Positive Risk in Adult Mental Health

How does a positive risk approach support recovery?
"The likelihood of an event happening with potentially harmful or beneficial outcomes for self and/or others" (Morgan 2009).
What is recovery?

- At the heart of recovery, “is a set of values about a person’s right to build a meaningful life for themselves, with or without the continuing presence of mental health symptoms.

- Recovery is based on ideas of self-determination and self-management.

- It emphasises the importance of ‘hope’ in sustaining motivation and supporting expectations of an individually fulfilled life”

(Shepherd et al., 2008)
‘Moral Outrage’, the media, and governmental organisations.

- “Teens 'let down' on suicide advice” (NZ)
- “Mother welcomes report on death of mentally ill son” (NZ)
- “Failing mental health system must change” (UK)
The problem with risk assessment.

Assessed to be suicidal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Absent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive</strong></td>
<td><strong>Negative</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>True Positive</strong></td>
<td><strong>False Negative</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>False Positive</strong></td>
<td><strong>True Negative</strong></td>
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Would have died by suicide
Defensive practice: What is it and what are the effects?

"We've considered every potential risk except the risks of avoiding all risks."
What are the effects?

- Focus on risk not treatment.
- Undermines self efficacy.
- Loss of hope
- Dependence
- Denies the right to choice and independence.
- Stigma (I’m mad and dangerous).
- Can lead to longer term increase in risk behaviour.
Positive risk in mental health
Positive risk management cycle

- Collaborative approach to risk
- Positive experience for client
- More engagement with the process
- Greater collaboration with the service
- Lower risk as strategies for management are designed and acted upon
- Open approach: engaging with the client in planning for risk

(Departement of Health, 2007)
Positive risk in practice

- What are the reasons for considering taking risks? (is it reactive or proactive?)
- What are the clients experiences and understanding of risk?
- What are the carer’s understanding of risk?
- What actions are you defining as being ‘positive risk taking’ for (a) the client and/or (b) practitioners?
- Define actions/behaviours you determine to be risky.
Positive risk in practice continued

- Define the risk being taken
- Define the intended outcomes of the course of action.
- What strengths support the action?
- What are the planned stages?
- What may be the pitfalls (including estimates of likelihood)?
- What are the early warning signs?
- What safety nets can be identified?
- Outline reasons and formulation why positive risk-taking is the course of action in this situation.
- How will progress be monitored.
Positive risk is not the reckless ignorance of risk!

TAKING RISK
There's a fine line between taking a calculated risk and doing something dumb.
Positive risk taking is weighing up the potential benefits and harms of exercising one choice of action over another. Identifying the potential risks involved, and developing plans and actions that reflect the positive potentials and stated priorities of the client. It involves using available resources and support to achieve the desired outcomes, and to minimise the potential harmful outcomes. It requires an agreement of the goals to be achieved, or a clear explanation of any differences of opinion regarding the goals or courses of action (Morgan, 2009).

The best source of knowledge is experience.