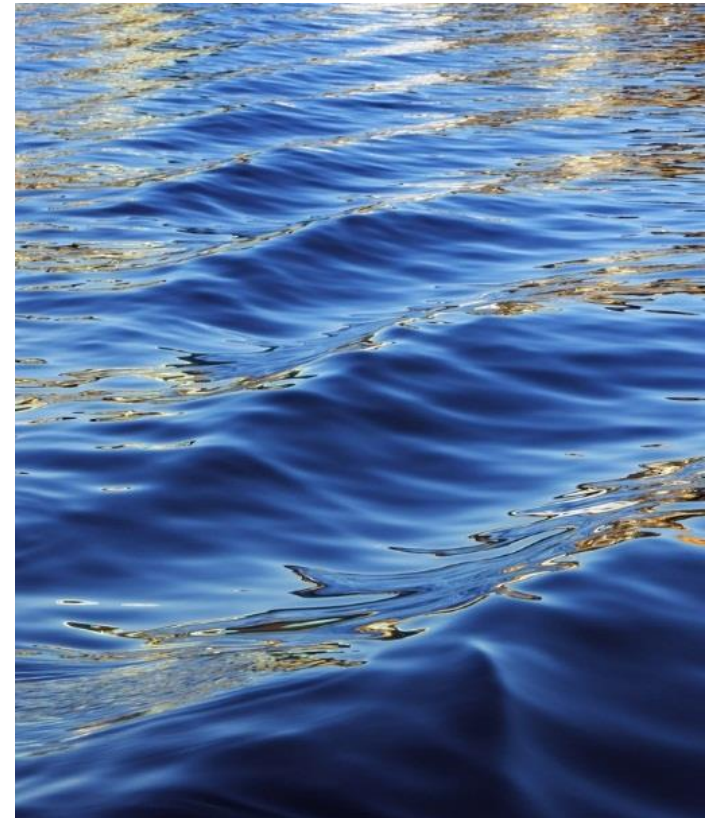


An Exploration of the Role of 'Anchor' Relationships in Building and Maintaining Recovery from Addiction

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Context

- Completed in part fulfillment of the MSc in Addiction Recovery (TCD)
- Qualitative study exploring the perspectives of 11 participants regarding their recovery journeys and the particular influence of significant others on their recovery journeys.
- The study focused specifically on 'anchoring' as an evolving concept which can be applied to recovery.
- Anchoring - Watkins describes the anchoring process as such; situating the 'anchor' in the person's mind as a faithful, trustable learning ally and facilitative companion. Basic components of anchoring involve relational safety, trust, facilitation, and challenge. In parallel with our traditional understanding of how anchors work, the anchor serves a particular purpose at a particular point in time. An anchor provides stability and securing when required, but does not prevent exploration and new experiences when the conditions are appropriate.

Selected Research Aims

- Ascertain whether or not people in recovery identify an individual who plays a specific role in positively impacting their recovery trajectory.
- Identify where that person is likely to be within an individual's social network (personal network, professional support) and the types of support they provide.
- Outline the specific tasks and roles that that individual fulfils.
- Profile the characteristics necessary to fulfil this role



Selected Findings



All participants identified a recovery anchor- a variety of people in both the personal and professional domains fulfilled this function for different participants.



Key qualities associated with those fulfilling the role were kindnesses, compassion, tenacity and empathy/understanding.



Tenacity is used as the term most suitable to describe an umbrella group of qualities ascribed to recovery anchors who were reported as 'hanging in there, never giving up and going above and beyond.'



Empathy and understanding – consistently highlighted

Evolution of the anchoring relationship

- A feature of the anchoring role was its capacity to evolve; relationships did not remain static in the face of attainment of recovery.
- Although anchor relationships remained quite significant for most participants (even with substantial time in recovery), generally there were higher levels of participation during early recovery, with a strong support function.
- Over time, relationships moved to a more equitable basis, professional relationships remained significant but became less engaged: casual meeting for coffee and occasional check-ins replaced scheduled meetings; however, knowledge of the existence of support (if required) was important.
- Generally, participants became more highly networked.

Lessons for Practice



The keyworker role – Soft skills training (Kindness & Compassion) as key.



Service policies can either facilitate or be a barrier to allowing staff the freedom to remain engaged, to 'hang in there' and to provide extra time, care and support at critical junctures can precede a step into recovery.



Key role for health professionals in instigating recovery journeys.

Participant Voice & Conclusions

- “He forced me to get me into recovery. I mean, that opened the door for me to get in to stabilize, so that was a big thing.....that was that..... but I think I would have eventually, yes, I think it would have. Yeah, definitely- I had to” (Lar).
- 'This is recovery, just here...this is it'. Clive.



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