



Exploring hope: Its meaning for adults living with depression and for social work practice

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Abstract

Mental health consumers are increasingly challenging deficit focussed constructions of mental illness, which conceptualise depression as a psychopathology with associated connotations of abnormality and disease. The emergence of the recovery paradigm facilitates the possibility, indeed the hope, of recovery from serious mental illness. Social work has much to offer this shifting mental health context, drawing as it does on holistic understandings of individuals and on perspectives such as strengths, resilience and empowerment. This changing practice environment supports the need to examine individual consumer experiences of depression and recovery in order to better inform the helping relationship. This paper informs this area of practice by exploring meanings and constructions of hope from the perspective of mental health consumers with depression. The research suggests that by incorporating hopefulness into interactions between mental health consumers and clinicians, there is the potential to enhance both the wellbeing of the consumer and the quality of the consumer/clinician relationship.

Keywords

hope, depression, recovery, consumers, social work practice, service delivery

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