

**Av egen kraft  
tillsammans med andra**

**Personer med psykiska funktionshinder, socialt stöd och  
återhämtning**

**Av  
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**Akademisk avhandling**

**Som med tillstånd av samhällsvetenskaplig fakultet vid  
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## Abstract

Title: A struggle on your own – alongside others. People with psychiatric disabilities, social support and recovery.

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The purpose of this study was to describe and analyse the significance of social support to adults with psychiatric disabilities, based on the individual's experiences. This includes research questions concerning what type of social support was perceived to be beneficial or restrictive, which relational aspects were considered having a beneficial or restrictive effect on the support- and recovery process, as well as what strategies and capacities the individual developed on their own in order to cope with their obstacles and disadvantages.

The empirical material was based on qualitative interviews with ten individuals that defined themselves as having psychiatric disabilities. They were each interviewed on three occasions. The repetitive form of the interviews led to three separate interview guides being created over the course of the data collection process. The goal of the first interview was to get a general idea of the subject's daily life, activities, arenas, relationships and support. The second interview focused on meaningful relationships. The third and final interview had one general and one individual part. The general part focused on the subject's psychiatric disabilities, their opportunities as well as existing and desired support measures. The subject matters in the individual part were related to the previous interviews with each of the participants and aimed to develop or expand on previous discussion.

The material was analysed using theories about social support and recovery and was presented with roots in four different networking entities: close and extended family, friends, coworkers and fellow students, as well as formal support instances. The result showed that it is the support with mobilising qualities that is beneficial to the recovery process. It increases the individual's degree of control over their illness, obstacles and challenges. In addition, it appeals to the individual as a central actor and as a person with difficulties as well as resources. The fact that the social support from the various support agencies have varying focus and direction benefits recovery since it increases the individual's opportunity to maintain as well as develop their social bonds and roles within the community. A relational prerequisite for social support is an equal relationship, which benefits the recovery process as it encompasses acknowledgement and acceptance of both the individual on a personal level and of their situation. The type of social support that hinders recovery is the kind that lacks a connection between the individual's perceived problems, their need for support and their over time fluctuating ability to handle their psychiatric disability. This is due to the fact that it robs the individual of control over the situation, increases the need for support and strengthens their perception of themselves as sick. Recovery comes to a halt when the individual isn't included in the support and recovery process, which is clarified in relational aspects such as lacking attentiveness, subpar acceptance as well as rejection. The individual's will and capacity to actively take on the responsibility to steer their recovery in a positive direction was made visible through four groups of strategies that were crystallised through the course of the research; creation of understanding and legitimisation, cultivation, including strategies and the creation of boundaries.