action Planning Toolkit'. It has a dark blue vertical bar on the left with yellow abstract swirls. The main content area is white with a light blue border. At the top, it says 'ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR WELLNESS AND RECOVERY' in bold. Below this is a paragraph of text explaining the purpose of the toolkit. A yellow lightbulb icon is next to a 'Tip' box that says 'Remember, we can always come back to these questions and change or add to them at any time.' Below the tip are three sections for self-reflection: 'Self-Care', 'Self-Compassion', and 'Self-Esteem'. Each section has a brief definition and a large empty box for writing. At the bottom, it says 'WRAP Recovery Action Planning Toolkit. Source: Doors To Wellbeing'.

**ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR WELLNESS AND RECOVERY**

Many lives and much research have helped us to understand the factors that are most important to recovery and wellness. We will briefly define each of these concepts for **Taking Action** in this section of our guide.

Under each concept, there is space for us to write how we are, or could be, using these concepts to support our wellness and recovery.

 **Tip:** Remember, we can always come back to these questions and change or add to them at any time.

**Self-Care:** Actions we take to care for ourselves and our own health, including physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health

**Self-Compassion:** Feeling kindness, acceptance, understanding, and forgiveness toward ourselves

**Self-Esteem:** How we feel about and value ourselves and our worth

**WRAP Recovery Action Planning Toolkit.**  
*Source: Doors To Wellbeing*

**WRAP is an evidence-informed recovery support intervention with a growing evidence base in mental health recovery and emerging evidence for substance use recovery.** This accreditation was based in part on preliminary evidence suggesting that WRAP can offer the following benefits to individuals in recovery<sup>2,3</sup>:

- Increased self-advocacy
- Decreased use of clinical support services
- Higher levels of recovery knowledge
- Increased quality of life and optimism among WRAP participants

Research also found that **WRAP participants reported significantly lower levels of depression and anxiety** compared to their peers who did not participate in WRAP<sup>4</sup>. These findings may suggest WRAP has the ability to help individuals establish the skills, confidence, and support systems needed to manage recovery and co-occurring mental health symptoms.

Additional studies found that WRAP was associated with a small but statistically significant improvement in recovery outcomes<sup>2</sup>. A randomized controlled trial found a small but significant improvement in clinical symptoms with WRAP participants compared to treatment as usual<sup>2</sup>. Another robust review found **Participants reported meaningful changes in their recovery experiences, including how individuals understood their mental health, communicated their needs, and managed their recovery**<sup>3</sup>. Individuals who use WRAP were associated with decreased hospitalizations, reduced symptom severity, and fewer or shorter crisis episodes<sup>3</sup>. **Participants also described the critical tools such as action plans and toolboxes for building resilience**, and one study found that WRAP helped participants find and maintain employment<sup>3</sup>.

Importantly, these benefits were most abundant among individuals who were actively using WRAP as an ongoing recovery tool rather than completing it as a one-time program or workshop<sup>3</sup>. This suggests that WRAP may be most effective when participants remain engaged in the recovery process and continue applying their recovery plans over time.

WRAP empowers participants to communicate more openly with providers, family members, and other supports<sup>3</sup>. **Some participants described WRAP as a turning point that helped recoverees better understand their triggers, accept recovery as a lifelong process, and take greater responsibility for managing their recovery**<sup>3</sup>. By strengthening self-responsibility, control, and confidence, WRAP may help individuals more clearly identify and communicate the supports they need to sustain recovery.

**WRAP may support the development of recovery capital by helping participants identify personal strengths, social supports, wellness tools, and community resources.** WRAP's emphasis on peer support, self-management, relapse prevention, social connection, and crisis planning closely aligns with the Recovery-Oriented Systems of Care (ROSC) approach to recovery as well as recovery capital. This is especially important because **recovery is not sustained through a singular treatment or recovery pathway alone, but rather sustaining recovery is an iterative lifelong process** through ongoing access to supportive relationships, stable environments, and individualized strategies and action plans.

WRAP can help support the recovery journey, regardless of where an individual is at in that journey.

**Key Takeaway:** The Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) offers an evidence-based approach to recovery grounded in peer support and self-management. WRAP has been found to strengthen recovery capital and empower individuals with the skills, confidence, and support systems needed to manage and thrive in their recovery journey.

## Works Cited

<sup>1</sup>Norton, M. J., & Flynn, C. (2021). The Evidence Base for Wellness Recovery Action Planning (WRAP): A Protocol for a Systematic Literature Review and Meta-Analysis. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(24), 13365. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph182413365>

<sup>2</sup>Canacott, L., Moghaddam, N., & Tickle, A. (2019). Is the Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) efficacious for improving personal and clinical recovery outcomes? A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psychiatric rehabilitation journal*, 42(4), 372–381. <https://doi.org/10.1037/prj0000368>

<sup>3</sup>Canacott L, Tickle A, Moghaddam N (2020), "Perceptions of wellness recovery action plan (WRAP) training: a systematic review and metasynthesis". *Mental Health Review Journal*, Vol. 25 No. 4 pp. 345–366, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1108/MHRJ-10-2019-0037>

<sup>4</sup>Cook, J. A., Copeland, M. E., Floyd, C. B., Jonikas, J. A., Hamilton, M. M., Razzano, L., Carter, T. M., Hudson, W. B., Grey, D. D., & Boyd, S. (2012). A randomized controlled trial of effects of Wellness Recovery Action Planning on depression, anxiety, and recovery. *Psychiatric services (Washington, D.C.)*, 63(6), 541–547. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.201100125>

Doors to Wellbeing. (2014). Taking action: An evidence-based self-help and peer support approach to wellness and recovery: Part 2: Action planning workbook. Copeland Center.

**Click here to learn more on [recovery capital](#) or [how to measure recovery capital](#)!**

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