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Recovery Mountain

A Look At the Journey of Recovery

The journey of recovery is like climbing a mountain that few have ever climbed before. There aren't worn paths and while you may meet someone on your journey, each of you are headed different ways. There are some signs every now and then.

At the start of the journey, you look up the mountain and you wonder how you are going to reach the top. You know you want to get to the top, but you wonder how you are going to reach it. You can't even see the top yet. You know you want to go and you need to get out of the valley you are in, but you are wondering how you are going to do it.

It is frightening to even think about starting this journey. You don't know what you are going to face ahead and you may even be afraid of what you believe lies ahead of you. You may not have even told anyone that you are going on this journey – what would they think if you told them?

You take a deep breath and begin to walk forward with an ever so slight incline. You're quite anxious and asking questions such as "How long will this take?" "What if I get lost?" "What if I can't make it?" "What if no one believes what I've been through on this journey or what has been in the valley?" "Will I be safe?" Perhaps you even doubt it is possible to reach the top.

You look all around, hesitant in moving forward. It seems like already the incline is getting pretty steep. So you look for someone to step. The gravel in this place looks loose, so you step hesitantly and carefully. You're trying to learn to trust these steps. You feel anxious because you've never done this before.

You look up the mountain and see how far there is to the top. It's discouraging. You want to turn back, second guessing your decision to make this journey. You look back down the mountain and you can see just how far up the mountain you are. You realize the valley seems farther away and just how much the terrain has changed. You see these changes and you feel encouraged and you begin to climb once again.

As you continue to climb you realize how much more you have to get to the top. You have come to a place where it seems impossible to go further. You can't see a place to step or a place to grab ahold of. You decide at this point to start walking to the side in hopes of finding a new place to continue climbing. While it's discouraging to not continue to make upward progress, you realize that you needed this break from climbing. After time and consideration, you realize you are not losing ground, but you are finding a different way up the mountain.

On this lateral move you find a small area that looks a bit worn. There is a camp fire, nourishment and a tent to rest in. While you're there you realize just how tired and hungry you are. There is a small rustic sign that says "You can do this. Take the supplies you need with you to care for you. It's okay to rest here a bit." While you are resting, another person on the journey to the top of the mountain stops to rest as well. As you begin to talk you learn that there are some things you can do to make the journey easier. You know now that you are not alone in this journey, and take encouragement in this. You not only realize you're not alone but you know now that there are some clearer steps to watch for and some steps to watch out for.

You begin to feel regenerated after taking some time to rest and after having conversation with another fellow traveler. You recognize the need to stop every now and then on this journey to continue to take care of you. You're also learning to stop and observe the good around you – nature, the sun, the birds, flowers, breeze and more. In the focus on making it up the mountain, you've not really taken the time to do this, but now you are more aware of the beauty around you.

You continue to look for another place to resume climbing. You have supplies now and are better equipped to care for you on the rest of this journey. Finally you come to a place you can start climbing again. You slowly begin your ascent once more. It's difficult climbing, but you are making progress.

At one step you step onto loose stones. The next thing you know you've slipped back three to four feet. It's discouraging because you were making progress. You realize however, that sliding backwards actually gave you an opportunity to look for better footing that would make it easier to continue to make the progress. You are now able to recognize those areas where you need to be careful and you know how to prepare for those places.

It's hard when the way up seems to take a downward turn through the wind up the mountain. After much time and energy, you've finally made it to the top of the mountain. Looking down the way you came up, you see all the progress you've made. As you look down from the top, you see green grass, beautiful scenery and so much more beauty than you've experienced before. You feel peaceful. You know

you've got this now. When you look at where you came from, you can see the dark valley, but as you see this, you realize that the memories from the valley are still there, but the pain of them are not.

As a survivor, this journey of healing is a challenge. It can be helpful to look back six months and see the progress you've made. Sometimes you can take a "break" where you aren't pushing through the trauma, but actually are taking good care of yourself and using good self-care to regain some strength to not keep processing so hard. We all need a break sometimes. This doesn't mean stopping therapy, but perhaps working more on coping skills intermittently to remain stabilized during your treatment.

Yes, recovery is tough, but it is possible to reach the top of the mountain. Give yourself time to rest along the way. Remember to take care of your basic needs – emotional, physical, mental and spiritual. Continue to reach out for support. It can make the journey of healing easier and reduce isolation. If you choose to join a support group for survivors, you can find a common bond and realize you are definitely not the only one on this difficult journey.

Give yourself grace on this journey, and affirm yourself on the way. Give yourself kudos for the successes, and compassion and kindness during the rough patches. You are worth this journey. The other side of the mountain is a much nicer place, and definitely a great place.

Here's to the other side of the mountain!