Role of Nutrition and Life Skills in Substance Use Recovery

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**OBJECTIVES**
- Determine the role of nutrition in recovery from the perspectives of recovery program directors and individuals in recovery in order to inform how to implement a nutrition program in a recovery setting.

**METHODS**
- 2 recovery programs, WVU Collegiate Recovery (WVU CRP) and West Virginia Women’s Sober Living (WV WSL) participated
- Cognitive interviews with program directors
- Focus groups with individuals in recovery
- Questions included their perceptions of the role of nutrition in recovery, what would help them follow a healthy diet, and what they would like to see implemented
- Thematic analysis using NVIVO Version 12.0

**RESULTS**
- **WVU CRP Program Directors**
  - Theme 1: Faculty Support. "I would also like faculty involvement and sort of connection in really developing relationships with different faculty members because I know that can have a real profound impact on a student’s time at and I really think that’s a powerful asset to students in recovery."
  - Theme 2: Implementing in Recovery. "I think that would be really beneficial to program participants."

- **WVU CRP Recovering Individuals**
  - Theme 1: Life Skills Training. Subthemes of Nutrition and Budgeting. "Horrible budgeting habits. It’s like right from the beginning, it’s laying the foundation of what it’s going to be like when they move out. So I think that would be really beneficial to program participants."
  - Theme 2: Implementing in Recovery. Subthemes of Helpful to Recovery, Implement Later in Recovery, Start Simple, and Shopping, Budgeting, and Meal Planning: "I think it’d have to be simple, would be the main thing is starting really simple. So that it doesn’t seem overwhelming cause to me I think about healthy eating and I’m like [heavy sigh] there are just too many factors. It’s just too hard."

- **WV WSL**
  - Theme 1: Different Priorities. "I think it could aid in recovery, but we’re not at the point where we’d consider nutrition a priority. We spent many years putting unhealthy drugs in our body but nutrition isn’t something we think about."
  - Theme 2: What Helps to Follow a Healthy Diet. Subthemes of Time-Management, Cost-Effective Options, and Group Mealtime: "We all came from a fast-paced life and you kind of get stuck in that. You have to learn how to slow down and we are all at different levels of recovery."

**CONCLUSIONS**
- Both programs described need for life-skills training, including budgeting and nutrition lessons
- Nutrition was less of a priority for those in the early stages of recovery
- Potential to incorporate nutrition lessons into a life-skills training program to target all aspects of wellness, independence, and sustained recovery