



Dignity of Risk

September 2020 Technical Assistance Call
Zoom format 10am and 3pm
Asia W Gray, Master of Social Work



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

What is it?

Why does it matter ?

How do I apply this?



What is dignity of risk?

- A concept; principle
- The principle that every human has the right to make choices, and have autonomy
- Especially applicable to persons most vulnerable to having their autonomy eroded.
- An expression of self determination, and personhood.

Human growth

- Autonomy and self determination is a vital element to growth & change.
- Humans learn from mistakes

- “A life without risks can erode a persons’ dignity” (Marsh and Kelly 2018)



History & Context

- Robert Perske coined the term in 1972 book
- “Overprotection endangers the persons human dignity and tends to keeps them from experiencing the normal taking of risks in life which is necessary for human growth and development”

Literature findings

- Widespread agreement for the concept
- Yet full of ethical tensions in practice

Emergence of Risk themes

- Safe but sorry
- Shared decision Making
- Rights and responsibilities
- Geography of Risk

Safe But Sorry...

- Focus on eliminating the risk of physical harm can come at the expense of psychological wellbeing and physical health³
- “Perceptions” of risk dominate the literature...perceptions are subjective
- Often the *likelihood of harm* is incongruent with the *perceived or feared risk* ⁴

Shared Decision Making

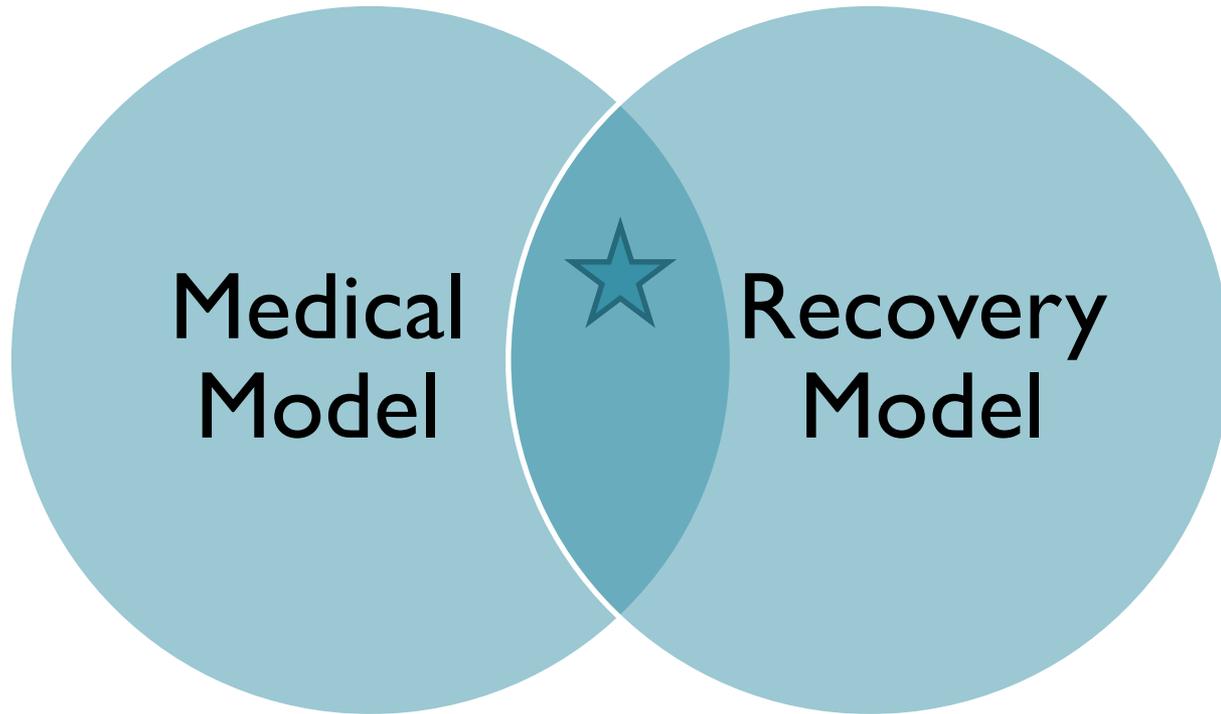
- Even impaired, decision making ability should be respected
- Community can mediate risk
- Context dependent
- Natural supports that the person wants involved
 - MH staff get more risk tolerant as we get to know someone

Rights and Responsibilities

- Staff can slant heavily towards paternalism
- Can fall into “absolute hazard avoidance” stance
- Practitioners WANT to be client centered and find that organizational policies and guidelines leave them unsupported

Ex. Australia’s nat’l framework, and Oregon ACT DACT modification for PSS

Where do you practice?



Geography of Risk

- A lot of risk conversations are focused around the physical environment in which risk may occur
- Transitions between levels of care/settings are fraught with complex decisions revolving around risk

What can we do?

Broaden how we think about risk— positive risk, and therapeutic risk

Create Intersubjective understandings and solutions



Therapeutic Risk & Positive Risk

- A clinical focus –concerned with the potentially positive health & wellbeing outcomes
- Focus on individual growth
- Sense of identity & social inclusion

Dignity of Risk

- Focused on the ethics of risk taking and decision making
- Power Imbalance
- Particularly concerned with those most vulnerable to having their autonomy eroded

Terms

Practice – case study

- Jed is a 54 yo male who is considering having two new roommates move into his apartment. ...
- Use the tool

Coming soon

- Common Ground
- Recovery Academy & Library
- <https://www.commongroundprogram.com/>



Questions, comments...

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