

# The Trait-Based Recovery Information and Funding Guide



Transforming the Future of Recovery



## Overview

The Trait-Based Model of Recovery helps individuals rediscover their strengths, rebuild emotional stability, and lead from their inherent traits. Rooted in evidence-based practice and measurable outcomes, TBMR enhances **resilience** and **emotional intelligence**, reduces depression and anxiety, and strengthens purpose and identity within recovery settings.

### This guide includes:

- Overview of the Trait-Based Model of Recovery
- Sample lessons and exercises from the curriculum
- Outcome highlights demonstrating measurable results
- Implementation guidance for treatment programs
- Funding steps for state and federal grant opportunities

### PROGRAM RESULTS

**97.1% RETENTION**  
Compared to 47%  
in Traditional Treatment

### KEY TRAITS After Trait-Based Intervention:

**Tenacity: 71%**

Post-Intervention Score

\*A 10.41% increase from Pre-Intervention Score

**Resilience: 78%**

Post-Intervention Score

\*A 8.16% increase from Pre-Intervention Score

**Creativity: 70%**

Post-Intervention Score

\*A 7.81% increase from Pre-Intervention Score

**Self-Awareness: 82%**

Post-Intervention Score

\*A 5.54% increase from Pre-Intervention Score

Find out more at the Trait-Based Data Archive.  
Reep, D. J. (2020). Trait-Based Data Archive [Data set]. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14711457>

### CLINICAL OUTCOMES



Programs end, but culture lasts. Start from Strength – because recovery begins within.

(270) 469-5508

Jgroop@StartfromStrength.org

www.StartfromStrength.org



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# Overview and How It Works

## Overview

The Trait-Based Model of Recovery helps individuals rediscover their **strengths**, rebuild **emotional stability**, and lead from their **inherent traits**. Rather than focusing on pathology or deficits, TBMR empowers clients to understand who they are, how they operate under stress, and how to use their inherent traits for **growth, purpose, and connection**.

Developed by the Center for Trait-Based Transformation, the model combines evidence-based assessments, experiential curriculum, and measurable outcomes that help individuals achieve internal balance and lasting transformation throughout recovery.

## How It Works

The Trait-Based Model of Recovery follows a four-step pathway that guides individuals from self-awareness to self-leadership:

**Assessments** – Identify core traits and Hero Archetype (Ruler, Champion, Enchanter, or Lover).

**Curriculum** – Forty guided lessons link traits to resilience, emotional balance, and purpose.

**Strength Spark Companion** – Encourages ongoing reflection through journaling and leadership challenges.

**Outcomes** – Tracks measurable change in anxiety, depression, resilience, and self-image.

*We don't have to erase people to heal them. Every person already carries the strength required for transformation.*



# Why Trait-Based Recovery Works



## A Strength-First Approach to Healing

Traditional recovery models often begin with what's broken. The Trait-Based Model begins with what's strong – helping individuals rediscover resilience, creativity, and self-leadership. Rooted in evidence-based practice, it reframes treatment as an act of empowerment rather than correction.

## The Tree of Traits

At the heart of the model are ten measurable strengths organized across three developmental paths:



Each trait guides growth, balance, and leadership – helping clients replace old patterns with strength-based awareness.

## Core Principles

**Trait Activation** – Strengthening inherent capacities builds confidence and identity.

**Shadow Integration** – Transforming out-of-balance traits restores wholeness.

**Heroic Reframing** – Clients connect with their Hero Archetype



# Trait-Based is Working and the Data Proves It

## A Paradigm Shift in Addiction Treatment and Recovery

Across multiple treatment settings, the Trait-Based Model of Recovery has redefined what's possible in behavioral health outcomes. Rather than beginning with pathology, the model begins with potential—empowering clients to lead from their inherent traits and rediscover purpose, identity, and balance.

Participants consistently show measurable improvement in mental health and engagement, including:

- 97.1% program retention over 90 days
- 71.5% reduction in depression
- 58.5% reduction in anxiety
- 97.7% of clients improving in at least one measurable trait

These outcomes represent a clear shift toward strength-based, client-led recovery — where transformation is sustained because it begins from within.

**AJE** Trait-Based Model of Recovery: A paradigm shift in the treatment of substance use disorder  
Roop. "Trait-based recovery enhances engagement and reduces anxiety and depression symptoms." Scientific Reports (2025) <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-06384-0>

Recovery from **substance use disorders** is often complicated by coinciding mental health conditions

Existing treatments often **inadequately address** these co-occurring disorders, leading to low engagement, high dropout rates, and a lack of persistent change

### The Trait-Based Model of Recovery offers a new solution

Moving beyond a focus on behavior modification, this intervention promotes **successful long-term recovery** through

- Identity development
- Strength discovery
- Purposeful transformation

Central to the model is an emotional development framework called the **Tree of Traits**

Balanced, constructive "light" expression vs. imbalanced, maladaptive "shadow" expression

### Key program outcomes

- 97.1% retention** vs. only 47% in traditional treatment programs
- Depression** 71.5% reduction
- Anxiety** 58.5% reduction

Clear increases in many traits

- Resilience
- Emotional intelligence
- Motivation
- Identity strength

Overall, this program empowers patients on the pathway to recovery **from the inside out**

Published in Scientific Reports (2025). Data from multi-site implementation of the Trait-Based Model of Recovery.

(270) 469-5508

Jgroop@StartfromStrength.org

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# Sample Lesson 1: Meeting Your Shadow

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## Lesson 5: Meeting Your Shadow

### Introduction

Every person carries strengths that shine, but also shadows that may feel harder to face. Your shadow traits are the parts of yourself that you may have tried to hide, avoid, or deny — yet they are still part of you. Recovery is not about pretending these shadows don't exist, but about recognizing them with honesty and compassion.

When you meet your shadow, you open the door to healing. What once held you back can become a teacher. In this lesson, you'll learn to acknowledge your shadow traits, understand how they developed, and begin practicing ways to integrate them into your growth.

### Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Define what a “shadow trait” is and why it matters in recovery.
- Identify at least two shadow traits you recognize in yourself.
- Reflect on how shadow traits have influenced your life and recovery.
- Practice showing compassion toward your shadow instead of rejecting it.
- Create an action plan for integrating shadow traits into your strengths-based growth.

### Section 1: Understanding the Shadow

The shadow represents traits, emotions, or behaviors you've pushed aside or tried to hide. Often, these traits were once coping mechanisms that helped you survive difficult moments.

#### Reflection Questions:

- What do the words “shadow trait” mean to you?
- Why might it be important to recognize your shadow instead of rejecting it?



# Sample Lesson 1 (cont.) – Meeting Your Shadow

## Section 2: Identifying Your Shadow Traits

Think about traits, habits, or patterns that may have caused challenges in your life or recovery. These are often clues to your shadow.

Write down at least two shadow traits you recognize in yourself and briefly describe how they show up in your life.

1. Shadow Trait: \_\_\_\_\_ | How it shows up: \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 3: Compassion for Your Shadow

Instead of rejecting your shadow traits, you can practice viewing them with compassion. Shadows often developed as a form of protection during hard times.

### Activity – Shadow with Compassion

Choose one of the shadow traits you listed. Reflect on the following prompts:

- Why do you think this shadow trait developed? \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 4: Expressing the Shadow

Sometimes creativity helps us better understand what we can't always put into words.

### Activity – Creative Expression

Use this space to represent your shadow through writing, drawing, or symbols. Let your creativity show what words can't.

## Section 5: Integration and Action Plan

Meeting your shadow is only the first step. The next is choosing to integrate what you've learned into daily growth.

### Commitment:

This week, I will actively acknowledge and work to integrate the shadow aspect of:



# Sample Lesson 2 – The Tree of Traits



www.StartfromStrength.org | The Trait•Based Model of Recovery

## Lesson 7: The Tree of Traits

### Introduction

Imagine your strengths and traits as branches of a tree. Some are strong and steady, while others may need care and growth. The *Tree of Traits* is a way to understand how GRIT, GRACE, and BALANCE work together to keep you rooted, growing, and resilient.

When your tree is balanced, you can stand tall in storms. When it's out of balance, you may feel weighed down or unstable. By learning to care for all the branches — resilience, empathy, creativity, authenticity, and more — you can cultivate a stronger, healthier recovery.

In this lesson, you'll explore your Tree of Traits, notice where you may lean too heavily on one path, and discover how to return to balance by practicing awareness and growth.

### Objectives

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- Explain the Tree of Traits and its connection to GRIT, GRACE, and BALANCE.
- Recognize what happens when GRIT or GRACE is overemphasized.
- Practice using self•awareness to return to balance.
- Reflect on how emotional intelligence, authenticity, and creativity support balance in recovery.
- Create a plan for nurturing your personal Tree of Traits.

### Section 1: My Current Tree

Think of yourself as a tree with branches that represent different traits. Some branches may feel strong, while others may feel fragile or underdeveloped.

### Reflection Questions:

- Which traits feel strongest in your life right now?



# Sample Lesson 2 (cont.) – The Tree of Traits

## Section 2: GRIT and GRACE in Balance

GRIT traits (resilience, tenacity, determination) help you endure challenges. GRACE traits (empathy, appreciation, motivation) help you connect with others and with yourself. Both are essential — but sometimes we get “lost” down one path.

- If you rely only on **GRIT**, you may push yourself so hard that you lose compassion, connection, or appreciation.
- If you rely only on **GRACE**, you may become caring and understanding but lack the persistence to keep going when life gets tough.

When one side dominates, the tree becomes unbalanced. Strength comes when GRIT and GRACE work together.

### Activity – Checking My Balance

- My strongest GRIT trait: \_\_\_\_\_
- How it supports me: \_\_\_\_\_

## Section 3: Returning to Balance

The path back to balance begins with **self-awareness**. When you notice you’ve gone too far in one direction,

- Self-awareness helps you recognize imbalance.
- Emotional intelligence grows as you learn to respond to yourself and others with understanding.
- Authenticity follows when you align your actions with your true values.
- Creativity allows you to revisit where you became unbalanced, set strategies to correct it, and find new solutions to challenges.

Together, these traits — self-awareness, emotional intelligence, authenticity, and creativity — form the **Path of Balance**.

### Reflection Question:

- How can self-awareness help you return to balance when you feel pulled too far into GRIT or GRACE?



# Sample Lesson 2 (cont.) – The Tree of Traits



## Section 4: Tree Visualization

Take a quiet moment to picture your Tree of Traits. Imagine each branch representing a trait. Which branches are leafy and strong? Which ones are thin or fragile? Which side feels heavier — GRIT or GRACE?

### Activity – Draw or Describe My Tree of Traits

## Section 5: Commitment & Daily Reflection

Balance is a daily practice. This week, notice where you lean too heavily — GRIT or GRACE — and use your Path of Balance traits (self-awareness, emotional intelligence, authenticity, creativity) to bring yourself back.

### My Commitment:

Trait or path I will pay closer attention to this week: \_\_\_\_\_

### Daily Reflections

- Monday: \_\_\_\_
- Tuesday: \_\_\_\_
- Wednesday: \_\_\_\_
- Thursday: \_\_\_\_
- Friday: \_\_\_\_
- Saturday: \_\_\_\_
- Sunday: \_\_\_\_

## TREE OF TRAITS

[www.startfromstrength.org](http://www.startfromstrength.org)



# Trait-Based Model of Prevention: Building Strength Before the Struggle

## Overview

The same evidence-based framework transforming recovery is also changing the landscape of prevention.

The Trait-Based Model of Prevention empowers students to identify and strengthen their inherent traits – building resilience, emotional intelligence, and leadership long before risk behaviors begin.

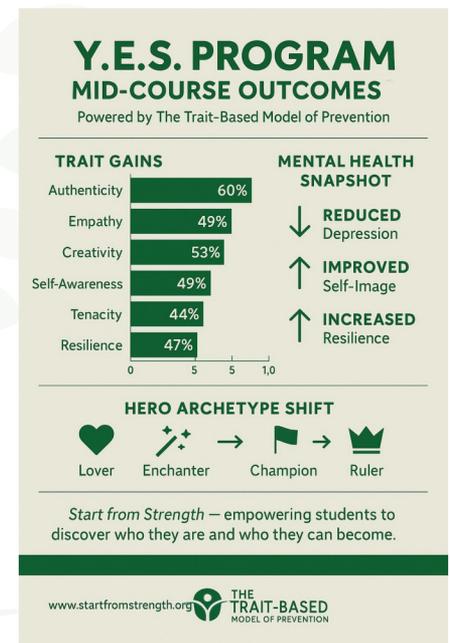
Delivered across grades 7–12, the program equips youth with tools for self-awareness, empathy, and authentic connection, fostering a culture of belonging and purpose.

## Early data from pilot schools show:

- Improved student engagement and school belonging
- Increased leadership and empathy traits
- Reduction in risk behaviors and absenteeism
- Strengthened peer and teacher relationships

## Program Highlights

- **8-Module Curriculum** – Adapted from the Trait-Based Recovery framework
- **Age-Appropriate Workbooks** – 7th through 12th grade editions
- **Video-Based Lessons** – Delivered through the Start from Strength digital platform
- **Built-In Assessments** – Track growth in GRIT, GRACE, and BALANCE traits
- **Badges and Reflection Activities** – Celebrate achievement and reinforce identity



Mid-course data from the 2025 Y.E.S. (Youth Empowerment through Strength) summer community-based mentorship program show strong gains in empathy, creativity, and self-awareness, along with improved mental health and self-image.

*Programs end, but culture lasts. Start from Strength – because prevention begins within.*



# A Unified Framework for Human Transformation

Across prevention, recovery, and leadership, the Trait-Based Model provides a shared foundation for growth. Whether in classrooms, treatment programs, or workplaces, it uses the same core language of traits to strengthen **resilience, empathy, and authenticity**.

By cultivating these inherent strengths, individuals learn to lead from within – creating ripple effects that transform relationships, communities, and culture itself.

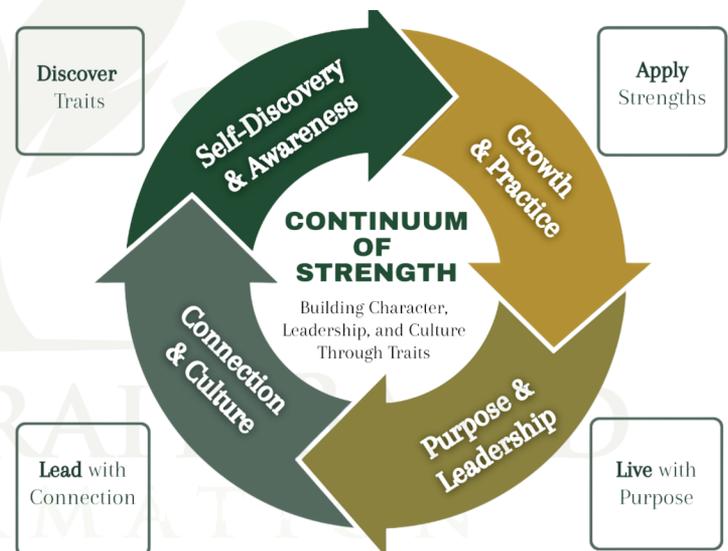
## The Trait-Based Ecosystem Includes:

- **Trait-Based Prevention** – Building strength before the struggle
- **Trait-Based Recovery** – Transforming pain into purpose
- **Leadership Through Traits** – The heart of both models, guiding authentic growth and lasting change

Together, these programs form one integrated ecosystem – helping people of every age discover who they are, why they matter, and how to live from strength.

## CONTINUUM OF STRENGTH

The Continuum of Strength shows how the same traits that build prevention also sustain recovery. At its center, leadership emerges as the expression of growth, guiding character, culture, and purpose from within. This unified framework empowers individuals to build resilience before the struggle, transform pain into purpose, and lead others through strength.



# Measuring what Matters: The Trait-Based Assessments

▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶▶ The Trait-Based Model uses a suite of validated assessments to measure real change—helping individuals, schools, and treatment programs see transformation in action. These assessments provide clear data on growth in traits, well-being, and engagement.

**DISCOVER YOUR INNER HERO**  
Discover Your Strengths. Transform Your Journey.

**RULER**  
A strategic leader, disciplined and structured. You create order, set goals, and thrive on stability.

**ENCHANTER**  
A visionary, full of charisma and adaptability. You reframe challenges, think outside the box, and embrace transformation with creativity.

**CHAMPION**  
A fearless fighter, driven by resilience and tenacity. You push forward, overcome obstacles, and inspire others with determination.

**LOVER**  
A connector, leading with empathy and compassion. You nurture relationships, foster emotional healing, and build deep bonds with others.

**TAKE OUR FREE ASSESSMENT**

**TREE OF TRAITS**  
Determination, Empathy, Resilience, Tenacity, Creativity, Authenticity, Emotional Intelligence, Self-Awareness, Appreciation, Motivational.

**By understanding your strengths, you can embrace your full potential and navigate recovery with confidence.**

**LEARN MORE AT THE CENTER FOR TRAIT-BASED TRANSFORMATION**  
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## Evidence-Based Assessment Suite

**PHQ-9 (Depression)**  
Measures changes in mood and emotional well-being.

**GAD-7 (Anxiety)**  
Tracks reductions in stress, worry, and restlessness.

**Resilience Scale**  
Assesses perseverance, adaptability, and coping ability.

**Self-Image Scale**  
Evaluates self-esteem, authenticity, and personal identity.

**CRAFFT Screening Tool**  
Identifies early behavioral and substance-use risks among youth.

The Trait & Hero Archetype Assessment links personality to leadership, resilience, and emotional balance—serving as the foundation for measuring transformation within the Trait-Based Model.

# Voices of Strength

## Stories of transformation through the Trait-Based Model of Recovery



From early recovery to long-term transformation, the Trait-Based Model helps individuals rediscover who they are—and who they can become. These voices from graduates and facilitators reflect the heart of Trait-Based Recovery: a journey of awakening inherent strength, reclaiming purpose, and finding peace within.

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### **“It’s like unlocking a secret door.”**

*Life has been a rollercoaster lately, but I feel like God is guiding me on an exciting adventure. This new sense of calm comes from the Trait-Based Model of Recovery – especially the Tree of Traits. It helped me break free from perfectionism and co-dependency. My perspective has changed completely, and I love it.*

– Wanda A.

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### **“I don’t struggle today – I thrive.”**

*I’ve been sober for the longest period of my life, and it’s because of Trait-Based Recovery. I didn’t live a mediocre life in the madness, and I don’t live one in sobriety. I have a solid network of people to rely on, and it all began here.*

– Troy R.

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### **“This model surpasses everything I’ve experienced.”**

*I’ve been sold on this model ever since it was presented to us. After 41 years in and around recovery programs, I believe Trait-Based surpasses them all. We now integrate it at the residential level, preparing clients for leadership and success as they transition back into life.*

– Program Facilitator

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### **“I’ve found my strength in the dark.”**

*The Trait-Based Model showed me that shadows can reveal strengths we didn’t know we had. I’ve learned to smile instead of weeping, to find peace and perspective through my own shadows – and in that, I found my shield of strength.”*

– Brigitte T.

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### **“It helped me practice forgiveness and balance.”**

*The Trait-Based Model helped me understand my strengths and imbalances. I’ve learned to forgive how I misused leadership traits in the past – and now I feel confident leading with purpose.”*

– Jacob H.

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*These voices remind us that healing begins the moment we Start from Strength.*



# Funding Alignment and Implementation Support

## Funding Steps for Implementing Trait-Based Recovery

The Center for Trait-Based Transformation (CTBT) supports treatment programs, recovery centers, and community organizations in securing grant funding to implement Trait-Based Recovery and Prevention initiatives.

This process applies to federal, state, and local funding opportunities – including opioid settlement funds, workforce reintegration initiatives, and community resilience grants.

### Step 1: Identify the Right Opportunity

Look for funding priorities that emphasize:

- Recovery and reintegration support
- Workforce development and life-skills training
- Mental-health and emotional-wellness programming
- Family engagement and community well-being

These priorities align directly with Trait-Based outcomes in resilience, self-awareness, and leadership.

### Step 2: Align Your Proposal

CTBT provides adaptable templates and measurable-outcome language that emphasize:

- Evidence-based design (Scientific Reports, 2025 publication)
- Validated assessments for resilience, empathy, and emotional intelligence
- Demonstrated reductions in anxiety and depression

### Step 3: Prepare and Submit

Include:

- A brief project summary and budget outline
- A CTBT letter of collaboration (available upon request)
- A sustainability plan for facilitator training and Strength Spark integration

Submit applications through the relevant federal, state, or local grant portals.

### Need a quick start?

CTBT can provide **proposal templates and support letters** upon request.



# Grant Funding Overview & Program Support

## Funding Snapshot

- Aligns with national and state recovery workforce priorities
- Eligible for treatment programs and community partners
- CTBT provides grant templates and measurable outcomes

## Program Cost

**\$199 per participant – includes:**

- Full access to the Trait-Based Model of Recovery curriculum
- Student guidebooks and workbooks
- Facilitator training through CTBT
- Assessments and outcome tracking via CTBT's online platform

*Programs can scale based on the number of clients served, with group licensing options available for district or county-wide implementation.*

## Tips for a Strong Application

- **Emphasize measurable outcomes** using Trait-Based assessment data
- **Highlight collaboration** – include a CTBT partnership letter
- **Focus on recovery impact**, leadership development, and resilience growth
- **Add a sustainability plan** for facilitator training and Strength Spark integration

***Start from Strength and let transformation do the rest.***

## Need Help Applying?

The Center for Trait-Based Transformation (CTBT) can assist with:

- Program descriptions, budget templates, and data
- Implementation and facilitator training plans
- Proposal and narrative guidance

***The Center for Trait-Based Transformation***



# The Center for Trait-Based Transformation: Start from Strength



## CENTER FOR TRAIT-BASED TRANSFORMATION — *Start From Strength* —

The Center for Trait-Based Transformation develops evidence-based programs that restore identity, resilience, and purpose across prevention, recovery, and education. Through the Trait-Based Model, we are helping individuals and communities start from strength.

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JGroop@StartFromStrength.org | (270) 469-5508  
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