

Recovery Coach Textbook

UNDERSTANDING ADDICTION

WHAT IS ADDICTION?

ADDICTION INVOLVES CRAVING FOR SOMETHING INTENSELY, LOSS OF CONTROL OVER ITS USE, AND CONTINUING INVOLVEMENT WITH IT DESPITE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES.

ADDICTION CHANGES THE BRAIN, FIRST BY SUBVERTING THE WAY IT REGISTERS PLEASURE AND THEN BY CORRUPTING OTHER NORMAL DRIVES SUCH AS LEARNING AND MOTIVATION.

ALTHOUGH BREAKING AN ADDICTION IS TOUGH, IT CAN BE DONE.

WHAT CAUSES ADDICTION?

THE WORD “ADDICTION” IS DERIVED FROM A LATIN TERM FOR “ENSLAVED BY” OR “BOUND TO.” ANYONE WHO HAS STRUGGLED TO OVERCOME AN ADDICTION—OR HAS TRIED TO HELP SOMEONE ELSE TO DO SO—UNDERSTANDS WHY.

ADDICTION EXERTS A LONG AND POWERFUL INFLUENCE ON THE BRAIN THAT MANIFESTS IN THREE DISTINCT WAYS: CRAVING FOR THE OBJECT OF ADDICTION, LOSS OF CONTROL OVER ITS USE, AND CONTINUING INVOLVEMENT WITH IT DESPITE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES.

FOR MANY YEARS, EXPERTS BELIEVED THAT ONLY ALCOHOL AND POWERFUL DRUGS COULD CAUSE ADDICTION. NEUROIMAGING TECHNOLOGIES AND MORE RECENT RESEARCH, HOWEVER, HAVE SHOWN THAT CERTAIN PLEASURABLE ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS GAMBLING, SHOPPING, AND SEX, CAN ALSO CO-OPT THE BRAIN.

ALTHOUGH A STANDARD U.S. DIAGNOSTIC MANUAL (THE DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL MANUAL OF MENTAL DISORDERS, FOURTH EDITION OR DSM-IV) DESCRIBES MULTIPLE ADDICTIONS, EACH TIED TO A SPECIFIC SUBSTANCE OR ACTIVITY, CONSENSUS IS EMERGING THAT THESE MAY REPRESENT MULTIPLE EXPRESSIONS OF A COMMON UNDERLYING BRAIN PROCESS.

NEW INSIGHTS INTO A COMMON PROBLEM

NOBODY STARTS OUT INTENDING TO DEVELOP AN ADDICTION, BUT MANY PEOPLE GET CAUGHT IN ITS SNARE. CONSIDER THE LATEST GOVERNMENT STATISTICS:

NEARLY 23 MILLION AMERICANS—ALMOST ONE IN 10—ARE ADDICTED TO ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUGS.

MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF PEOPLE WITH ADDICTION ABUSE ALCOHOL. THE TOP THREE DRUGS CAUSING ADDICTION ARE MARIJUANA, OPIOID (NARCOTIC) PAIN RELIEVERS, AND COCAINE.

IN THE 1930S, WHEN RESEARCHERS FIRST BEGAN TO INVESTIGATE WHAT CAUSED ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR, THEY BELIEVED THAT PEOPLE WHO DEVELOPED ADDICTIONS WERE SOMEHOW MORALLY FLAWED OR LACKING IN WILLPOWER. THEY THOUGHT OVERCOMING ADDICTION INVOLVED PUNISHING MISCREANTS OR ENCOURAGED THEM TO MUSTER THE WILL TO BREAK A HABIT.

THE SCIENTIFIC CONSENSUS HAS CHANGED SINCE THEN. TODAY WE RECOGNIZE ADDICTION AS A CHRONIC DISEASE THAT CHANGES BOTH BRAIN STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION. JUST AS CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE DAMAGES THE HEART AND DIABETES IMPAIRS THE PANCREAS, ADDICTION HIJACKS THE BRAIN. THIS HAPPENS AS THE BRAIN GOES THROUGH A SERIES OF CHANGES, BEGINNING WITH RECOGNITION OF PLEASURE AND ENDING WITH A DRIVE TOWARD COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR.

PLEASURE PRINCIPLE

THE BRAIN REGISTERS ALL PLEASURES IN THE SAME WAY, WHETHER THEY ORIGINATE WITH A PSYCHOACTIVE DRUG, A MONETARY REWARD, A SEXUAL ENCOUNTER, OR A SATISFYING MEAL. IN THE BRAIN, PLEASURE HAS A DISTINCT SIGNATURE: THE RELEASE OF THE NEUROTRANSMITTER DOPAMINE IN THE NUCLEUS ACCUMBENS, A CLUSTER OF NERVE CELLS LYING UNDERNEATH THE CEREBRAL CORTEX (SEE ILLUSTRATION). DOPAMINE RELEASE IN THE NUCLEUS ACCUMBENS IS SO CONSISTENTLY TIED WITH PLEASURE THAT NEUROSCIENTISTS REFER TO THE REGION AS THE BRAIN'S PLEASURE CENTER.

ALL DRUGS OF ABUSE, FROM NICOTINE TO HEROIN, CAUSE A PARTICULARLY POWERFUL SURGE OF DOPAMINE IN THE NUCLEUS ACCUMBENS. THE LIKELIHOOD THAT THE USE OF A DRUG OR PARTICIPATION IN A REWARDING ACTIVITY WILL LEAD TO ADDICTION IS DIRECTLY LINKED TO THE SPEED WITH WHICH IT PROMOTES DOPAMINE RELEASE, THE INTENSITY OF THAT RELEASE, AND THE RELIABILITY OF THAT RELEASE.

EVEN TAKING THE SAME DRUG THROUGH DIFFERENT METHODS OF ADMINISTRATION CAN INFLUENCE HOW LIKELY IT IS TO LEAD TO ADDICTION. FOR EXAMPLE, SMOKING A DRUG OR INJECTING IT INTRAVENOUSLY, AS OPPOSED TO SWALLOWING IT AS A PILL, GENERALLY PRODUCES A FASTER, STRONGER DOPAMINE SIGNAL AND IS MORE LIKELY TO LEAD TO DRUG MISUSE.

ADDICTIVE DRUGS PROVIDE A SHORTCUT TO THE BRAIN'S REWARD SYSTEM BY FLOODING THE NUCLEUS ACCUMBENS WITH DOPAMINE. THE HIPPOCAMPUS LAYS DOWN MEMORIES OF THIS RAPID SENSE OF SATISFACTION, AND THE AMYGDALA CREATES A CONDITIONED RESPONSE TO CERTAIN STIMULI.

LEARNING PROCESS

SCIENTISTS ONCE BELIEVED THAT THE EXPERIENCE OF PLEASURE ALONE WAS ENOUGH TO PROMPT PEOPLE TO CONTINUE SEEKING AN ADDICTIVE SUBSTANCE OR ACTIVITY. BUT MORE RECENT RESEARCH SUGGESTS THAT THE SITUATION IS MORE COMPLICATED. DOPAMINE NOT ONLY CONTRIBUTES TO THE EXPERIENCE OF PLEASURE, BUT ALSO PLAYS A ROLE IN LEARNING AND MEMORY—TWO KEY ELEMENTS IN THE TRANSITION FROM LIKING SOMETHING TO BECOMING ADDICTED TO IT.

ACCORDING TO THE CURRENT THEORY ABOUT ADDICTION, DOPAMINE INTERACTS WITH ANOTHER NEUROTRANSMITTER, GLUTAMATE, TO TAKE OVER THE BRAIN'S SYSTEM OF REWARD-RELATED LEARNING. THIS SYSTEM HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN SUSTAINING LIFE BECAUSE IT LINKS ACTIVITIES NEEDED FOR HUMAN SURVIVAL (SUCH AS EATING AND SEX) WITH PLEASURE AND REWARD.

THE REWARD CIRCUIT IN THE BRAIN INCLUDES AREAS INVOLVED WITH MOTIVATION AND MEMORY AS WELL AS WITH PLEASURE. ADDICTIVE SUBSTANCES AND BEHAVIORS STIMULATE THE SAME CIRCUIT—AND THEN OVERLOAD IT.

REPEATED EXPOSURE TO AN ADDICTIVE SUBSTANCE OR BEHAVIOR CAUSES NERVE

CELLS IN THE NUCLEUS ACCUMBENS AND THE PREFRONTAL CORTEX (THE AREA OF THE BRAIN INVOLVED IN PLANNING AND EXECUTING TASKS) TO COMMUNICATE IN A WAY THAT COUPLES LIKING SOMETHING WITH WANTING IT, IN TURN DRIVING US TO GO AFTER IT. THIS PROCESS MOTIVATES US TO TAKE ACTION TO SEEK OUT THE SOURCE OF PLEASURE.

DO YOU HAVE ADDICTION?

DETERMINING WHETHER YOU HAVE ADDICTION ISN'T COMPLETELY STRAIGHTFORWARD AND ADMITTING IT ISN'T EASY, LARGELY BECAUSE OF THE STIGMA AND SHAME ASSOCIATED WITH ADDICTION. BUT ACKNOWLEDGING THE PROBLEM IS THE FIRST STEP TOWARD RECOVERY.

A "YES" ANSWER TO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING THREE QUESTIONS SUGGESTS YOU MIGHT HAVE A PROBLEM WITH ADDICTION AND SHOULD—AT THE VERY LEAST—CONSULT A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER FOR FURTHER EVALUATION AND GUIDANCE.

- DO YOU USE MORE OF THE SUBSTANCE OR ENGAGE IN THE BEHAVIOR MORE OFTEN THAN IN THE PAST?
- DO YOU HAVE WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE THE SUBSTANCE OR ENGAGE IN THE BEHAVIOR?
- HAVE YOU EVER LIED TO ANYONE ABOUT YOUR USE OF THE SUBSTANCE OR EXTENT OF YOUR BEHAVIOR?
- DEVELOPMENT OF TOLERANCE

OVER TIME, THE BRAIN ADAPTS IN A WAY THAT ACTUALLY MAKES THE SOUGHT-AFTER SUBSTANCE OR ACTIVITY LESS PLEASURABLE.

IN NATURE, REWARDS USUALLY COME ONLY WITH TIME AND EFFORT. ADDICTIVE DRUGS AND BEHAVIORS PROVIDE A SHORTCUT, FLOODING THE BRAIN WITH DOPAMINE AND OTHER NEUROTRANSMITTERS. OUR BRAINS DO NOT HAVE AN EASY WAY TO WITHSTAND THE ONSLAUGHT.

ADDICTIVE DRUGS CAN RELEASE TWO TO 10 TIMES THE AMOUNT OF DOPAMINE THAT NATURAL REWARDS DO, AND THEY DO IT MORE QUICKLY AND MORE RELIABLY. IN A PERSON WHO BECOMES ADDICTED, BRAIN RECEPTORS BECOME OVERWHELMED. THE BRAIN RESPONDS BY PRODUCING LESS DOPAMINE OR

ELIMINATING DOPAMINE RECEPTORS—AN ADAPTATION SIMILAR TO TURNING THE VOLUME DOWN ON A LOUDSPEAKER WHEN NOISE BECOMES TOO LOUD.

AS A RESULT OF THESE ADAPTATIONS, DOPAMINE HAS LESS IMPACT ON THE BRAIN'S REWARD CENTER. PEOPLE WHO DEVELOP AN ADDICTION TYPICALLY FIND THAT IN TIME THE DESIRED SUBSTANCE NO LONGER GIVES THEM AS MUCH PLEASURE. THEY HAVE TO TAKE MORE OF IT TO OBTAIN THE SAME DOPAMINE "HIGH" BECAUSE THEIR BRAINS HAVE ADAPTED—AN EFFECT KNOWN AS TOLERANCE.

COMPULSION TAKES OVER

AT THIS POINT, COMPULSION TAKES OVER. THE PLEASURE ASSOCIATED WITH AN ADDICTIVE DRUG OR BEHAVIOR SUBSIDES—AND YET THE MEMORY OF THE DESIRED EFFECT AND THE NEED TO RECREATE IT (THE WANTING) PERSISTS. IT'S AS THOUGH THE NORMAL MACHINERY OF MOTIVATION IS NO LONGER FUNCTIONING.

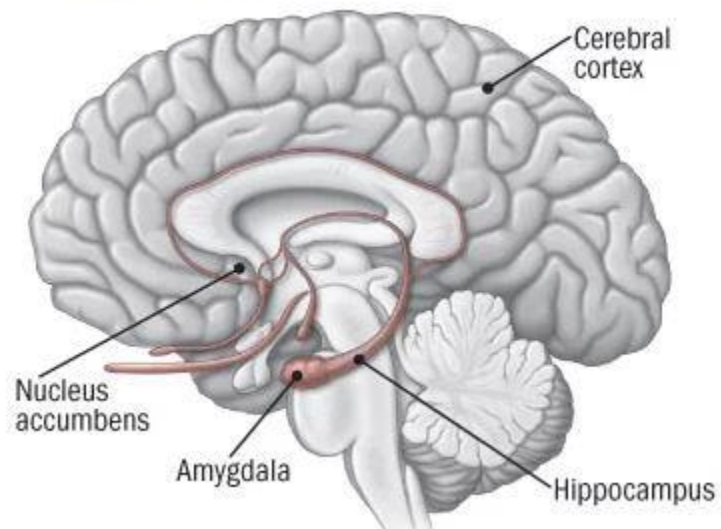
THE LEARNING PROCESS MENTIONED EARLIER ALSO COMES INTO PLAY. THE HIPPOCAMPUS AND THE AMYGDALA STORE INFORMATION ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL CUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE DESIRED SUBSTANCE, SO THAT IT CAN BE LOCATED AGAIN. THESE MEMORIES HELP CREATE A CONDITIONED RESPONSE—INTENSE CRAVING—WHenever THE PERSON ENCOUNTERS THOSE ENVIRONMENTAL CUES.

CRAVINGS CONTRIBUTE NOT ONLY TO ADDICTION BUT TO RELAPSE AFTER A HARD-WON SOBRIETY. FOR EXAMPLE, A PERSON ADDICTED TO HEROIN MAY BE IN DANGER OF RELAPSE WHEN HE SEES A HYPODERMIC NEEDLE, WHILE ANOTHER PERSON MIGHT START TO DRINK AGAIN AFTER SEEING A BOTTLE OF WHISKEY. CONDITIONED LEARNING HELPS EXPLAIN WHY PEOPLE WHO DEVELOP AN ADDICTION RISK RELAPSE EVEN AFTER YEARS OF ABSTINENCE.

VIDEOS:

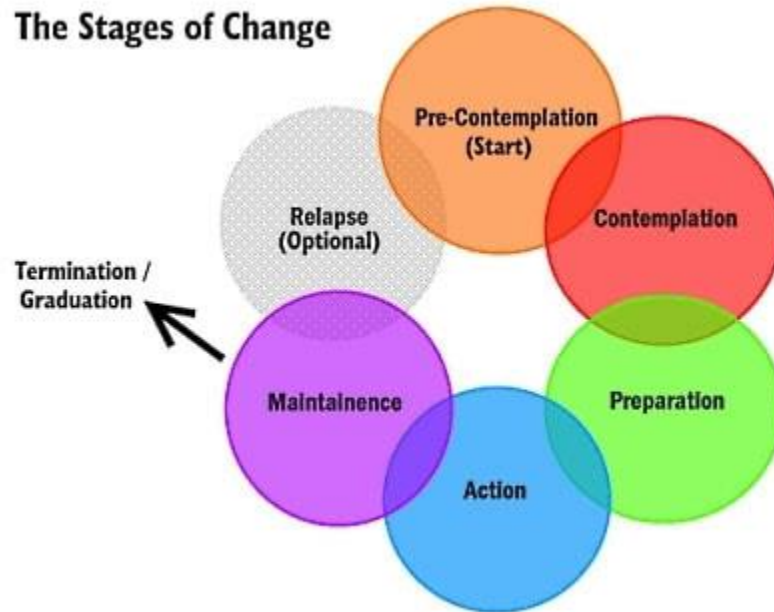
UNDERSTANDING ADDICTION AND THE BRAIN
ARE YOU AN ADDICT?
ADDICTION AND THE BRAIN
WHY DO BRAINS GET ADDICTED?

PLEASURE, REWARD AND THE BRAIN
Brain's Reward Center



REFERENCE: ADAPTED WITH PERMISSION FROM THE HARVARD MENTAL HEALTH LETTER AND OVERCOMING ADDICTION: PATHS TOWARD RECOVERY, A SPECIAL HEALTH REPORT PUBLISHED BY HARVARD HEALTH PUBLICATIONS.

STAGES OF CHANGE



STAGE 1: PRE-CONTEMPLATION

PEOPLE IN THIS STAGE MAY BE AWARE THAT THERE ARE REPERCUSSIONS RELATED TO THEIR ADDICTION, BUT THEY MINIMIZE OR JUSTIFY THEIR CHOICES, SEEING MORE BENEFIT THAN DEFICIT. NOT A GREAT DEAL OF DESIRE TO CHANGE AND TO AN OUTSIDE OBSERVER, IT MAY SEEM AS IF THEY ARE SLEEPWALKING THROUGH THEIR LIVES, QUITE UNCONSCIOUSLY. THIS IS WHEN I PLANT SEEDS AND DO A WRITTEN COST/BENEFIT ANALYSIS WITH CLIENTS.

STAGE 2: CONTEMPLATION

PEOPLE IN THE CONTEMPLATION STAGE HAVE BECOME AWARE OF THE GREATER IMPACT OF THEIR ADDICTIVE BEHAVIORS, YET THEY ARE UNCERTAIN IF IT IS WORTH THE EFFORT TO EFFECT CHANGE. THEY MAY BE OPEN TO CONSIDERING CHANGE "SOMEDAY." I HAVE HAD YOUNG CLIENTS WHO HAVE SAID, "WHEN I'M 18, I'LL STOP SMOKING POT."

IN ADVANCE OF STAGE THREE, PEOPLE MAKE A DECISION AND HAVE A GLIMPSE

THAT THE COSTS OVERSHADOW PERCEIVED BENEFITS. BEHAVIORAL CHANGE BECOMES A POSSIBILITY. IT IS NOT A “ONE AND DONE” DECISION, BUT RATHER A PROCESS OVER TIME.

STAGE 3: PREPARATION

AT THIS STAGE PEOPLE BEGIN TO SEE THAT THEY ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR CHOICES AND HAVE THE POWER TO MAKE LIFE-CHANGING DECISIONS. THEY NEED TO DO IT FOR THEMSELVES, BUT NEED NOT DO IT BY THEMSELVES. THEY SET AN INTENTION TO GATHER RESOURCES, WHETHER IT IS IN THE FORM OF THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION, 12 STEP MEETINGS OR OTHER SOBER SUPPORTS. THEY SET A TIMELINE AND MAY MAKE A VERBAL OR WRITTEN COMMITMENT.

STAGE 4: ACTION

IN STAGE FOUR, PEOPLE TAKE THE ACTUAL STEPS TO ENGAGE IN POSITIVE MENTAL, EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL CHANGE BY IMMERSING THEMSELVES IN ADDICTION RECOVERY, NOT JUST ABSTINENCE FROM THEIR DRUG(S) OF CHOICE. I CALL IT A “LIFE MAKEOVER” THAT COULD INCLUDE DEVELOPING A FITNESS PLAN, DIETARY ADAPTATION, AS WELL AS TIME WITH POSITIVE PEOPLE AND ACTIVITIES THAT ARE HEART- AND SOUL-NOURISHING. I ASK THEM TO “RE-WRITE” THEIR LIFE STORY, REMINDING THEM THAT THEIR HISTORY IS NOT THEIR DESTINY.

STAGE 5: MAINTENANCE

PEOPLE IN THE MAINTENANCE STAGE HAVE BECOME ABLE TO SUSTAIN THESE PATTERNS LIKE A FITNESS ROUTINE. ON THE FIRST DAY OF WORKOUT AT A GYM, YOU ARE NOT AS STRONG, FLEXIBLE AND ENERGETIC AS YOU WILL BE A YEAR LATER. THE MORE YOU PRACTICE, THE EASIER IT GETS. PEOPLE ARE MORE AWARE OF TRIGGERS AND STRESSORS THAT COULD LEAD TO RELAPSE. IT IS MORE THAN MERELY A ROTE EXERCISE, BUT RATHER AN INTEGRATED ASPECT OF THEMSELVES.

STAGE 6: TERMINATION

AT THE TERMINATION STAGE PEOPLE CAN GAZE INTO THE MIRROR AND BEHOLD A NEW MAN OR WOMAN. I HAVE HEARD CLIENTS PROCLAIM, "I NO LONGER WANT TO BE THAT GUY." THEY CONSIDER IT UNTHINKABLE TO RETURN TO THEIR FORMER LIFESTYLE. IT IS WHEN I ALSO ASK THEM IF THEY COULD IMAGINE ANYTHING WORTH LOSING THEIR SOBRIETY OVER. AT THIS POINT, MOST SAY NO. EVEN IN THE FACE OF MAJOR LOSS, THEY KNOW THAT IF THEY MAINTAIN THEIR RESOLVE TO REMAIN CLEAN, THEY CAN ENJOY A NEW LIFE.

ALTHOUGH THE STAGES OF CHANGE IS AN ORDERLY APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING RECOVERY, IT DOESN'T EXIST IN A VACUUM AND IS NOT ALWAYS LINEAR. PEOPLE CAN MOVE BACK AND FORTH THROUGH THE STAGES AND RELAPSE IS ALWAYS POSSIBLE. I FRAME IT NOT AS FAILURE, BUT AS A RE-SET AND RENEWAL OF DETERMINATION.

VIDEO: STAGES OF CHANGE

[HTTPS://WWW.ADDICTION.COM/3517/CHANGE-IN-ADDICTION-RECOVERY](https://www.addiction.com/3517/change-in-addiction-recovery)

STAGES OF RECOVERY



STABILIZATION

DURING THE STABILIZATION PERIOD, PEOPLE EXPERIENCE WITHDRAWAL AND CRAVINGS, AND THEY ARE EXTREMELY VULNERABLE TO TRIGGERS. THEY OFTEN LACK A SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT AND THE NECESSARY SKILLS FOR COPING WITH STRESS AND OTHER TRIGGERS.

EARLY

DURING EARLY RECOVERY, PEOPLE HAVE RECOVERED FROM THEIR PHYSICAL DEPENDENCY ON ALCOHOL OR OTHER DRUGS, BUT THEY'RE VULNERABLE TO FRIENDS OR PEERS WHO USE SUBSTANCES OF ABUSE. THEY UNDERSTAND THAT THEY MUST DEVELOP NEW SKILLS BUT DON'T KNOW HOW TO USE THEM.

MIDDLE

IN THE MIDDLE RECOVERY PERIOD, PEOPLE ARE LIVING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE. THEY'VE PRACTICED THE SKILLS THEY LEARNED DURING EARLY RECOVERY. THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE DURING THIS PERIOD IS REPAIRING DAMAGED RELATIONSHIPS AND LEARNING VOCATIONAL SKILLS. THEIR PRIMARY VULNERABILITY IS TO PRACTICAL PROBLEMS SUCH AS UNEMPLOYMENT OR INADEQUATE LIVING SITUATIONS.

LATE

DURING LATE RECOVERY, PEOPLE LEARN FROM MISTAKES THEY MADE DURING THE INITIAL RECOVERY STAGES. THEY'VE DEVELOPED GOALS AND A ROBUST SUPPORT SYSTEM. THEY'VE CORRECTED SELF-DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIORS AND LEARNED TO COPE WITH EVERYDAY STRESSORS. THE MAIN VULNERABILITY DURING THE LATE PERIOD STEMS FROM INADEQUATE TIME SPENT ADDRESSING UNDERLYING CAUSES OF ADDICTION, SUCH AS TRAUMA.

MAINTENANCE

MOST PEOPLE LIVE THE REST OF THEIR LIVES IN THE MAINTENANCE STAGE OF RECOVERY. THEY COPE WITH TRANSITIONS, STRESS AND RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS. THEY ACTIVELY AVOID RELAPSE, BUT THEY ARE VULNERABLE TO RELAPSE IF THEY ARE INVOLVED IN A TRAUMATIC EVENT OR IF THEY OVERESTIMATE THEIR ABILITY TO AVOID RELAPSE.

REFERENCE: WWW.SAMHSA.GOV

DECIDING TO GET SOBER?

IF YOU ARE ONE OF THE THOUSANDS AROUND THE WORLD WHO ARE TRYING TO WORK ON YOUR RECOVERY FROM AN ADDICTION, THEN THERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF THAT CAN HELP YOU TO REFLECT MORE ON YOUR RECOVERY. RECOVERY IS REWARDING BUT NOT EASY.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF IF YOU WANT TO CHANGE



DECIDING TO GET SOBER ACTIVITY.

IN YOUR ACTIVITY JOURNAL ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

- WHY DO YOU WANT TO MAKE THIS CHANGE?
- WHAT ARE THE THREE BEST REASONS FOR YOU TO MAKE THIS CHANGE?
- WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE CHANGE?
- WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF THE CHANGE?
- ON A SCALE FROM 0 TO 10, HOW IMPORTANT WOULD YOU SAY THAT IS FOR YOU TO MAKE THIS CHANGE?
- WHAT IS THE MAIN FEAR YOU WILL BE LOOKING AT WHEN YOU ARE GETTING CLEAN AND/OR SOBER?
- WHAT IS THE WORST THING THAT YOU THINK COULD HAPPEN?
- WHAT IS THE BEST THING THAT COULD HAPPEN?
- WHAT IS THE COMMITMENT THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO STICK TO? HOW WILL YOU DO THIS EACH DAY?

- WHAT IS THE FIRST STEP TO TAKE IN THE NEXT DAY? IN THE NEXT WEEK? WHAT WILL LIKE BE LIKE IN A MONTH IF YOU KEEP UP WITH YOUR COMMITMENT?
- WHAT WOULD LIVING A SOBER LIFESTYLE AND A RECOVERING LIFESTYLE MEAN FOR YOU? HOW COULD IT IMPROVE YOUR LIFE FOR THE BETTER?

10 GOOD REASONS TO GET CLEAN AND SOBER

1. STOP THE PAIN – ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS STOP THE PAIN. EVERYTHING WAS JUST TOO PAINFUL WITHOUT DRINKING. SOMETIMES I DID PILLS AND ALCOHOL TO REALLY MAKE THE PAIN GO AWAY FASTER. WHEN THE EFFECTS WORE OFF, ALL I COULD THINK ABOUT WAS THE PAIN, SO I DRANK AND TOOK MORE PILLS. BUT THE PAIN CAME BACK EVEN WORSE. AFTER MANY YEARS OF THIS, I DECIDED THE ONLY WAY TO REALLY STOP THE PAIN WAS TO STOP DRINKING AND USING PILLS COMPLETELY. I REALIZED THE PAIN IN MY LIFE WAS MOSTLY CAUSED BY MY DRINKING AND DRUGS. I HAD TO STOP IT. THAT’S WHY I QUIT.
2. I WANT TO CHANGE – WHEN I LOOK BACK ON WHAT MY LIFE HAS BEEN AND WHO I’VE BECOME, I SEE THAT IT’S NOT A PRETTY PICTURE. I’VE LET PEOPLE DOWN, MOST OF ALL MYSELF. IT GOT TO THE POINT WHERE I COULDN’T EVEN STAND TO LOOK AT MYSELF IN THE MIRROR BECAUSE OF ALL THE LIES AND HURTFUL THINGS I’VE DONE BECAUSE OF MY DRINKING/USING. NOBODY ELSE IS FORCING ME TO CHANGE. I’M THE ONE THAT’S DRIVING MY DESIRE TO STOP DOING DRUGS AND ALCOHOL. I KNOW IT WON’T BE EASY, BUT I REALLY WANT TO BE CLEAN AND SOBER – AND STAY THAT WAY.
3. REGAIN MY SELF-ESTEEM – I FELT WORTHLESS, NO GOOD TO ANYONE, LEAST OF ALL TO MYSELF. IF ANYBODY ASKED ME TO DO SOMETHING, I KNEW I COULDN’T DO IT. I DIDN’T HAVE IT IN ME. SOMEWHERE OVER WEEKS OR MONTHS OR WHATEVER, IT GOT SO THAT NO ONE EVER ASKED ME TO DO ANYTHING. THEY PROBABLY KNEW HOW WORTHLESS AND UNRELIABLE I WAS. THE BIG THING IS THAT I KNEW IT – AND I FOUND THAT I REALLY DIDN’T LIKE IT. AND I KNEW THE CAUSE WAS MY DRINKING, WHICH HAD GOTTEN WAY OUT OF CONTROL QUITE SOME TIME AGO. THE ONLY WAY I’D REGAIN MY SELF-ESTEEM WOULD BE TO GET CLEAN AND SOBER. ONE DAY I

JUST WOKE UP AND SAID, THAT'S IT, I'M QUITTING DRINKING FOR GOOD. THEN I GOT HELP, BECAUSE I KNEW I COULDN'T DO IT ALONE.

4. BE A GOOD PARENT – MY CHILDREN WERE SUFFERING – SOMETHING I WAS INCREASINGLY UNABLE TO SEE IN MY FOG OF DRINKING AND DRUGS. I DON'T MEAN I PHYSICALLY ABUSED THEM, ALTHOUGH I DID RAISE MY HAND A FEW TIMES. BUT I YELLED AT THEM CONSTANTLY, CALLED THEM HORRIBLE NAMES. I FORGOT TO DO THEIR LAUNDRY, MISSED THEIR SCHOOL EVENTS, DIDN'T WAKE THEM UP FOR SCHOOL, DIDN'T COMPLIMENT THEIR SUCCESSES. I DIDN'T EVEN REALIZE WHAT WAS GOING ON WITH THEM. FRANKLY, I DIDN'T CARE. I WAS SO WRAPPED UP IN MY OWN CYCLE OF GETTING HIGH, COMING DOWN, AND FEELING THE NEED TO GET HIGH AGAIN THAT MY KIDS JUST GOT LEFT BEHIND. ONE DAY WHEN I WASN'T TOO HIGH I SAW MY YOUNGEST ONE CRYING AND THE OLDEST TRYING TO COMFORT HER, TRYING TO BE THE PARENT. I LOOKED AROUND AND THE HOUSE WAS A MESS, A PIGSTY, REALLY. I WAS DIRTY, HADN'T SHOWERED IN DAYS, AND I SUDDENLY THOUGHT, "YOU'VE REALLY MESSED UP WITH YOUR KIDS. WHAT KIND OF A PARENT ARE YOU?" THAT DID IT FOR ME. I WANT TO BE A GOOD PARENT, A ROLE MODEL, TO MY CHILDREN, AND THAT'S WHAT GOT ME WANTING TO GET CLEAN AND SOBER.

5. BE A LOVING SPOUSE – I DON'T KNOW HOW MY SPOUSE PUT UP WITH ME ALL THESE YEARS. I STOLE MONEY, ACTED CRAZY IN FRONT OF OUR FRIENDS, AND GENERALLY MADE LIFE MISERABLE. SEX WAS EITHER NONEXISTENT AFTER A WHILE OR I WAS TOO DRUGGED OR DRUNK TO BE MUCH GOOD. BUT MY SPOUSE STUCK WITH ME, TELLING ME HOW MUCH I WAS LOVED, HOW HE'D ALWAYS LOVE ME. I WONDERED HOW HE REALLY COULD LOVE ME? HOW COULD ANYONE? WHEN I'D SEE OTHER WOMEN LOOK AT HIM, I SOMETIMES THOUGHT HE'D BE BETTER OFF WITH THEM THAN ME. BUT THEN I REMEMBERED – I ADMIT, I WAS SOMEWHAT SOBER AT THE TIME – HOW MUCH HE MEANT TO ME AND HOW MUCH I REALLY WANTED TO BE THE WIFE AND LIFE PARTNER FOR HIM THAT I PROMISED WHEN WE GOT MARRIED. I DECIDED I'D GET CLEAN AND SOBER SO I COULD REALLY GIVE HIM ALL THE LOVE I HAVE. IT'S NOT BURIED THAT DEEP INSIDE THAT I CAN'T FIND IT AGAIN. AND I'M GOING TO DO IT – NOT FOR HIM, BUT FOR ME.

6. STOP BEING EMBARRASSED – EVERYTHING I DID WAS EMBARRASSING. MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS COULDN'T STAND HAVING ME AROUND ANYMORE BECAUSE I'D GET TOO LOUD, RIP OFF MY CLOTHES OR SAY SOMETHING REALLY OBNOXIOUS OR CRUEL. I'D FLIRT WITH OTHER PEOPLE'S SPOUSES, MALE OR FEMALE, IT DIDN'T MATTER, EVEN THOUGH I KNEW IT WAS WRONG. I DIDN'T CARE. WHEN I DRANK, NOTHING MATTERED EXCEPT WHAT I WANTED AT THE TIME, WHATEVER THAT WAS. I'D WAKE UP PASSED OUT IN SOME DIRTY BATHROOM IN A BAR WITH MY HEAD IN THE TOILET, PUKE ALL OVER ME, AND ALL I'D THINK ABOUT WAS WHERE WAS MY DRINK? ONE TIME I'D REALLY HAD TOO MUCH AFTER DRINKING NONSTOP FOR SEVERAL DAYS. THE CLEANING PEOPLE FOUND ME STILL PASSED OUT IN THE JOHN AND FOUND MY PURSE. THEY TRIED TO WAKE ME UP BUT I KEPT NODDING OFF. THEY CALLED SOME NUMBERS IN MY ADDRESS BOOK. GUESS WHAT? NO ONE WOULD COME GET ME. THEY ULTIMATELY CALLED THE POLICE. WHEN I SOBERED UP ENOUGH TO REALIZE WHAT HAPPENED, I DECIDED RIGHT THEN AND THERE THAT I WAS OFF DRINKING. I'D DO WHATEVER IT TOOK SO THAT I'D NEVER EMBARRASS MYSELF LIKE THAT AGAIN.

7. WANT TO REMEMBER – I'VE LOST SO MANY MEMORIES BECAUSE OF DRUGS AND DRINKING. I MISSED SO MANY BIRTHDAYS OF MY CHILDREN, SO MANY OF THEIR MILESTONE EVENTS. I CAN'T EVEN REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK, LET ALONE A MONTH OR TWO AGO. HOW COULD THINGS HAVE GOTTEN THIS BAD? I DON'T REMEMBER WHEN JUST DRINKING A GLASS OF WINE WAS ALL I DID. WHO WAS THAT YOUNG GIRL THAT WAS ONCE SO INNOCENT? WAS IT EVER REALLY ME? TODAY I SEE MY CHILDREN AND THEY'RE ALREADY SO BIG! I WANT TO BE ABLE TO REMEMBER THE REST OF THEIR GROWING UP YEARS. THIS MEANS SO MUCH TO ME THAT I WILL QUIT DRINKING AND DRUGS. I NEED TO DO IT. I WANT TO DO IT. I HAVE TO DO IT. IF NOT, ALL MY TOMORROWS WILL BE GONE, JUST LIKE ALL MY YESTERDAYS. I CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN. I'M DONE WITH ALCOHOL AND DRUGS.

8. BE RESPECTED – WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, ALL US KIDS RESPECTED OUR PARENTS. THEY WERE LIKE GOD TO US, AND WE LOVED THEM UNCONDITIONALLY. THEY WORKED HARD AND GAVE US ALL THE LOVE THEY HAD. IN MY LIFE, AS IT IS TODAY, I DON'T HAVE ANYONE THAT LOOKS UP TO ME, NO ONE THAT RESPECTS ME. WHY? BECAUSE I'M A PIECE OF WORK, THAT'S WHY. I DON'T DO ANYTHING THAT WOULD CAUSE PEOPLE TO RESPECT ME. YOU CAN'T RELY ON ME, MY WORD DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING BECAUSE I WON'T LIVE UP TO IT. MY CHILDREN IGNORE WHAT I SAY BECAUSE I'M USUALLY DRUNK OR HIGH. I'VE EVEN CAUGHT THEM LAUGHING AT ME BEHIND MY BACK. GOD, I HATE WHAT I'VE BECOME! SOMEWHERE I LOST IT ALL AND LET MYSELF BECOME THIS HATEFUL, UNRELIABLE PERSON. I WANT TO BE A PERSON THAT OTHERS RESPECT, THAT MY CHILDREN RESPECT, THAT I RESPECT. THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY TO DO THAT: I HAVE TO QUIT DRINKING AND DOING DRUGS.

9. PROVIDE FOR MY FAMILY – AS A SPOUSE AND PARENT, I HAVE A FINANCIAL OBLIGATION TO FULFILL – AND I'VE FAILED MISERABLY AT THAT BECAUSE OF MY HABIT. I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO KEEP A JOB, WE'VE LOST OUR HOUSE, AND MY CHILDREN WON'T BE ABLE TO GO TO COLLEGE. I CAN'T SEE HOW MY WIFE HASN'T LEFT ME YET. I WOULD, IF I WAS HER. IT STARTED JUST AS A WAY TO COPE WITH STRESS, JUST A DRINK OR A JOINT OR TWO. THEN IT BECAME MORE. THEN IT GOT TO BE ALL THE TIME. THEN I COULDN'T STOP, AND IT COST US PLENTY. I WANT TO BE ABLE TO PROVIDE FOR MY FAMILY AGAIN. I WANT TO BE THE KIND OF PERSON THAT CAN GET AND HOLD ONTO A GOOD JOB. I WANT TO REGAIN MY SENSE OF PURPOSE, TO BE PROUD OF MYSELF AND WHO I AM. NOT THE WAY I WAS. THAT'S ALL IN THE PAST, STARTING TODAY. I'M GETTING OFF ALCOHOL AND CRACK.

10. HAVE FRIENDS AGAIN – I USED TO HAVE GOOD FRIENDS. I USED TO BE A GOOD FRIEND. THAT WAS ALL BEFORE DRUGS AND DRINKING GOT TO BE MY WAY OF LIFE. NOW I HAVE NO ONE, NO ONE EXCEPT ME, AND THAT'S A SORRY EXCUSE FOR LIFE. DEEP DOWN INSIDE, I KNOW I'VE GOT IT IN ME TO BE THE KIND OF PERSON THAT CAN BE A GOOD FRIEND, SOMEONE WHO HAS YOUR BACK, SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T LET YOU DOWN. I'VE GOT TO FIND THAT INNER ME AGAIN, AND THE ONLY WAY I CAN SEE TO DO THAT IS TO GET CLEAN AND SOBER.

REFERENCE:

[HTTPS://WWW.ELITEREHABPLACEMENT.COM/RECOVERY/QUESTIONS-ASK-REFLECT-RECOVERY](https://www.eliterehabplacement.com/recovery/questions-ask-reflect-recovery)

[HTTPS://WWW.PROMISES.COM/ARTICLES/ABUSED-DRUGS/10-GOOD-REASONS-TO-GET-CLEAN-AND-SOBER](https://www.promises.com/articles/abused-drugs/10-good-reasons-to-get-clean-and-sober)

GETTING WERE YOU WANT TO BE!

SETTING GOALS

THE PRACTICE OF GOAL-SETTING IS NOT JUST HELPFUL; IT IS A PREREQUISITE FOR HAPPINESS. PSYCHOLOGISTS TELL US THAT PEOPLE WHO MAKE CONSISTENT PROGRESS TOWARD MEANINGFUL GOALS LIVE HAPPIER MORE SATISFIED LIVES THAN THOSE WHO DON'T.

THOSE WHO WRITE THEIR GOALS DOWN ACCOMPLISH SIGNIFICANTLY MORE THAN THOSE WHO DO NOT WRITE THEIR GOALS.



MOST PEOPLE FIND THAT IT IS EASIER TO ACHIEVE THINGS WHEN THEY SET THEMSELVES GOALS. THIS WAY THEY WILL HAVE A CLEARER IDEA ABOUT WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE. WHEN PEOPLE ARE TRAPPED IN ADDICTION THEIR GOALS WILL REVOLVE AROUND GETTING DRUNK OR HIGH. THIS MEANS THAT WHEN YOU FIRST BECOME SOBER YOU CAN FEEL A BIT PURPOSELESS. IT WILL BE IMPORTANT FOR YOU TO ESTABLISH NEW GOALS IN SOBRIETY THAT THEY CAN WORK TOWARDS.

GOALS ARE WHAT TAKE US FORWARD IN LIFE. THEY ARE THE OXYGEN TO OUR DREAMS. THEY ARE THE FIRST STEPS TO EVERY JOURNEY WE TAKE AND ARE ALSO OUR LAST. IT'S VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU REALIZE THE SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPORTANCE OF GOAL-SETTING AND APPLY THIS KNOWLEDGE IN YOUR LIFE.

IT TAKES PRACTICE TO DEFINE GOALS THAT NOT ONLY ARE PERSONAL, BUT ALSO SPECIFIC, MEASURABLE, REALISTIC, AND POSITIVE. AS YOU SET YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE, THINK ABOUT EXACTLY HOW YOU WILL GET THERE.

SOME STRATEGIES INCLUDE:

- USE A JOURNAL, DIARY, CALENDAR, OR APP TO TRACK HOW YOU ARE DOING. IT KEEPS YOU FOCUSED ON THE GOAL, LETS YOU KNOW WHEN YOU GET OFF COURSE, AND GIVES YOU A REWARDING FEELING WHEN YOU MOVE IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION.
- COMMIT TO YOUR GOAL BY SAYING IT OUT LOUD. YOU CAN EVEN COME UP WITH A SLOGAN THAT INSPIRES YOU.
- DECIDE IN ADVANCE WHEN AND WHERE YOU WILL TAKE EACH ACTION YOU'RE STRIVING FOR. BE AS SPECIFIC AS POSSIBLE. FOR EXAMPLE, "I'LL EXERCISE FOR 30 MINUTES BEFORE WORK ON MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, AND FRIDAY."
- WRITE A STORY OR DRAW A PICTURE TO ENVISION HOW YOUR LIFE WILL CHANGE WHEN YOU REACH YOUR GOAL. AND GIVE IT A HAPPY ENDING.
- WATCH MOVIES OR READ ABOUT PEOPLE WHO'VE ACHIEVED THE SAME GOAL YOU'RE GOING AFTER. IF YOU UNDERSTAND HOW THEY SUCCEEDED, YOU'LL HAVE A BETTER IDEA OF WHAT MIGHT LIE AHEAD FOR YOU.
- CHART THE PROS AND CONS OF THE CHANGE FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS IN YOUR LIFE. GO BACK TO THE LIST EVERY WEEK OR SO, AND ADD OR SHIFT ITEMS AS NEEDED. IF YOUR GOAL IS A HEALTHY ONE AND YOU ARE READY FOR CHANGE, THE PROS WILL WIN.
- KEEP THEM FEW IN NUMBER. PRODUCTIVITY STUDIES SHOW THAT YOU REALLY CAN'T FOCUS ON MORE THAN 5-7 ITEMS AT ANY ONE TIME. AND DON'T TRY TO CHEAT BY INCLUDING SECTIONS WITH SEVERAL GOALS UNDER EACH SECTION. THIS IS A RECIPE FOR LOSING FOCUS AND ACCOMPLISHING VERY LITTLE. INSTEAD, FOCUS ON A HANDFUL OF GOALS THAT YOU CAN REPEAT ALMOST FROM MEMORY.

- MAKE THEM “SMART.” THIS IS AN ACRONYM, AS YOU PROBABLY KNOW, AND IT IS INTERPRETED IN VARIOUS WAYS BY DIFFERENT TEACHERS. WHEN I REFER TO SMART GOALS, I MEAN THIS.
- WRITE THEM DOWN. THIS IS CRITICAL. THERE IS A HUGE POWER IN WRITING YOUR GOALS DOWN EVEN IF YOU NEVER DEVELOP AN ACTION PLAN OR DO ANYTHING ELSE (NOT RECOMMENDED).
- REVIEW THEM FREQUENTLY. WHILE WRITING YOUR GOALS DOWN IS A POWERFUL EXERCISE IN ITSELF, THE REAL JUICE IS IN REVIEWING THEM ON A REGULAR BASIS. THIS IS WHAT TURNS THEM INTO REALITY. EVERY TIME I REVIEW



GOALS MUST MEET FIVE CRITERIA.

ARE YOUR GOALS SMART...

THEY MUST BE:

- SPECIFIC—YOUR GOALS MUST IDENTIFY EXACTLY WHAT YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH IN AS MUCH SPECIFICITY AS YOU CAN MUSTER.
- MEASURABLE—AS THE OLD ADAGE SAYS, “YOU CAN’T MANAGE WHAT YOU CAN’T MEASURE.” IF POSSIBLE, TRY TO QUANTIFY THE RESULT. YOU WANT TO KNOW ABSOLUTELY, POSITIVELY WHETHER OR NOT YOU HIT THE GOAL.
- ACTIONABLE—EVERY GOAL SHOULD START WITH AN ACTION VERB (E.G., “QUIT,” “RUN,” “FINISH,” “ELIMINATE,” ETC.) RATHER THAN A TO-BE VERB (E.G., “AM,” “BE,” “HAVE,” ETC.)
- REALISTIC—YOU HAVE TO BE CAREFUL HERE. A GOOD GOAL SHOULD STRETCH YOU, BUT YOU HAVE TO ADD A DOSE OF COMMON SENSE. I GO RIGHT UP TO THE EDGE OF MY COMFORT ZONE AND THEN STEP OVER IT. (IF I AM NOT OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE, I’M NOT THINKING BIG ENOUGH.)
- TIME-BOUND—EVERY GOAL NEEDS A DATE ASSOCIATED WITH IT. WHEN DO YOU PLAN TO DELIVER ON THAT GOAL. IT COULD BE BY YEAR-END (DECEMBER 31) OR IT COULD BE MORE NEAR-TERM (SEPTEMBER 30). A GOAL WITHOUT A DATE IS JUST A DREAM. MAKE SURE THAT EVERY GOAL ENDS WITH A BY WHEN DATE.



REFERENCE: [HTTPS://MICHAELHYATT.COM/GOAL-SETTING](https://michaelhyatt.com/goal-setting)

DEVELOPING A RECOVERY SUPPORT NETWORK



SOBRIETY IS TOUGH. FOR SOME PEOPLE IT CAN ALMOST BE HARDER FOR THEM TO COPE WITH SOBRIETY THAN IT WAS TO LIVE IN ADDICTION. AT LEAST, IT FEELS THAT WAY AT FIRST. YOU CERTAINLY WON'T INCUR THE SAME COSTS, AND YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH SOME OF YOUR UNDERLYING ISSUES THROUGH SUCH MEANS AS THERAPY AND MEDITATION. BUT EVEN SO, ONCE YOU'VE DETOXED AND GONE THROUGH A TREATMENT PROGRAM, YOU'RE LEFT WITH TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHAT COMES NEXT. IF YOU INTEND TO STAY SOBER AS YOU MOVE ON WITH YOUR LIFE, IT WOULD BEHOVE YOU TO START BUILDING A STRONG SUPPORT NETWORK.

HAVING A STRONG SUPPORT NETWORK WILL HELP YOU TO STAY SOBER BY GIVING YOU PEOPLE WHO DEMONSTRATE SUCH QUALITIES AS RELIABILITY, LOYALTY, CARING AND FRIENDSHIP. YOU'LL ALSO BE ABLE TO DEMONSTRATE THOSE SAME QUALITIES YOURSELF. TRUST US—BEING AS DEPENDENT AS THOSE IN YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK WILL DO YOU A LOT OF GOOD. IT WILL HELP YOU TO AFFIRM YOURSELF, AND FEEL BETTER ABOUT WHO YOU ARE.

WHAT IS RECOVERY?

SAMHSA HAS DELINEATED FOUR MAJOR DIMENSIONS THAT SUPPORT A LIFE IN RECOVERY:

HEALTH—OVERCOMING OR MANAGING ONE’S DISEASE(S) OR SYMPTOMS—FOR EXAMPLE, ABSTAINING FROM USE OF ALCOHOL, ILLICIT DRUGS, AND NON-PRESCRIBED MEDICATIONS IF ONE HAS AN ADDICTION PROBLEM—AND, FOR EVERYONE IN RECOVERY, MAKING INFORMED, HEALTHY CHOICES THAT SUPPORT PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

HOME—HAVING A STABLE AND SAFE PLACE TO LIVE

PURPOSE—CONDUCTING MEANINGFUL DAILY ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS A JOB, SCHOOL VOLUNTEERISM, FAMILY CARE TAKING, OR CREATIVE ENDEAVORS, AND THE INDEPENDENCE, INCOME, AND RESOURCES TO PARTICIPATE IN SOCIETY

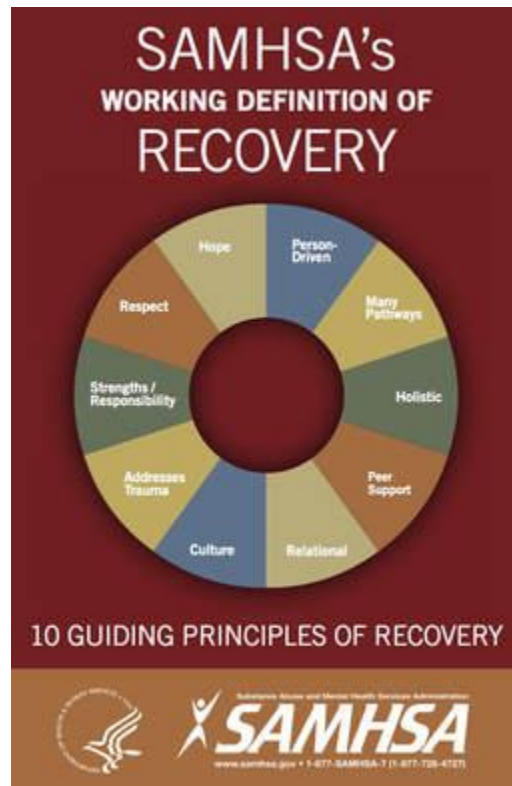
COMMUNITY—HAVING RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL NETWORKS THAT PROVIDE SUPPORT, FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, AND HOPE



USING PEER SUPPORT TO STRENGTHEN YOUR RECOVERY SUPPORT NETWORK BY SHARING THEIR EXPERIENCES, PEERS BRING HOPE TO PEOPLE IN RECOVERY AND PROMOTE A SENSE OF BELONGING WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.

PEER SUPPORT SERVICES ARE DELIVERED BY INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE COMMON LIFE EXPERIENCES WITH THE PEOPLE THEY ARE SERVING. PEOPLE WITH MENTAL AND/OR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS HAVE A UNIQUE CAPACITY TO HELP EACH OTHER BASED ON A SHARED AFFILIATION AND A DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THIS EXPERIENCE. IN SELF-HELP AND MUTUAL SUPPORT, PEOPLE OFFER THIS SUPPORT, STRENGTH, AND HOPE TO THEIR PEERS, WHICH ALLOWS FOR PERSONAL GROWTH, WELLNESS PROMOTION, AND RECOVERY.

IN BUILDING A RECOVERY SUPPORT NETWORK IT IS IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND AND HAVE SOLID FOUNDATION OF WHAT RECOVERY IS.



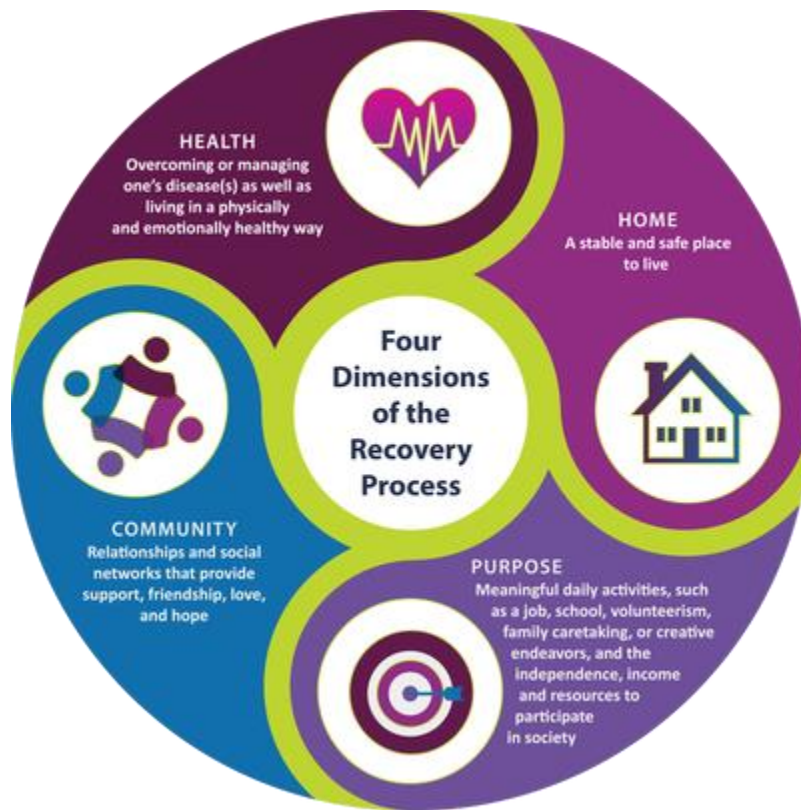
[WORKING DEFINITION OF RECOVERY](#)

5 TIPS FOR BUILDING A STRONG SUPPORT NETWORK

1. START BY EDUCATING YOURSELF AND OTHERS ABOUT WHAT YOU NEED AS WE ARE SURE YOU'VE NOTICED, THERE IS A LOT OF INFORMATION OUT THERE ABOUT SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND TREATMENT. SOME OF IT IS HELPFUL AND SOME OF IT IS SIMPLY NOT TRUE. FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH, THEY NEED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SUBSTANCE ABUSE, ABOUT THE TYPES OF TREATMENT AVAILABLE, AND ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE DOING AND FEELING! IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY, BUT THE FIRST STEP IS TO HAVE FRANK CONVERSATIONS ABOUT WHAT YOU ARE GOING THROUGH AND WHAT YOU NEED TO KEEP MOVING FORWARD. WE ALSO RECOMMEND POINTING THEM TO PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES, LIKE BOOKS, OR WEBSITES RUN BY PROFESSIONALS (LIKE THIS ONE!) AS IT WILL ADD SOME CREDENCE TO WHAT YOU'RE SAYING TO THEM.

2. TELL THEM HOW THEY CAN HELP; BE BRIEF AND SPECIFIC. IF YOU WANT SOMETHING FROM SOMEONE, IT BEST TO ASK FOR IT SPECIFICALLY, OR YOU ARE NOT LIKELY TO GET WHAT YOU WANT. SAME GOES FOR SUPPORT, ASK SPECIFICALLY FOR WHAT YOU WANT FROM SOMEONE ELSE! THIS REQUIRES YOU TO THINK THROUGH WHAT WOULD BE HELPFUL BEFORE YOU HAVE THE CONVERSATION. DON'T WORRY THOUGH; YOU CAN ALWAYS CHANGE YOUR REQUEST LATER WITH ANOTHER CONVERSATION.
3. BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF AND WITH THEM. MOST PEOPLE ARE AWKWARD AND INTIMIDATED WHEN MAKING CHANGES IN BEHAVIOR. WHEN YOU ARE TRYING TO INTERACT WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE DISTANCED THEMSELVES FROM YOU (DUE TO FEAR, ANGER, FRUSTRATION, OR YOUR WITHDRAWAL FROM THEM) THERE IS OFTEN A HISTORY OF DIFFICULT INTERACTIONS. BE PATIENT WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS WHO WANT TO BE SUPPORTIVE BUT DON'T HAVE THE SKILLS YET TO PULL IT OFF EXACTLY IN THE WAY THAT YOU NEED OR WISH. JUST LIKE YOU, THEY MAY NEED SOME TIME AND SOME GUIDANCE TO GET IT RIGHT.
4. PICK UP THE PHONE! NOW THAT YOU'VE ASKED FOR HELP, IF SOMEONE CALLS (TEXTS, EMAILS, ETC) TO PROVIDE THAT SUPPORT, RESPOND TO THEM! SOMETIMES THAT MAY BE EASY, OTHER TIMES IT MAY BE VERY DIFFICULT. THE MORE YOU CAN PUSH YOURSELF TO STAY CONNECTED, THE MORE YOU CAN BENEFIT FROM THEIR SUPPORT. WHAT DO YOU DO IF YOU ARE HAVING A BAD DAY, AND JUST CAN'T BEAR TO TALK WITH ANYONE? TEXT, EMAIL OR CALL THEM BACK AND SAY..." HEY, THANKS FOR REACHING OUT. I NEED THE DAY TO GET MY THOUGHTS TOGETHER...BUT I'LL CALL YOU TOMORROW." TRY NOT TO AVOID, DISAPPEAR, OR FAIL TO RESPOND TO EFFORTS TO CONNECT FROM OTHERS AS DOING SO WILL ONLY MAKE YOU FEEL WORSE ("I JUST CAN'T GET MY ACT TOGETHER AND NOW THEY ARE EVEN MORE UPSET WITH ME") AND MAKE THEM MORE UPSET AND WORRIED ("HE ASKED ME TO CHECK IN AND NOW HE IS NOT ANSWERING...SOMETHING BAD MUST BE HAPPENING").
5. POSTIVELY REINFORCE THEM IF YOU LIKE SOMETHING THAT SOMEONE DOES AND YOU WANT THEM TO KEEP DOING IT, GIVE THEM SOME POSITIVE

FEEDBACK! SAYING “THANK YOU, THAT WAS NICE” OR “I REALLY APPRECIATE THE WAY YOU HANDLED THAT” GOES A LONG WAY TOWARDS MAKING THOSE BEHAVIORS RE-OCCUR. ALMOST EVERYONE LIKES TO BE NOTICED AND LIKE.



REFERENCE: [HTTPS://WWW.AMETHYSTRECOVERY.ORG/BUILDING-A-STRONG-AND-SOBER-SUPPORT-NETWORK](https://www.amethystrecovery.org/building-a-strong-and-sober-support-network)

WWW.SAMHSA.GOV

CHOOSING A RECOVERY PATHWAY



RECOVERY MEANS DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE, AND EVERYBODY'S RECOVERY IS DIFFERENT.

RECOVERY IS NEVER OUT OF REACH, NO MATTER HOW HOPELESS YOUR SITUATION SEEMS. CHANGE IS POSSIBLE WITH THE RIGHT PATHWAY AND SUPPORT – EVEN IF YOU'VE TRIED AND FAILED BEFORE.

RECOVERY IS ABOUT BEING BACK IN CONTROL OF YOUR OWN LIFE. IT'S ABOUT BEING ABLE TO MAKE CHOICES ABOUT HOW YOU LIVE AND WHAT YOU DO.

THERE IS NO RIGHT OR WRONG WAY TO APPROACH RECOVERY; YOUR PATH MAY BE DIFFERENT TO OTHER PEOPLE'S. YOUR NEEDS MAY CHANGE WITH TIME AND DIFFERENT TREATMENTS MAY BE MORE APPROPRIATE FOR YOU. STARTING YOUR RECOVERY JOURNEY WILL BE LIFE CHANGING – BUT ALSO HARD WORK. IT WILL HELP YOU GAIN CONTROL BACK OVER YOUR LIFE, TAKE OWNERSHIP OF YOUR FUTURE, BE HEALTHIER AND MORE EMPLOYABLE.

THE PROCESS OF RECOVERY IS HIGHLY PERSONAL AND OCCURS VIA MANY PATHWAYS. IT MAY INCLUDE CLINICAL TREATMENT, MEDICATIONS, FAITH-BASED APPROACHES, PEER SUPPORT, FAMILY SUPPORT, SELF-CARE, AND OTHER

APPROACHES. THE ROAD TO RECOVERY OFTEN INVOLVES BUMPS, PITFALLS, AND SETBACKS. BUT GETTING HELP AND CONFRONTING YOUR ADDICTION TO ALCOHOL AND DRUG PROBLEMS IN YOUR LIFE – OR THE LIVES OF THOSE YOU LOVE – CAN PROVIDE A PROVEN PATHWAY TO A HEALTHIER AND MORE PRODUCTIVE LIFE.

RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE. IN FACT, WE ESTIMATE THAT OVER 20 MILLION INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES ARE LIVING LIFE IN RECOVERY! INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE “IN RECOVERY” KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO THEM AND HOW IMPORTANT IT IS IN THEIR LIVES.

A SOLUTION IS AVAILABLE.

LET'S TAKE A MOMENT AND LOOK AT THE DIFFERENT PATHWAYS.

RECOVERY PATHWAYS



CLINICAL TREATMENT OR MEDICAL MODEL

THE MEDICAL MODEL OF ADDICTION TAKES THE HIGH GROUND IN ADDICTION MODELS BECAUSE IT INCORPORATES THE MOST WELL-ESTABLISHED INFORMATION FROM OTHER MODELS. IN A SENSE, IT IS PRIMARILY A DESCRIPTIVE MODEL AND DOESN'T LEAD TO ONE PARTICULAR METHOD FOR INTERVENTION.

THE ESSENTIAL OUTLINE OF THE ADDICTION PROCESS IS:

RISK FACTORS. HERE THE MODEL ADOPTS THE CONTEXT ISSUE AND INCLUDES THINGS LIKE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT, DRUG AVAILABILITY, PREEXISTING MOOD DISORDERS, LIFE ISSUES.

GENETIC OR BIOLOGICAL PREDISPOSITION. WHILE NOT PROVEN IN ALL ADDICTIONS, THIS COVERS THE INNATE “ADDICTION DRIVE” AND HELPS EXPLAIN WHY SIMILAR BEHAVIOR AND CIRCUMSTANCES LEADS TO ADDICTION IN ONE PERSON BUT NOT ANOTHER.

A SPECIALIZED RESPONSE TO ADDICTIVE CHEMICALS. THIS ADDRESSES WHY TAKING A DRUG IS PLEASANT FOR SOME AND UNNERVING FOR OTHERS. ONLY THOSE WHO ENJOY THE EXPERIENCE WILL PROGRESS TOWARD ADDICTION. PRACTICE. THIS INVOLVES TRIAL AND ERROR BY WAY OF EXPERIMENTATION. “LEARNING” THE DRUG.

THE SWITCH BETWEEN USE AND ADDICTION. THIS IS A NOD TO THE CHANGES IN BRAIN STATES THAT COME WITH DRUG USE – HYPERSENSITIZATION, HEDONIC DYSREGULATION (INABILITY TO FEEL PLEASURE WITHOUT HIGH LEVELS OF THE DRUG). THE BROAD NATURE OF THE MEDICAL MODEL OF ADDICTION ACCEPTS EACH STAGE AS A TARGET FOR INTERVENTION AND ATTACK. IMPORTANTLY, THE MEDICAL MODEL OF ADDICTION SAYS THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ADDICTION RESTS WITH THE ADDICT, EVEN THOUGH THEY MAY BE GENETICALLY PRIMED FOR ADDICTION. IT ALSO ALLOWS THAT, BECAUSE OF REAL BIOLOGICAL CHANGES IN THE BRAIN, FULL RECOVERY MAY TAKE YEARS.

THE ADVANTAGES OF THE MEDICAL MODEL OF ADDICTION ARE BUILT INTO ITS GENERAL NATURE. PHYSICIANS AND MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS WILL FIND ROOM TO APPLY THEIR OWN JUDGMENT IN EACH CASE, RATHER THAN HAVING TO FOLLOW A STRICT PARADIGM THAT DOESN’T WORK FOR ALL TYPES OF ADDICTION. THE MEDICAL MODEL OF ADDICTION ALSO TENDS TO DISALLOW ADDICTIONS THAT DO NOT INVOLVE CHEMICAL SUBSTANCES (SEX ADDICTION, SHOPPING ADDICTION, OTHERS) AND PLACES THOSE TYPES INTO THE CATEGORY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISEASE INSTEAD , MEDICATIONS, FAITH-BASED APPROACHES, PEER SUPPORT, FAMILY SUPPORT, SELF-CARE.

SOCIAL MODEL OF RECOVERY

THE TERM KNOWN AS “SOCIAL MODEL RECOVERY” IS OFTEN USED IN THE FIELD OF ADDICTION RECOVERY OR DRUG REHAB. SOCIAL MODEL DRUG REHAB PROGRAMS EMPHASIZE THE PROCESS OF RELEARNING RESPONSES TO CHALLENGES, STRESSES AND ANXIETIES THROUGH “DOING” AND “EXPERIENCING” THINGS IN A NEW WAY BY WATCHING POSITIVE ROLE MODELS. THESE TYPES OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL REHAB PROGRAMS HAVE HAD SOME SUCCESS BECAUSE THEY CAN BE VERY EFFECTIVE AT BUILDING STRONG, POSITIVE SOCIAL COPING BEHAVIORS AND SOCIAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS.

THE SOCIAL MODEL OF ADDICTION RECOVERY HAS BEEN SEEN IN PROGRAMS LIKE ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (AA) WHERE MUTUAL SELF-HELP IS PROMOTED AS A WAY TO STAY SOBER. GENERALLY, PEOPLE STRUGGLING WITH ALCOHOLISM OR ADDICTION OFTEN LACK SOCIAL SUPPORT AND, IN THE ABSENCE OF THAT SUPPORT FROM A SOCIAL NETWORK, THEIR ADDICTION CAN LEAD TO THE UNRAVELING OF THEIR LIVES, AND SOMETIMES HOMELESSNESS. LONG AGO AA RECOGNIZED THAT ALCOHOLICS STRUGGLING WITH SOBRIETY NEEDED MORE SOCIAL SUPPORT AND THE GUIDANCE PROVIDED BY SHARED EXPERIENCES.

RECOVERY HOMES AND FACILITIES

THE AA PROGRAM INITIALLY PROVIDED “RECOVERY HOMES” FOR NEWER AA MEMBERS WHO WERE TEMPORARILY HOMELESS AND IN ACUTE NEED OF SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE. IN THE EARLY DAYS OF AA, THESE RECOVERY HOMES MIGHT ACTUALLY BE THE HOMES OF OTHER AA MEMBERS WHO WOULD HOST NEWER MEMBERS AND ACT AS GUIDES BY SHARING THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES. LATER, ONCE THE NEED FOR SUCH RECOVERY HOMES WAS RECOGNIZED BY THE PUBLIC, THEY RECEIVED FUNDING AND SUPPORT, AND WERE FORMALIZED AS A STANDARD (AND LICENSED) COMPONENT OF MANY ADDICTION REHABILITATION PROGRAMS.

RECOVERY HOMES OR FACILITIES ARE AN INTEGRAL PART OF A SOCIAL MODEL RECOVERY PROGRAM. THEY TEND TO BE STRUCTURED AS COMMUNITY-BASED RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS WHERE FOOD, SHELTER, GUIDANCE AND RECOVERY SERVICES ARE PROVIDED IN A SUPPORTIVE PEER-GROUP ENVIRONMENT. SERVICES IN A RECOVERY HOME OR RESIDENTIAL REHAB FACILITY MAY INCLUDE HEALTH

CARE, INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP COUNSELING (WITH GROUP SHARING AND SUPPORT), ALCOHOL AND DRUG RECOVERY EDUCATION, GROUP RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES, AND REFERRALS TO COMMUNITY SERVICES.

INPATIENT AND OUTPATIENT SOCIAL MODELS FOR RECOVERY

THE SOCIAL MODEL FOR RECOVERY AS FOSTERED IN RECOVERY HOMES CAN HELP ADDICTS MAKE POSITIVE, LASTING CHANGES IN THEIR LIFESTYLE TO HELP THEM BETTER COPE WITH PATTERNS THAT LED TO ADDICTION. THE IDEA IS TO DEMONSTRATE, OR MODEL, A POSITIVE AND DRUG-FREE, ALCOHOL-FREE, NON-DYSFUNCTIONAL WAY OF LIFE WITHIN A RECOVERY HOME. HOWEVER, THE SOCIAL MODEL FOR ADDICTION RECOVERY IS NOT LIMITED TO RESIDENTIAL REHAB PROGRAMS WITHIN RECOVERY HOMES. THERE ARE ALSO NON-RESIDENTIAL SOCIAL MODEL RECOVERY PROGRAMS WHERE ADDICTS OR ALCOHOLICS CAN PARTICIPATE AS OUTPATIENTS. THESE ARE TYPICALLY COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE A SOBER AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT. OFTEN, SERVICES ARE PROVIDED TO OUTPATIENTS OR MEMBERS WHO HAVE ALCOHOL- OR DRUG-RELATED PROBLEMS. A COMMUNITY-BASED PROGRAM MIGHT ALSO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITY CONCERNING SUCH PROBLEMS IN ORDER TO REDUCE ADDICTION PROBLEMS INCLUDING ALCOHOLISM OR DRUG ADDICTION.

MEDICATION ASSISTED TREATMENT

MEDICATION-ASSISTED TREATMENT (MAT) IS THE USE OF MEDICATIONS, IN COMBINATION WITH COUNSELING AND BEHAVIORAL THERAPIES, TO PROVIDE A “WHOLE-PATIENT” APPROACH TO THE TREATMENT OF SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS. RESEARCH SHOWS THAT A COMBINATION OF MEDICATION AND THERAPY CAN SUCCESSFULLY TREAT THESE DISORDERS, AND FOR SOME PEOPLE STRUGGLING WITH ADDICTION, MAT CAN HELP SUSTAIN RECOVERY.



SMART RECOVERY

SMART RECOVERY IS A FREE, COMMUNITY, SCIENCE-BASED MUTUAL SELF-HELP PROGRAM FOR PEOPLE SEEKING ABSTINENCE FROM DRUGS, ALCOHOL OR NON-SUBSTANCE ADDICTIONS.

SMART RECOVERY QUICK FACTS

- SMART RECOVERY IS DESIGNED TO HELP PEOPLE STRUGGLING WITH ALCOHOL USE DISORDERS, DRUG USE DISORDERS AND COMPULSIVE GAMBLING, SEX, EATING, SHOPPING, SELF-HARM AND OTHERS.
- SMART RECOVERY PROMOTES ABSTINENCE AND THE PROGRAM IS DESIGNED FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE CONSIDERING OR CHOOSING ABSTINENCE.
- THE RECOVERY PROGRAM IS BASED ON SCIENTIFIC PRINCIPLES AND EVOLVES AS SCIENTIFIC UNDERSTANDING EVOLVES. MANY OF THE EXERCISES ARE BASED ON MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUES AND COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY.
- THERE IS NO FORMAL RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL COMPONENT TO SMART RECOVERY, THOUGH MANY GROUP MEMBERS WILL HOLD PRIVATE BELIEFS.
- THE SMART SYSTEM TEACHES RECOVERY TOOLS FOR BEHAVIOR CHANGE. IN SUPPORT MEETINGS YOU DISCUSS AND PRACTICE THESE TOOLS AND SKILLS.
- SMART RECOVERY IS A NON-PROFIT ENTITY AND MEETINGS ARE FREE.
- YOU CAN FIND MEETINGS ONLINE AND IN MANY URBAN AREAS.
- ANYONE WILLING TO BECOME A MEETING FACILITATOR CAN START THEIR OWN SMART RECOVERY MEETINGS.

12 STEP PROGRAMS

THE BASICS OF AA. THE ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (AA) 12-STEP RECOVERY PROGRAM IS A FREE TREATMENT PROGRAM FOR PEOPLE SUFFERING FROM ALCOHOL ABUSE AND ADDICTION. AA PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS FOLLOW A SET OF RECOVERY STEPS TO ACHIEVE AND MAINTAIN ABSTINENCE FROM ALCOHOL. MANY PEOPLE USE A SPONSOR TO HELP THEM THROUGH THE PROCESS.



CELEBRATE RECOVERY

CELEBRATE RECOVERY IS A CHRIST-CENTERED PROGRAM WITH FOUNDATIONS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED IN BIBLICAL TRUTH. THE 12 STEPS WITH ACCOMPANYING SCRIPTURES AND THE 8 PRINCIPLES BASED ON THE BEATITUDES OFFER PARTICIPANTS A CLEAR PATH OF SALVATION AND DISCIPLESHIP; BRINGING HOPE, FREEDOM, SOBRIETY, HEALING, AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE BACK ONE DAY AT A TIME THROUGH OUR ONE AND ONLY TRUE HIGHER POWER, JESUS CHRIST. THE 12 STEPS AND THE 8 PRINCIPLES WORK SEAMLESSLY TOGETHER, TYING HISTORICAL RECOVERY TO TIMELESS BIBLICAL TEACHING.



PEER SUPPORT

PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES ARE SERVICES THAT ARE DESIGNED AND DELIVERED BY PEOPLE WHO, THEMSELVES, HAVE EXPERIENCED BOTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDER AND RECOVERY. THEY KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE AN ADDICT, TO STRUGGLE WITH THE DAILY PRESSURES AND STRESS, TO OVERCOME THE GUILT, SADNESS, CONFUSION, TO TRY TO FIND A JOB, REBUILD CAREERS, RELATIONSHIPS, AND SELF-ESTEEM.

THE PEER SUPPORT SPECIALIST USES THEIR OWN UNIQUE, LIFE-ALTERING

EXPERIENCE IN ORDER TO GUIDE AND SUPPORT OTHERS WHO ARE IN SOME FORM OF RECOVERY. THIS TYPICALLY REFERS TO PATIENTS RECOVERING FROM ADDICTION, MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS OR ABUSE.

PEER SUPPORT SPECIALISTS WORK IN CONJUNCTION WITH HIGHLY TRAINED AND EDUCATED PROFESSIONALS. THEY FILL A GAP BY PROVIDING SUPPORT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SOMEONE WHO HAS FIRST-HAND EXPERIENCE, SOMETHING THAT PROFESSIONALS CANNOT LEARN FROM TRAINING OR EDUCATION. THEY MAY WORK FOR THE GOVERNMENT, IN HEALTH FACILITIES, NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS OR REHABILITATION CENTERS.

TYPES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT AND PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES

BACKED BY CONSIDERABLE RESEARCH THAT RECOVERY IS ENHANCED WITH SOCIAL SUPPORT, FOUR TYPES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED: EMOTIONAL, INFORMATIONAL, INSTRUMENTAL, AND AFFILIATIONAL SUPPORT. RCSP PROJECTS HAVE FOUND THESE TYPES OF SUPPORT USEFUL IN ORGANIZING COMMUNITY-BASED PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES.

INDIVIDUALS IN RECOVERY DON'T HAVE A SINGLE NEED. THEY HAVE MANY NEEDS. THEY MAY NEED ASSISTANCE IN FINDING A JOB, THUS REQUIRING A JOB REFERRAL SERVICE (INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT). BUT THEIR CONFIDENCE LEVEL MAY BE AT ALL-TIME LOWS, SO THEY ALSO NEED EMOTIONAL SUPPORT, PERHAPS IN SOME TYPE OF COACHING ON INTERVIEWING SKILLS, HOW TO DRESS APPROPRIATELY, FOLLOW-UP TIPS.

EMOTIONAL

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT, WHICH MAY INCLUDE PEER MENTORING OR SUPPORT GROUPS LED BY PEERS, ENCOURAGES THE INDIVIDUAL THROUGH EMPATHY, CONCERN OR CARING, HELPING TO BOLSTER CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM.

INFORMATIONAL

EXAMPLES OF INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT MAY INCLUDE A WELLNESS SEMINAR, CHILD PARENTING CLASS, OR TRAINING FOR A NEW JOB. THE PURPOSE OF THE

INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT IS TO PROVIDE TRAINING IN VARIOUS LIFE OR VOCATIONAL SKILLS AND TO SHARE KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION.

INSTRUMENTAL

PEOPLE IN RECOVERY OFTEN NEED ASSISTANCE IN ORDER TO COMPLETE CERTAIN TASKS. SUCH INSTRUMENTAL SUPPORT MAY INCLUDE TRANSPORTATION OR CHILD CARE OR HELP TO ACCESS VARIOUS COMMUNITY HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES.

AFFILIATION

A SENSE OF BELONGING, OF COMMUNITY, AND BEING WITH OTHER PEOPLE TO PROMOTE LEARNING SOCIAL AND RECREATIONAL SKILLS IS IMPORTANT TO THOSE IN RECOVERY. AFFILIATIONAL SUPPORT MAY INCLUDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIALIZING THAT ARE DRUG- AND ALCOHOL-FREE, ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION IN SPORTS LEAGUES, OR MAKING RECOVERY CENTERS AVAILABLE.

HOW IT WORKS

PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUPS HAVE A PEER LEADER, WHO PROVIDES SUPPORT TO PEERS (THOSE SEEKING HELP TO ESTABLISH OR MAINTAIN THEIR RECOVERY). IN THE INTERACTION, BOTH THE PEER LEADER AND PEERS RECEIVE MUTUAL SUPPORT AND THEIR RECOVERY GAINS STRENGTH IN THE PROCESS. THE PEER LEADER MAY HAVE DIFFERENT TITLES, SUCH AS RECOVERY GUIDE, COACH OR MENTOR, PEER RESOURCE SPECIALIST, OR PEER SERVICES INTERVENTIONIST.

THE ROLE OF THE PEER LEADER, HOWEVER, IS VERY CLEARLY DISTINGUISHED FROM THAT OF A 12-STEP SPONSOR, TREATMENT COUNSELOR OR OTHER PROFESSIONAL. THIS IS BECAUSE THE INTENT OF THE PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES IS TO ENHANCE THE RECOVERY PROCESS BY NOT DUPLICATING OTHER SERVICES IN THE COMMUNITY.

SOMETIMES QUESTIONS COME UP THAT ARE NOT THE PURVIEW OF THE PEER LEADER. IT'S IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT PEER LEADERS DO NOT DIAGNOSE, GIVE ADVICE OR PROVIDE THERAPY. FOR EXAMPLE, A PEER MAY BE WORRIED ABOUT COMPLETING THE 12-STEPS AND ASK THE PEER LEADER FOR HELP. THE PEER LEADER WILL RESPOND THAT THIS IS AN ISSUE THEY NEED TO WORK OUT WITH THEIR SPONSOR, NOT THE PEER LEADER. SIMILARLY, IN THE INSTANCE WHERE A

PEER HAS QUESTIONS ABOUT RECURRING SYMPTOMS OR WHETHER OR NOT A MEDICATION NEEDS TO BE CHANGED. THE PEER LEADER WILL TELL THE PEER THAT THIS IS SOMETHING THEY NEED TO TAKE UP WITH THEIR DOCTOR OR NURSE.

IN EARLY RECOVERY ESPECIALLY, THE PEER LEADER, ACTING AS MENTOR OR COACH, SPENDS A GREAT DEAL OF TIME WITH THE PEER – TYPICALLY MORE THAN A 12-STEP SPONSOR. THAT’S BECAUSE THE PEER LEADER OFTEN HAS A MORE EXTENSIVE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WHAT’S AVAILABLE IN THE COMMUNITY IN TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT, HOUSING, EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES AND COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES. THE PEER LEADER IS INVOLVED IN HELPING PEERS MAKE APPROPRIATE CHOICES ABOUT WHICH RECOVERY PATH WILL WORK BEST FOR THEM – NOT ENCOURAGING THE PEER TO CHOOSE THE PATH THAT WORKED FOR THE PEER LEADER. SIMILARLY, THE PEER LEADER WILL TYPICALLY NOT URGE THE PEER TO FOLLOW ANY PARTICULAR PATH OR RECOVERY. AGAIN, THE INTENT IS TO ENCOURAGE THE PEER TO FIND THE RECOVERY PATH THAT WILL BE IN THE PEER’S BEST INTEREST – AND ONE HE OR SHE CAN FOLLOW.

HOW INDIVIDUALS BENEFIT FROM PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES

THE BENEFITS OF PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES ARE BOTH TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE. THEY VARY FROM INDIVIDUAL TO INDIVIDUAL. SOME PEOPLE IN EARLY RECOVERY ATTEST TO THE FACT THAT THESE SERVICES HELPED THEM REMAIN IN RECOVERY, WHEREAS A SIMPLE RELIANCE ON 12-STEP MEETINGS OR SESSIONS WITH A COUNSELOR DID NOT. TO THAT END, PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES FULFILL THEIR MISSION: TO HELP PEOPLE STRENGTHEN AND REMAIN IN RECOVERY.

HERE ARE SOME OTHER BENEFITS:

SAFE PLACE TO SOCIALIZE – PARTICIPANTS IN PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES KNOW THEY HAVE A SAFE PLACE TO SOCIALIZE WITH OTHERS WHO ARE ALSO IN RECOVERY. THIS GIVES THEM A SENSE OF BELONGING, OF COMMUNITY, AND A PRESSURE-FREE OPPORTUNITY TO INTERACT WITH OTHERS.

SHARING PERSONAL STORIES AND PROBLEM SOLVING – GROUP SUPPORT ACTIVITIES OFTEN HAVE AN EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT AS WELL. DURING SUCH GROUP INTERACTION, PEERS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE PERSONAL STORIES AS WELL AS SOLVE PROBLEMS. THE GROUP MAY CONSIST OF INDIVIDUALS

WITH A SHARED SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDER, OR HIV/AIDS, OR THOSE RE-ENTERING SOCIETY FOLLOWING INCARCERATION, OR THOSE WHO WITH THE SAME CULTURAL OR RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND.

ENRICHING SPIRITUAL VALUES – SOME, BUT NOT ALL, PEER GROUP ACTIVITIES THAT ARE LED BY A PEER LEADER HAVE A SPIRITUAL COMPONENT – IN ADDITION TO EDUCATIONAL AND GROUP SUPPORT. THIS PROVIDES PARTICIPANTS WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENRICH THEIR OWN SPIRITUAL VALUES – WHATEVER THEY MAY BE.

LEARN NEW SKILLS – OUTSIDE EXPERTS ARE OFTEN BROUGHT IN TO DEMONSTRATE AND TEACH NEW SKILL SETS TO GROUP MEMBERS. THE RANGE OF SKILLS MAY INCLUDE CREDIT COUNSELING, HOW TO BUDGET AND MANAGE FINANCES, JOB SKILLS TRAINING, HOW TO PREVENT RELAPSE, AND EFFECTIVE CONFLICT RESOLUTION.

PLACE TO PRACTICE NEW SOCIAL SKILLS – PEER RECOVERY GROUPS OFFER PARTICIPANTS A NONTHREATENING ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH TO PRACTICE SOME OF THE NEW SOCIAL SKILLS THEY HAVE LEARNED.

PROVIDING SERVICE TO OTHERS – IT'S COMMON FOR PARTICIPANTS IN PEER RECOVERY GROUPS TO WANT TO GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY, TO HELP OTHERS AS THEY HAVE BEEN HELPED. AFTER ALL, THE PEER GROUP LEADER IS SOMEONE WHO HAS ALSO BEEN IN RECOVERY – AND CHOSE TO HELP OTHERS. THIS EXAMPLE INSPIRES MANY GROUP PARTICIPANTS TO DO LIKEWISE. MOST OFTEN THEY WORK AS VOLUNTEERS IN PROVIDING PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES, BUT SOME RECEIVE A SMALL STIPEND.

SERVICES AVAILABLE AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF RECOVERY – THE ADAPTABILITY OF PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES IS THAT THEY ARE AVAILABLE AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE RECOVERY PROCESS. SUCH SERVICES MAY PRECEDE A PERSON'S ENTERING INTO TREATMENT, AND MAY FACILITATE OR MOTIVATE THE INDIVIDUAL'S DESIRE TO CHANGE. PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES MAY ACCOMPANY TREATMENT, THUS PROVIDING A CONNECTION TO THE COMMUNITY DURING TREATMENT. SERVICES MAY FOLLOW TREATMENT, OFFERING A BETTER RELAPSE PREVENTION. MANY PEOPLE WHO DO NOT ENTER TREATMENT BECAUSE THEY CANNOT AFFORD IT OR DO NOT WISH TO CAN AVAIL THEMSELVES OF PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT – DURING PARTICIPATION IN PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT GROUPS, MEMBERS ARE ALSO BUILDING UPON THEIR LEADERSHIP ABILITY. THIS GIVES THEM A FOUNDATION TO BE ABLE TO HELP OTHERS BY EITHER DIRECTING THE SERVICE PROGRAM OR BY PROVIDING SUPPORT TO THEIR PEERS.

PROMOTION OF SHARED VALUES – SELF-DIRECTION, EMPOWERMENT, CHOICE, GIVING BACK TO OTHERS, KEEPING RECOVERY FIRST, BEING A LEADER, PARTICIPATING, BEING AUTHENTIC, AND INCLUDING ALL CULTURES ARE SHARED VALUES THAT ARE PROMOTED DURING PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES.

ALWAYS AVAILABLE – PEER RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES ARE ONE MEANS OF PROVIDING AN INVALUABLE, CONTINUOUSLY AVAILABLE SUPPORT FOLLOWING TREATMENT. THIS SAFETY NET FOR INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE COMPLETED TREATMENT HELPS THEM IN THEIR GOAL TO REMAIN IN RECOVERY AND BEGIN THE NECESSARY STEPS TO ACHIEVE THEIR DREAMS.

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FELLOWSHIP AND RECOVERY



LET'S FACE IT: AS ADDICTS, WE MIGHT HAVE BEEN THE SOCIAL BUTTERFLIES AND LIFE OF THE PARTY FOR A TIME, BUT AS THE ADDICTION ESCALATED, WE OFTEN FOUND OURSELVES BECOMING INCREASINGLY ISOLATED. WE DIDN'T LIKE OURSELVES AND COULDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY ANYONE ELSE WOULD EITHER. WE FELT SAFE IN THE ARMS OF OUR ADDICTION, AND AFTER A WHILE DIDN'T SEE THE POINT IN TRYING TO ENGAGE OTHERS. IT OFTEN FELT LIKE TOO MUCH WORK.

THE "FELLOWSHIP" PART OF RECOVERY MAY FEEL LIKE AN OVERLOAD, BUT IT'S NEEDED AND WORTH IT THUS, FOR MANY OF US, GETTING INTO RECOVERY CAN BE A FELLOWSHIP OVERLOAD. THERE ARE THESE LIVELY RECOVERING PEOPLE ALL AROUND US WANTING TO HELP US, HUG US, CALL US ON THE PHONE AND SEND ENCOURAGING TEXTS. THEY WANT TO MEET FOR COFFEE, THEY ARE INVITING US TO HELP SET UP CHAIRS BEFORE THE MEETING AND THEY ARE DELVING INTO THE MOST PRIVATE DETAILS OF OUR LIVES. FOR THE NEWCOMER—THE ONE WHO HAS BEEN ISOLATING IN THE DARK CORNERS OF ADDICTION—THE PROGRAM'S FOCUS ON FELLOWSHIP CAN FEEL LIKE A HURDLE.

CAN'T WE JUST WORK THE STEPS ON OUR OWN? CAN'T WE JUST COME TO THE MEETING A FEW MINUTES LATE AND SLIP OUT A FEW MINUTES EARLY TO AVOID THE CHIT-CHAT? WHY DO WE HAVE TO CALL OUR SPONSORS EVERY DAY? WHY DO WE HAVE TO PICK UP THE PHONE WHEN OTHERS CALL US? WE BARELY KNOW THESE PEOPLE.

IF YOU'RE A NEWCOMER, YOU MAY NOT YET SEE THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF FELLOWSHIP. THAT'S OK. YOU WILL. WE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO THINKING WE CAN DO EVERYTHING ON OUR OWN. BUT ISN'T THAT WHAT WE WERE TRYING TO DO BEFORE WE GOT INTO RECOVERY? AND HOW WAS IT WORKING FOR US? WE WERE FULL-BLOWN ADDICTS. ALTHOUGH ALL THIS FELLOWSHIP FEELS FOREIGN AND UNCOMFORTABLE, IT'S TIME TO GIVE THIS NEW WAY OF LIVING A CHANCE.

WHILE ALL THE PEOPLE AROUND YOU HUGGING YOU AND CALLING YOU MAY FEEL OVERWHELMING, THE TRUTH IS, YOU NEED THESE PEOPLE AND THEY NEED YOU. THEY ARE WELCOMING YOU INTO THE FOLD WITH A LEVEL OF OPEN ACCEPTANCE UNLIKE ANYTHING YOU ARE LIKELY TO RECEIVE ANYWHERE ELSE. THE REST OF THE WORLD IS EVALUATING AND ASSESSING US, LOVING US CONDITIONALLY.

IN THE 12-STEP ROOMS, THE PERFORMANCE AND THE DISTINCTIONS AND THE CONDITIONS GO OUT THE WINDOW. WE ARE NOTHING MORE THAN A HUMBLE GROUP OF ADDICTS DESPERATELY TRYING TO GET WELL AND LEANING ON EACH OTHER TO DO IT.

YOU MAY FEEL GUILTY AT FIRST THAT SO MANY PEOPLE ARE GOING OUT OF THEIR WAY TO HELP YOU. THAT'S BECAUSE MOST OF US DON'T KNOW HOW TO LET OTHERS SERVE US. WE BELIEVE WE ARE UNWORTHY OR THAT SOMETHING WILL BE ASKED OF US IN RETURN. BUT AS WE STICK AROUND THE 12-STEP ROOMS, WE SEE THAT SERVICE TO OTHERS STRENGTHENS SOBRIETY. AND THEN IT IS EASY TO SEE WHY EVERYONE IS SO HAPPY TO GIVE AND SERVE AND SACRIFICE.

POWER OF LETTING OTHERS HELP YOU

IF YOU ARE A NEWCOMER, THIS IS YOUR CHANCE TO OPEN YOURSELF UP AND RECEIVE. IT IS NOT THE TIME TO ASK HOW YOU CAN PAY EVERYONE BACK FOR ALL THEY HAVE DONE FOR YOU. THAT DAY WILL COME. AS YOU BEGIN WORKING THROUGH THE FIRST STEPS, YOU ARE LETTING OTHERS HELP YOU. YOU ARE GETTING YOUR HEAD CLEARED OUT AND YOU ARE RECONNECTING WITH GOD. THESE ARE ROCKY DAYS AND YOU HAVE ALL YOU CAN HANDLE TO SIMPLY NOT TAKE A DRINK OR GET HIGH.

THE MOST IMPORTANT SERVICE YOU DO FOR YOUR FELLOWSHIP RIGHT NOW IS TO STAY SOBER AND TO KEEP SHOWING UP AT YOUR MEETING. YOU MAY NOT SEE HOW IMPORTANT THIS IS NOW, BUT LATER YOU WILL UNDERSTAND.

AS YOU CONTINUE WORKING THROUGH THE STEPS, THE PROGRAM WILL START TO FEEL MORE NATURAL. YOU WILL BE GETTING YOUR BEARINGS AND ENJOYING SOME SOLID SOBRIETY. AND SOON YOU WILL FEEL YOURSELF REACHING OUT. INSTEAD OF LETTING OTHERS CALL YOU, YOU WILL PICK UP THE PHONE. AFTER SOME MONTHS YOU MAY BE ASKED TO SPONSOR. YOU MAY TAKE ON A SIMPLE SERVICE POSITION.

SOON YOU FIND THAT THESE PEOPLE ARE BECOMING YOUR GREATEST FRIENDS AND CONFIDANTS. YOU LOOK FORWARD TO GOING TO YOUR MEETING AND EVEN WELCOME THE PHONE CALLS. YOU HAVE FINALLY FOUND A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTAND YOU, WANT TO KNOW YOU AND LIKE YOU. YOU LIKE THEM, TOO.

AND AS YOU GIVE BACK TO THIS FELLOWSHIP THROUGH SERVICE, THROUGH YOUR CONTINUED SOBRIETY AND THROUGH SIMPLY SHARING YOUR OWN STORY OF ADDICTION AND RECOVERY, YOU ARE STRENGTHENING THE GROUP AS A WHOLE AND YOU ARE PRACTICING THE 12TH STEP. NEWCOMERS WALKING THROUGH THE DOORS HEAR YOUR STORY OF HOPE AND DARE TO BELIEVE THIS PROGRAM COULD WORK FOR THEM. THIS IS THE SERVICE WE DO FOR OUR FELLOWSHIP AND FOR THE COMMUNITY. AND AS RECOVERING ADDICTS, IT IS OUR HIGHEST CALLING AND OUR GREATEST JOY.

FELLOWSHIP CAN ALSO BE FOUND IN RECOVERY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

WHAT IS A RECOVERY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION?

A RECOVERY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION (RCO) IS AN INDEPENDENT, NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION LED AND GOVERNED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES OF RECOVERY. THESE ORGANIZATIONS ORGANIZE RECOVERY-FOCUSED POLICY ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES, CARRY OUT RECOVERY-FOCUSED COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS, AND/OR PROVIDE PEER-BASED RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES (P-BRSS). THE BROADLY DEFINED RECOVERY COMMUNITY – PEOPLE IN LONG-TERM RECOVERY, THEIR FAMILIES, FRIENDS AND ALLIES, INCLUDING RECOVERY-FOCUSED ADDICTION AND RECOVERY PROFESSIONALS – INCLUDES ORGANIZATIONS WHOSE MEMBERS REFLECT RELIGIOUS, SPIRITUAL AND SECULAR PATHWAYS OF RECOVERY. THE SOLE MISSION

OF AN RCO IS TO MOBILIZE RESOURCES WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF THE RECOVERY COMMUNITY TO INCREASE THE PREVALENCE AND QUALITY OF LONG-TERM RECOVERY FROM ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG ADDICTION. PUBLIC EDUCATION, POLICY ADVOCACY AND PEER-BASED RECOVERY SUPPORT SERVICES ARE THE STRATEGIES THROUGH WHICH THIS MISSION IS ACHIEVED.



FIND A RCO

INTERNET FELLOWSHIP RESOURCES

[FELLOWSHIP: WHAT IT IS AND WHY YOU NEED IT TO RECOVER FROM ADDICTION](#)

[FELLOWSHIP IN RECOVERY](#)

[24-7 ONLINE SOBER CHAT LOUNGE](#)

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BENEFITS OF RECOVERY

Addiction recovery is more than stopping drinking or using. It's an ongoing process of growing and healing—mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually.

EVERYONE KNOWS ADDICTION IS UNHEALTHY. EVEN WORKAHOLICS (OFTEN CONSIDERED AN "ACCEPTABLE" ADDICTION) WHO MAKE IT TO THE TOP IN THEIR CAREER AND FINANCES INEVITABLY ADMIT THAT THEY SACRIFICED MANY IMPORTANT PARTS OF THEIR LIVES TO GET THERE (NAMELY, FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS). AND MOST ADDICTS HAVE HAD SOMEONE IN THEIR LIFE TELL THEM THEY NEED TO GET INTO RECOVERY, BUT FEW ARE EVER TOLD THE REAL BENEFITS OF DOING SO. SADLY, THEY ARE OFTEN LEFT TO CONCLUDE THAT RECOVERY IS AS GOOD AS ANY OTHER ALTERNATIVE BECAUSE ADDICTION CLEARLY ISN'T WORKING.

I BELIEVE THERE ARE COUNTLESS BENEFITS TO RECOVERY, BUT FOR THE SAKE OF SPACE AND TIME I AM GOING TO ONLY SHARE THE FOLLOWING 5 MAJOR BENEFITS. MAYBE THESE WILL HELP YOU OR A LOVED ONE HAVE A BETTER PICTURE OF WHY RECOVERY IS THE BEST ALTERNATIVE TO ADDICTION.

1. RECOVERY LEADS YOU OUT OF SECRECY AND DECEPTION.

EVERY ADDICT HAS LIED. IT IS ADDICTION 101 -- YOU MUST LIE IF YOU WANT TO KEEP DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING. LYING BECOMES LIKE A DIALECT OF ADDICTS. THEY BECOME HIGHLY SKILLED IN THE ART OF DECEPTION SO AS TO NOT LET THE TRUTH OF THEIR ADDICTIVE WAYS LEAK OUT. THEIR FEAR OF BEING TRULY KNOWN IS SO OVERWHELMING THAT THEY BELIEVE THEIR ONLY OPTION FOR SURVIVAL IS TO HIDE AND LIE.

THIS IS WHY IT IS SO DIFFICULT FOR ADDICTS TO ENTER RECOVERY: THEY FEAR BEING KNOWN. THIS IS ALSO WHY IT IS SO IMPORTANT FOR THOSE SEEKING TO HELP ADDICTS TO RESPOND WITH KINDNESS AND ENCOURAGEMENT WHEN THEY FINALLY DO TAKE THAT FIRST STEP AND TELL THEIR FULL STORY. THE LAST THING AN ADDICT NEEDS AT THAT POINT IS SOMEONE BEATING THEM UP FOR TELLING THE TRUTH. THAT'S A CERTAIN RECIPE FOR SENDING THEM RIGHT BACK INTO HIDING AND MORE ADDICTION.

RECOVERY INVITES AN ADDICT TO TELL THEIR WHOLE STORY, EVERY BIT OF IT. NO SECRETS. NO LIES. NO HIDING. IT IS A JOURNEY OF DISCLOSING THE DEPTHS OF THE HEART AND LEARNING WHAT THE POWER OF THE TRUTH CAN DO. THE TRUTH IS THE ONLY WAY TO DEFEAT A LIE. AND THE TRUTH (JESUS CHRIST) IS WHAT ULTIMATELY SETS THE CAPTIVES FREE. IT IS A BEAUTIFUL THING TO SEE AN ADDICT SHARE THEIR STORY AND DISCOVER THAT THEY CAN STILL BE LOVED IN SPITE OF THEIR TERRIBLE FAILURES. SUCH GRACE TURNS MANY ADDICTS FROM LIARS AND CHEATS INTO MEN AND WOMEN OF GREAT INTEGRITY AND COMPASSION.

2. RECOVERY LEADS TO BETTER PHYSICAL HEALTH.

MUCH HAS BE LEARNED IN RECENT DECADES ABOUT THE IMPACT OF ADDICTIVE BEHAVIOR ON THE BRAIN. ROUGHLY EIGHTY PERCENT OF SEX ADDICTS SUFFER FROM SOME DEGREE OF DEPRESSION, WHICH MAKES SENSE WHEN YOU DISCOVER THAT REPEATED OVERUSE OF THE BRAIN IN ONE AREA CAUSES AN IMBALANCE OF UNDERUSE IN ANOTHER. SUCH IMBALANCES CAN CAUSE ALL SORTS OF SYMPTOMS, FROM DEPRESSION TO ANXIETY TO RAGE, ETC.

THE IRONY IS THAT MANY SEX ADDICTS BY OVERSTIMULATING SEXUALLY ARE ACTUALLY DECREASING THEIR ABILITY TO EXPERIENCE SEXUAL PLEASURE. NEUROLOGIST SERGE STOLERU HAS FOUND THAT OVEREXPOSURE TO EROTIC STIMULI EXHAUSTS THE SEXUAL RESPONSES OF NORMAL, HEALTHY YOUNG MEN. MANY SEX ADDICTS WE HAVE HELPED IN OUR MINISTRY ARE ACTUALLY IMPOTENT!

RECOVERY HELPS AN ADDICT REGAIN BALANCE IN THEIR BRAIN BY ELIMINATING THE PRACTICE OF OVER STIMULATION, THE ADDICT'S BRAIN BEGINS TO RESHAPE TOWARD WHAT A HEALTHY BRAIN SHOULD LOOK LIKE. THIS IS CALLED NEUROPLASTICITY; THE ABILITY OF THE BRAIN TO CHANGE SHAPE BASED ON USAGE. THIS IS GOOD NEWS FOR ADDICTS! THEIR BRAIN DOESN'T HAVE TO STAY

STUCK IN THE RUT OF ADDICTION AND ALL THE GARBAGE THAT COMES WITH IT. RECOVERY IS A PROCESS OF LEARNING TO LIVE IN A HEALTHY WAY, WHICH INCLUDES PHYSICAL, AS WELL AS EMOTIONAL, HEALTH.

3. RECOVERY LEADS TO HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS.

EVERY ADDICT HAS POOR RELATIONSHIP SKILLS. THERE CAN BE MANY REASONS FOR THIS, BUT AS IT PERTAINS TO ADDICTION THIS IS DUE TO SELFISHNESS, IMBALANCE OF BRAIN CHEMISTRY, ANGER PROBLEMS AND A GENERAL LACK OF CARE ABOUT ANYTHING OR ANYONE (ADDICTS OFTEN DESCRIBE THEMSELVES AS "NUMB"). ADDICTION DRAWS THE ADDICT MORE AND MORE INTO THEMSELVES UNTIL ALL THAT IS LEFT (AT LEAST IN THEIR MIND) IS THEM; A SORT OF "GOD" UNTO THEMSELVES. THIS IS WHY IT IS SO FRUSTRATING TO BE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH AN ADDICT; THEY ARE GOOD LIARS WHO WORSHIP THEMSELVES. THIS DOESN'T MAKE FOR STRONG RELATIONSHIPS.

RECOVERY, HOWEVER, IS GOOD BECAUSE IT HELPS EXPOSE THE ADDICT'S SELFISHNESS AND LEARN HOW TO CONNECT WITH OTHERS IN HEALTHY, CARING WAYS. THE ADDICT DISCOVERS THEY ARE NOT THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE AND THAT BEING CONNECTED TO OTHERS IS NOT A DISTRACTION FROM THEIR LIVES, BUT RATHER AN ENHANCEMENT. THEY COME TO EMBRACE THAT RELATIONSHIPS ARE NECESSARY FOR HEALTH AND GROWTH.

BUT NOT ALL RELATIONSHIPS ARE HEALED IN RECOVERY. SOMETIMES THE DAMAGE IS SO DEEP AND SO OVERWHELMING THAT FAMILY AND FRIENDS MIGHT WALK AWAY. THE ADDICT CAN'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT THIS; THERE ARE OFTEN PAINFUL CONSEQUENCES TO ADDICTION. THIS DOESN'T MEAN, HOWEVER, THAT THE SKILLS FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FUTURE CANNOT BE ACQUIRED. RECOVERY IS A PATHWAY TO THESE SKILLS.

4. RECOVERY LEADS TO FREEDOM AND JOY.

I HAVE NEVER MET AN ADDICT WHO HASN'T IMMEDIATELY ANSWERED 'YES' WHEN ASKED THE QUESTION, "DO YOU WANT TO BE FREE?" ALL ADDICTS KNOW THEY ARE IN PRISON (EVEN IF THEY WON'T VERBALLY ADMIT IT, THEY KNOW IT IN THEIR SOUL). BUT NOT ALL ARE READY TO BE FREE. NOT ALL ARE BROKEN AND WEARY ENOUGH TO GIVE UP THEIR WAY FOR A DIFFERENT WAY. THIS IS WHY PATIENCE IS SO IMPORTANT WHEN TRYING TO HELP SOMEONE BREAK FREE FROM

AN ADDICTION. FREEDOM ONLY COMES TO THOSE DESPERATE ENOUGH TO DIE FOR IT.

5. RECOVERY LEADS TO PURPOSE AND SERVICE.

IF ADDICTS ARE INCREASINGLY SELFISH, YOU CAN BE CERTAIN THEY AREN'T SERVING OTHERS OUT OF A CARING HEART. THEY MAY BE INVOLVED IN "SERVICE," BUT IT'S PROBABLY WITH AN AGENDA OR A SENSE OF DUTY TO COVER UP THE TRUTH ABOUT THEIR RAGING ADDICTION. THIS IS ANOTHER REASON WHY ADDICTS DON'T HAVE DEEP JOY: THE GREATEST JOY IS ONLY REALIZED THROUGH GIVING.

AS AN ADDICT PROGRESSES IN RECOVERY, THERE COMES A POINT WHEN A "NUDGE" STARTS HAPPENING. IT'S SIMILAR TO A NESTING BIRD WHEN SHE SENSES IT'S TIME FOR THE BABY CHICKS TO SPREAD THEIR WINGS AND FLY. THE EARLY STAGES OF RECOVERY ARE LIKE THE INCUBATION AND HATCHING PERIOD; A TOTAL DEPENDENCE ON THE PROTECTION AND NURTURE OF THE MAMA AND PAPA BIRDS (SPONSORS, MENTORS, COUNSELORS, ETC.). BUT NO BIRD IS MEANT TO LIVE ITS ENTIRE LIFE IN THE NEST. AND NO ADDICT IS MEANT TO LIVE HIS OR HER ENTIRE RECOVERY IN THE "NEST." THERE MUST COME A TIME TO FLY.

"FLYING" IN RECOVERY IS WHEN AN OLD-TIMER ADDICT SIMPLY TAKES A FEW NEWBIES UNDER THEIR WING AND MENTORS THEM. HE SHARE HIS STORY WITH THEM. HE ENCOURAGES THEM AS THEY TELL THEIR STORY AND FACE ALL THE FEARS OF STARTING THIS AWKWARD JOURNEY. HE PASSES ALONG INSIGHT AND WISDOM AS ONE WHO KNOWS THROUGH EXPERIENCE THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF THE RECOVERY PROCESS. AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, HE REMINDS THEM THAT RECOVERY IS WORTH IT BECAUSE THERE IS A GOD WHO LOVES THEM AND MADE THEM FOR SOMETHING SPECIAL, SOMETHING BEYOND ADDICTION -- SOMETHING EVEN BEYOND RECOVERY...

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SPIRITUAL NEEDS



MANY PEOPLE ENTER ADDICTION TREATMENT REHAB OR WALK THROUGH THE DOORS OF A 12-STEP ROOM AND STRUGGLE WITH THE CONCEPT OF SPIRITUALITY. FOR THOSE BEGINNING THE JOURNEY OF ADDICTION RECOVERY WHO DO NOT IDENTIFY AS RELIGIOUS, OR WHO DID PREVIOUSLY BUT HAVE NOW REJECTED RELIGION, OR WHO HAVE FELT HARMED BY RELIGION, THE IDEA OF SPIRITUALITY OR A HIGHER POWER CAN BE CHALLENGING.

FOR THOSE WHO PRACTICE RELIGION AND IDENTIFY GOD AS THEIR HIGHER POWER, SPIRITUALITY LIKELY ALREADY MAKES SENSE. THEY CAN FIT SPIRITUALITY INTO THE FRAMEWORK OF THEIR CURRENT RELIGION. FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS NEVER PRACTICED, NO LONGER PRACTICES OR WHO FEELS HARMED BY RELIGION, IT CAN BE DIFFICULT TO GRASP HOW SPIRITUALITY CAN EXIST WITHOUT THE PRESENCE OF RELIGION. BUT SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION ARE VERY DIFFERENT.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION

IT IS HELPFUL TO SEPARATE SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION. WE OFTEN UNCONSCIOUSLY LINK THE TWO. BUT SPIRITUALITY DOES NOT NEED TO BE DEFINED THROUGH THE LENS OF RELIGION. RELIGION CAN BE THOUGHT OF AS A SET OF BELIEFS, RITUALS AND PRACTICES REGARDING BELIEF IN GOD OR GODS TO BE WORSHIPPED. SPIRITUALITY IS A PERSONAL SEARCH FOR MEANING IN LIFE, FOR CONNECTION WITH ALL THINGS AND FOR THE EXPERIENCE OF A POWER BEYOND ONESELF. SOME FIND IT HELPFUL TO THINK OF RELIGION AS RULES OR PRACTICES AGREED TO BY A NUMBER OF PEOPLE, WHEREAS SPIRITUALITY IS COMPLETELY RELATED TO ONE'S INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE AND CONNECTIONS. SPIRITUALITY IS

RECOGNIZING A POWER GREATER THAN OURSELVES WHICH IS GROUNDED IN LOVE AND COMPASSION. IT IS A POWER THAT GIVES US PERSPECTIVE, MEANING, AND A PURPOSE TO OUR LIVES. IT IS A DESIRE TO CONNECT WITH MORE THAN OURSELVES, TO CONNECT WITH EVERYTHING.

SO, WHY IS SPIRITUALITY IMPORTANT IN RECOVERY FROM ADDICTION?

SPIRITUALITY IS IMPORTANT IN ADDICTION RECOVERY BECAUSE ADDICTION TAKES AWAY OUR ABILITY TO BE SPIRITUAL. IT DISCONNECTS US FROM OUR SPIRITUALITY AND FROM POWERS, PEOPLE AND THINGS OUTSIDE OURSELVES. TO FULLY RECOVER FROM OUR ADDICTION WE MUST RECONNECT TO OUR SPIRITUALITY, OUR SEARCH FOR PURPOSE IN OUR LIFE AND CONNECTIONS BEYOND OURSELVES.

HOW DOES ADDICTION TAKE AWAY OUR SPIRITUALITY?

FIRST, ALCOHOLISM OR DRUG ADDICTION TAKES AWAY OUR ABILITY TO CHOOSE BECAUSE EVERYTHING BECOMES CENTERED ON USING. OUR ENTIRE FOCUS IS ON THE DRUG OF ADDICTION...HOW TO GET IT, WHEN TO GET IT, WHO TO GET IT FROM, WHERE TO GET IT, WHEN TO USE IT, ACTUALLY USING IT, AND RECOVERING FROM USING IT. THE SOLE FOCUS IN LIFE REVOLVES AROUND THE ADDICTION. WE TEND TO ONLY VALUE PEOPLE AND THINGS BASED ON OUR ADDICTION. AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF SPIRITUALITY IS CHOOSING FOR OURSELVES: DECIDING ON OUR BELIEFS, EXPLORING OUR PURPOSE AND MEANING AND HONESTLY CONNECTING WITH PEOPLE AND POWERS BEYOND OURSELVES. ADDICTION KEEPS US FROM CHOOSING ANYTHING BUT THE OBJECT(S) OF OUR ADDICTION.

SECOND, ADDICTION TAKES AWAY OUR ABILITY TO GROW AND CHANGE. ALTHOUGH THE LIFE OF AN ADDICT CAN SEEM RANDOM, CHAOTIC AND UNCERTAIN, IT IS ACTUALLY VERY PREDICTABLE AND EXTREMELY ROUTINE. BECAUSE THE ADDICT FOCUSES EXCLUSIVELY ON THEIR ADDICTION, THEIR LIFE CEASES TO HAVE ANY GROWTH OR CHANGE: IT IS SOLELY ABOUT GETTING THE DRUG, USING THE DRUG AND RECOVERING FROM THE DRUG, REPEATED OVER AND OVER. LIFE BECOME ROBOTIC, THE ADDICT IS NO LONGER THEMSELVES. NOT BEING ABLE TO BE OUR TRUE SELVES' STOPS US FROM GROWING. SPIRITUALITY IS ABOUT GROWING, CHANGING AND EVOLVING.

THIRD, ADDICTION TAKES AWAY OUR ABILITY TO HAVE ANY REAL RELATIONSHIPS

BECAUSE OUR SOLE FOCUS AND CONNECTION IS WIRED TO BE EXCLUSIVELY WITH THE ADDICTION. ADDICTION CAUSES US TO BE DISHONEST, WE SAY AND DO THINGS BASED ON THE DRUG. BECAUSE WE ARE NO LONGER OURSELVES, WE CANNOT FORM HONEST RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS (OR OURSELVES). WE CANNOT CONNECT TO ANYTHING BEYOND OURSELVES AND OUR DRUG. OUR WORLD SOON SHRINKS TO BECOME JUST US AND OUR ADDICTION, EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE ELSE JUST BECOMES A MEANS TO USING. ADDICTION EVENTUALLY RESULTS IN A LOSS OF ALL REAL RELATIONSHIPS AND CONNECTIONS. AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF SPIRITUALITY IS CONNECTING TO MORE THAN OURSELVES, ULTIMATELY WITH EVERYTHING.

FINALLY, ADDICTION TAKES AWAY OUR ABILITY TO EXPERIENCE SURPRISE, WONDER AND AWE. IF THERE IS ONE EXPERIENCE THAT CAN IMMEDIATELY LET US KNOW WE ARE CONNECTING WITH OUR SPIRITUALITY, IT IS EXPERIENCING AWE AND WONDER. MANY EXPECT WONDER AND AWE TO COME ONLY IN THE FORM OF EXTRAORDINARY EVENTS WITH LOUD FANFARE. BUT ACTUALLY WONDER AND AWE COME MAINLY DURING ORDINARY EVENTS AND THINGS. THEY COME WHEN WE TAKE THE TIME TO RECOGNIZE THE INCREDIBLE BEAUTY AND WONDER IN EVERYDAY OBJECTS AND HAPPENINGS. THE BEAUTY AND COMPLEXITY OF A SUNFLOWER, THE WONDERFUL FRAGRANCE OF A ROSE, SEEING THE NIGHT SKY FILLED WITH STARS, AND WATCHING THE SUN SLOWLY SET ARE OFTEN SOURCES OF WONDER. ANY MOMENT CAN BE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR AWE AND WONDER: A MOMENT TO FEEL CONNECTED TO MORE THAN OURSELVES, TO FEEL THAT THERE IS A POWER OR POWERS BEYOND OURSELVES, TO APPRECIATE THINGS AND PEOPLE FOR THEIR OWN BEAUTY. IF WE VIEW SPIRITUALITY FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE WE CAN SEE HOW RECOVERY AND SOBRIETY GIVES US OUR SPIRITUALITY BACK. SPIRITUALITY IS INDIVIDUALLY DEFINED, IT IS HOWEVER ONE CHOOSES TO ASSIGN MEANING, VALUE, AND PURPOSE TO THEIR LIFE. THEREFORE, SOMEONE WHO WALKS INTO A 12-STEP ROOM DOES NOT HAVE TO BE DETERRED BY THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE PROGRAM BECAUSE THEY CAN CHOOSE ANYTHING GREATER THAN THEMSELVES AS THEIR HIGHER POWER, SUCH AS THEIR OWN SOBRIETY.

PRACTICING SPIRITUALITY

BEING SPIRITUAL IS A PRACTICE THAT RESTORES ALL OF THE THINGS ADDICTION TAKES AWAY FROM US. ADDICTION IS A PREDICTABLE DISEASE WITH A PREDICTABLE OUTCOME. PRACTICING SPIRITUALITY INVOLVES GETTING COMFORTABLE WITH THE UNCERTAIN. IT CAN BE PRACTICED AND STRENGTHENED BY TAKING THE TIME TO CELEBRATE WHAT WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR, WHAT WE TRUST IN, WHAT INSPIRES US, AND HOW WE EXERCISE FAITH. BEING SPIRITUAL REQUIRES US TO BE MINDFUL OF THE ORDINARY MOMENTS THAT MAKE A SIMPLE LIFE EXTRAORDINARY AND TO BE VULNERABLE TO CHANGE, TO RISK HAVING HONEST RELATIONSHIPS AND TO GROW. IT'S THESE ORDINARY MOMENTS AND BRAVE BOUTS OF VULNERABILITY THAT ALLOW US TO CONNECT WITH OTHERS WITH LOVE AND COMPASSION.

REFERENCE: [HTTP://WWW.ALTERNATIVESINTREATMENT.COM/BLOG-PAGE-POSTS/SPIRITUALITY-ADDICTION-RECOVERY](http://www.alternativesintreatment.com/blog-page-posts/spirituality-addiction-recovery)

FOLLOWING DIRECTIONS "RECOGNIZING WE CREATE OUR OWN PROBLEMS"

THE ADDICT ALWAYS HAS AN REASON FOR THE PROBLEM THEY FACE IN THEIR LIVES. SOMETIMES IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO LOOK AT ROOT CAUSE BUT TO UNDERSTAND OUR PERCEPTION IS THE PROBLEM. IT IS IMPORTANT TO MOVE FORWARD IN RECOVERY AND LIFE AND NOT CONTINUE RUN INTO CONFLICTS.

THIS SECTION SHARES 2 READINGS THAT WILL HELP GIVE A PERSPECTIVE ON HOW WE, OUR PERCEPTION AND ENTITLEMENT CAUSES MANY OF OUR PROBLEMS.

UNDERSTANDING THE INSANITY OF ALCOHOLISM: HOW THE ALCOHOLIC THINKS

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THE INSANITY OF ALCOHOLISM

SADLY, WELL INTENTIONED FOLKS TRY TO PROTECT THE ALCOHOLIC FROM HIM/HERSELF (ENABLING) OR TRY TO PREDICT WHAT THEY WILL DO NEXT (NO CRYSTAL BALL AVAILABLE). THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF WISE SAYINGS AMONGST ALCOHOLICS IN RECOVERY. SOME ARE MEANT TO MAKE YOU THINK AND SOME ARE MEANT TO BE TAKEN VERY LITERALLY. ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS REFERS TO, "THE INSANITY OF OUR DISEASE." THIS IS A VERY LITERAL STATEMENT. I CAN TELL YOU A BIT ABOUT UNDERSTANDING THE ACTIVE ALCOHOLIC BUT I CANNOT MAKE IT MAKE SENSE TO YOU BECAUSE UNDERSTANDING THE ACTIVE ALCOHOLIC REQUIRES STRIPPING AWAY A LOT OF RATIONAL THOUGHT, THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND WILLINGNESS TO LEARN FROM MISTAKES, THE ABILITY TO RECOGNIZE OBVIOUS PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR, AND QUITE OFTEN, THE APPLICATION OF COMMON SENSE. THERE ARE AT LEAST A HUNDRED FORMS OF ALCOHOLISM. WHAT I AM DESCRIBING HERE IS THE PERSON WHO IS STILL DRINKING, IS HIGH FUNCTIONING, AND HAS NOT YET LOST THE THINGS THEY HOLD DEAR. THE DISEASE OF ADDICTION

DICTATES THAT THEY WILL LOSE THESE THINGS IN TIME AND THE RULE OF THREES DICTATES A GRIM LONG-TERM PROGNOSIS (JAIL, INSTITUTION, AND/OR DEATH).

ALCOHOLICS THINK, ACT, BELIEVE, AND FEEL BASED ON DISTORTED PERCEPTIONS OR THEMSELVES AND THE WORLD AROUND THEM. THEY LIVE AT THE EXTREMES OF ALL OR NOTHING. THERE IS NO MODERATION, NO MIDDLE GROUND, NO COMPROMISE, AND NO GRAY AREA IN THEIR WORLDVIEW. TO VARYING DEGREES, ALCOHOLICS LIVE IN DENIAL OF THEIR DESTRUCTIVENESS (SELF AND OTHERS) AND THIS FURTHER DISTORTS WHAT THEY ARE ABLE TO MAKE SENSE OF.

PROBABLY ALCOHOLICS ARE THE VERY BEST LIARS BECAUSE THEY ARE ABLE TO USE RATIONALIZATION AND JUSTIFICATION TO CONVINCED THEMSELVES THAT A LIE IS TRUTH. THIS HAPPENS SUBCONSCIOUSLY. THEY ARE NOT AWARE THAT THEY ARE, IF YOU'LL PARDON THE TERM – MIND SCREWING THEMSELVES. ALCOHOLICS ADOPT A LANGUAGE THAT FACILITATES LYING IN A WAY THAT SOUNDS VERY WELL INTENTIONED. THEIR FAVORITE WORD IS, “PROBABLY.” THIS WORD IMPLIES INTENTION WHERE IN FACT NONE EXISTS. AN ALCOHOLIC WHO TELLS YOU THEY WILL PROBABLY DO SOMETHING IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY TO DO IT. USING WORDS LIKE THESE PROVIDES THEM A LOOP HOLE – AN ESCAPE HATCH IN WHICH NO ABSOLUTES ARE GIVEN AND NO PROMISES MADE. THE ALCOHOLIC RELIES ON WORDS AND PHRASES LIKE: POSSIBLY, MAYBE, WOULD, COULD, SHOULD, I'D LIKE TO, I WANT TO, I NEED TO. THESE WORDS MEAN NOTHING. THEY SOUND GOOD BUT ALMOST ALWAYS LEAD TO DISAPPOINTMENT. PROGRESSIVELY, ALCOHOLISM BLURS EVERY LINE AND IMPACTS EVERY INTERACTION, EVERY RELATIONSHIP, EVERY PART OF THE ALCOHOLIC'S WORLD.

FIREHOUSE MANAGEMENT PUTTING BLINDERS ON A HORSE LEAVES IT WITH NO PERIPHERAL VISION – SUCH IS THE WORLDVIEW OF THE ALCOHOLIC. THEY MAY ATTEND TO MANY THINGS, BUT IN ORDER TO DO SO THEY MUST TURN THEIR ATTENTION AWAY FROM ONE THING AND TOWARD ANOTHER. MULTITASKING FOR THE ALCOHOLIC MEANS MAKING MANY MESSSES AT ONCE. THERE IS NO BALANCE FOR THE ACTIVE ALCOHOLIC. AS ONE AREA OF THEIR LIFE DECLINES THEY WILL OFTEN FOCUS THEIR ATTENTION ON IT AND TAKE IT TO AN EXTREME. AS THIS HAPPENS, ANOTHER PART OF THEIR LIFE DECLINES AND GRADUALLY THEIR LIFE BECOMES DICTATED BY “FIREHOUSE MANAGEMENT” – EVERY COURSE OF ACTION BECOMES BASED ON THE MOST PRESSING PROBLEM. THIS IS AN INEVITABLY DOWNWARD SPIRAL, THOUGH SOME ALCOHOLICS MANAGE TO MAINTAIN IT FOR A VERY LONG TIME.

EXTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL

AS ALCOHOLICS TEND TO DRINK PROGRESSIVELY MORE THEY WILL GENERALLY CONCEAL THE FREQUENCY AND AMOUNT THEY DRINK. THEY WILL TELL YOU THEY ONLY HAD THREE GLASSES OF WINE AND THIS IS TRUE. WHAT THEY HAVE NOT TOLD YOU IS THAT EACH GLASS WAS A 16 OUNCE TUMBLER. IT IS NOT ONLY THE DRINKING THAT GETS HIDDEN; IT IS ALSO THE NEGATIVE AFFECTS ALCOHOL PRODUCES IN THEIR LIVES. ALCOHOLICS DEVELOP WHAT COUNSELORS CALL "AN EXTERNAL LOCUS OF CONTROL." PROGRESSIVELY, EVERYTHING IS SOMEONE ELSE'S FAULT. IF THEIR JOB IS GOING POORLY IT'S BECAUSE THEIR BOSS HATES THEM. IF THEIR MARRIAGE SUFFERS THEN THEIR SPOUSE IS UNREASONABLE. IF THEY FAIL AS PARENTS THEY WILL SEE THEIR CHILDREN AS UNGRATEFUL. EVERYTHING AND EVERYONE BECOMES A REASON TO DRINK. THE SPIRALING ALCOHOLIC WILL OFTEN SAY THAT THEY DON'T EVEN WANT TO DRINK BUT THAT CIRCUMSTANCES LIKE THEIR HORRIBLE JOB/SPOUSE/KIDS "FORCE" THEM TO.

SELF-PITY AND THE SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT

ALCOHOLICS OFTEN HAVE A BIZARRE SENSE OF ENTITLEMENT. THEY REASON THAT HAVING SUCH A DIFFICULT/STRESSFUL/DEMANDING LIFE ENTITLES THEM TO ACT IN WAYS THAT ARE IMMATURE, IRRESPONSIBLE, AND SELFISH. TO OBSERVE THEIR BEHAVIOR IS TO CONCLUDE A BELIEF THAT THE WORLD MUST OWE THEM SOMETHING. THE ACTIVE ALCOHOLIC WALLOWS IN SELF-PITY AND CONCLUDES THAT THEY ARE A VICTIM OF LIFE. AS THEY DEMAND MORE FROM THE WORLD THEY EXPECT LESS AND LESS FROM THEMSELVES.

APPEARANCE OVER SUBSTANCE

THE QUICKEST ROUTE TO SELF DESTRUCTION FOR ALCOHOLICS ARE THE WORDS, "SCREW IT." THIS IS A DECLARATION THAT EVERYTHING IS ALREADY SCREWED SO THEY MIGHT AS WELL DRINK. WHEN PEOPLE DECIDE TO STOP DRINKING WE ENCOURAGE THEM TO NOTICE THAT "IT" IS ACTUALLY, "ME." THIS IS EVIDENT IN, "IT'S NOT WORTH IT." ON SOME LEVEL THE ALCOHOLIC ALWAYS KNOWS THE TRUTH AND THEY ARE USUALLY WORKING HARD NOT TO KNOW IT. THEY PRETEND AND DEMAND THAT THOSE CLOSE TO THEM BUY INTO THE FANTASY THAT ALL IS WELL. LIFE BECOMES PROGRESSIVELY LESS ABOUT ANYTHING SUBSTANTIVE AND PROGRESSIVELY MORE ABOUT MAINTAINING APPEARANCES. THIS IS WELL

EXPLAINED IN PINK'S SONG, "FAMILY PORTRAIT." "IN OUR FAMILY PORTRAIT WE LOOK PRETTY HAPPY. WE LOOK PRETTY NORMAL..."

MASTER MANIPULATORS

ALCOHOLICS ARE MASTER MANIPULATORS. THEY MAY NOT HAVE BEEN CON ARTISTS BEFORE THEY STARTED DRINKING BUT THEY COME TO HAVE REMARKABLE SKILLS. THEY ARE THE FOLKS WHO CAN SELL ICE TO ESKIMOS. THEY WILL PICK A FIGHT WITH YOU BECAUSE THEY WANT TO LEAVE AND THEY WILL HAVE YOU BELIEVING IT'S YOUR FAULT. THEY SHOW LITTLE OR NO ACCOUNTABILITY. THEY MAY HAVE HAD INTEGRITY BEFORE THEIR ADDICTION KICKED IN BUT IT WILL BE CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT FROM THEIR LIVES AS THEY SPIRAL. THERE IS OFTEN ONE EXCEPTION TO THIS RULE FOR EACH ALCOHOLIC – ONE THING THEY DO ESPECIALLY WELL AND IT WILL MOST GENERALLY BE THEIR SOLE SOURCE OF SELF ESTEEM. WE HAVE KNOWN A LARGE NUMBER OF ALCOHOLICS WHO HAVE INCREDIBLE WORK ETHICS BECAUSE BEING A GOOD WORKER IS THE ONE THING THEY KNOW THEY'RE GOOD AT...WELL, THEY WILL SAY THAT AND DRINKING.

ALCOHOLISM - A UNIQUE DISEASE

THE DISEASE OF ALCOHOLISM GRADUALLY AND INSIDIOUSLY STRIPS EVERYTHING AWAY FROM A PERSON. WE HAVE BEEN ASKED COUNTLESS TIMES WHETHER ALCOHOLISM IS TRULY A DISEASE OR A CHOICE. IN TRUTH IT IS BOTH. ALCOHOLISM IS UNIQUE AS A DISEASE IN THAT IT NOT ONLY HIDES FROM VIEW – IT ALSO LIES TO ITS CARRIER ABOUT ITS PRESENCE. THE PERSON WHO IS ACTIVE IN ADDICTION HAS A UNIQUE CHOICE RELATIVE TO ALL OTHER DISEASES. THE ALCOHOLIC CAN GO INTO REMISSION AT ANY TIME AND MANY DO. WE SEE THAT ALCOHOLICS WILL ABSTAIN FROM DRINKING FOR A TIME TO PROVE TO THEMSELVES OR OTHERS THAT THEY ARE NOT ADDICTED, ONLY TO RETURN LATER WITH A VENGEANCE.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS (THE ONLY REAL RECOVERY FROM ALCOHOLISM INVOLVES FAR MORE THAN SOBRIETY. RECOVERY FROM ALCOHOLISM INVOLVES CHANGING EVERY PART OF A PERSON'S LIFE. THE PERSON WHO ONLY STOPS DRINKING IS WHAT WE REFER TO AS A "DRY DRUNK" MEANING THAT THEY ARE EVERY BIT AS UNHEALTHY THEY HAVE SIMPLY STOPPED DRINKING – A SMALL PERCENTAGE OF FOLKS MANAGE THIS LONG TERM. IN MY PROFESSIONAL OPINION, REAL RECOVERY IS ONLY MADE POSSIBLE BY THE PROGRAM OF

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS. THERE ARE COUNTLESS POSITIVE THINGS THAT CAN BE ADDED TO THE PROGRAM OF AA AND THEIR IMPORTANCE CANNOT BE OVERSTATED. FOLKS IN RECOVERY NEED THE SUPPORT OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS. SADLY, I MEET TOO MANY FRIENDS AND FAMILY WHO ARE UNWITTINGLY ENABLING (PROTECTING AN ALCOHOLIC FROM THE NATURAL CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR BEHAVIOR) THE ALCOHOLIC AND THIS ALWAYS RESULTS IN A PERSON STAYING STUCK IN ADDICTION.

SUGGESTED READING:

THE MISLEADING MIND: HOW WE CREATE OUR OWN PROBLEMS AND HOW BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY CAN HELP US SOLVE THEM BY KARUNA CAYTON

BUDDHISM ASSERTS THAT WE EACH HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO FREE OURSELVES FROM THE PRISON OF OUR PROBLEMS. AS PRACTICED FOR MORE THAN TWENTY-SIX HUNDRED YEARS, THE PROCESS INVOLVES WORKING WITH, RATHER THAN AGAINST, OUR DEPRESSION, ANXIETY, AND COMPULSIONS. WE DO THIS BY RECOGNIZING THE HABITUAL WAYS OUR MINDS PERCEIVE AND REACT — THE WAY THEY MISLEAD. THE LIVELY EXERCISES AND INSPIRING REAL-WORLD EXAMPLES CAYTON PROVIDES CAN HELP YOU TRANSFORM INTRACTABLE PROBLEMS AND NEUTRALIZE SUFFERING BY CULTIVATING A RADICALLY LIBERATING SELF-UNDERSTANDING.

TRAINING THE UNTRAINED MIND

MIND TRAINING IS ESSENTIAL TO BUDDHISM. IN ESSENCE, IT IS THE PATH THE BUDDHA ADVOCATED IN HIS FOURTH NOBLE TRUTH. AND YET, AS I'VE SAID, MIND TRAINING IS NOT NECESSARILY A RELIGIOUS OR SPIRITUAL PRACTICE. IT DOES NOT REST ON ACCEPTING CERTAIN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OR ADOPTING PARTICULAR TERMINOLOGY. IT CAN BE USED SUCCESSFULLY AS AN ENTIRELY SECULAR PRACTICE, OR IT CAN BE INCORPORATED AS A DELIBERATE SPIRITUAL PRACTICE WITHIN ANY RELIGION, WHETHER YOU ARE CHRISTIAN, MUSLIM, HINDU, JEWISH, OR SOMETHING ELSE. YOU CAN BE A BUSINESSPERSON, SCHOOLTEACHER, OR A STAY-AT-HOME MOM OR DAD AND STILL PRACTICE MIND TRAINING. NATURALLY, THE IDEAS BEHIND MIND TRAINING, OR THE EXPLANATIONS OF MIND THE BUDDHA PRESENTED IN HIS FIRST THREE NOBLE TRUTHS, ARE EQUALLY ESSENTIAL NO MATTER OUR PLACE IN LIFE. TRAINING AND THEORY GO HAND IN HAND. SO, AS YOU READ THE REST OF THE BOOK, KEEP PRACTICING THE MIND TRAINING

METHODS THIS CHAPTER DESCRIBES, AND AS YOU PRACTICE, KEEP READING TO STEADILY IMPROVE YOUR UNDERSTANDING AND SUCCESS.

AS WE BEGIN, I WANT TO SHARE A WONDERFUL AND AMUSING HISTORICAL ANECDOTE THAT CAPTURES WHAT THE PRACTICE IS ALL ABOUT AND HOW TRANSFORMATIVE IT CAN BE. FROM THE SEVENTH CENTURY, BUDDHISM FLOURISHED IN TIBET, BUT IN THE NINTH CENTURY, IT DECLINED AS A RESULT OF A RUTHLESS TIBETAN KING WHO AIMED TO DESTROY BUDDHISM IN HIS COUNTRY. THEN, IN THE EARLY ELEVENTH CENTURY, TIBETAN BUDDHISM BEGAN A REGENERATION. THIS WAS MARKED BY INCREASED TRAVEL BETWEEN TIBET AND INDIA, AS KEY TIBETANS TRAVELED TO INDIA FOR INSTRUCTION, AND MANY INDIAN MASTERS WERE INVITED TO TIBET. FOREMOST OF THESE INDIAN MASTERS WAS LAMA ATISHA, A WELL-KNOWN SCHOLAR AND PRACTITIONER WHO WAS ONE OF INDIA'S PRINCIPAL TEACHERS OF MIND TRAINING. LAMA ATISHA WAS INVITED PERSONALLY BY THE CURRENT KING TO SPEARHEAD THE REESTABLISHING OF TIBET'S RICH BUDDHIST CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS TRADITION. INITIALLY, ATISHA COMMITTED TO STAYING IN TIBET FOR THREE YEARS, BUT HE WAS SO WELL-LOVED BY TIBETANS THAT HE REMAINED FOR A TOTAL OF TWELVE YEARS, FINALLY PASSING AWAY IN TIBET.

ONE REASON FOR ATISHA'S LONG INITIAL COMMITMENT WAS BECAUSE TRAVEL FROM INDIA TO TIBET WAS NOT EASY. YOU HAD TO NEGOTIATE HOT, DISEASE-INFESTED JUNGLES, EIGHTEEN-THOUSAND-FOOT HIMALAYAN PASSES, AND INHOSPITABLE TRIBES AND BANDITS. THE TRIP TOOK MONTHS TO PREPARE AND MONTHS TO COMPLETE, INVOLVING DANGERS AND HARDSHIPS WE CAN BARELY IMAGINE TODAY. AMONG THE PARTY TRAVELING TO TIBET WAS ATISHA'S PERSONAL COOK, WHO WAS KNOWN AS A VERY DIFFICULT PERSON TO GET ALONG WITH. AND INDEED, THE TIBETANS FOUND HIM RUDE, CRASS, AND UNFRIENDLY. BUT EVEN WORSE, THE COOK'S TERRIBLE BEHAVIOR DID NOT MERELY EXTEND TO THE TIBETANS BUT EVEN TO ATISHA HIMSELF. THE TIBETANS JUST COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY LAMA ATISHA WOULD KEEP SUCH AN UNSAVORY PERSON AS HIS COOK. WASN'T TRAVEL HARD ENOUGH? HOWEVER, ATISHA NEVER SHOWED ANY SENSE OF INTOLERANCE, ANGER, OR EMBARRASSMENT OVER HIS COOK'S BEHAVIOR. THEN AS NOW, TRAVELING CAN SOMETIMES BRING OUT THE WORST IN PEOPLE, AND THE TIBETANS WERE IMPRESSED THAT ATISHA SHOWED ONLY AFFECTION FOR THE COOK. FINALLY, THOUGH, THEY COULDN'T STAND IT, AND THEY ASKED ATISHA WHY HE DID NOT FIRE THE MAN AND SEND HIM BACK TO INDIA. LAMA ATISHA REPLIED, "HE IS NOT JUST MY COOK; HE IS MY TEACHER OF

PATIENCE.”

WITH THAT ONE SIMPLE STATEMENT, LAMA ATISHA DEMONSTRATED TO THE TIBETANS AND TO US THE ENTIRE CONCEPT OF TRANSFORMING ONE’S INNER EXPERIENCE THROUGH MIND TRAINING.

EMBRACING OUR PROBLEMS

IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO INTERPRET LAMA ATISHA’S REMARK AS A GLIB ATTEMPT AT HUMOR. HE WAS NOT MAKING THE BEST OF A BAD SITUATION. ATISHA WAS SPEAKING THE TRUTH: HE REGARDED THE COOK AS HIS TEACHER, AND HE DELIBERATELY CHOSE TO KEEP THIS DIFFICULT MAN CLOSE TO HIM. AMAZINGLY, LAMA ATISHA CHOSE TO MAKE HIS LIFE HARDER THAN IT NEEDED TO BE.

THIS EXEMPLIFIES THE FIRST ASPECT OF MIND TRAINING. RATHER THAN BEING ANOTHER WAY TO AVOID OR ESCAPE PROBLEMS, MIND TRAINING FREELY EMBRACES PROBLEMS. NOT ONLY THAT, AS LAMA ATISHA INDICATED, WE MUST ACTIVELY SEEK AND ENGAGE OUR PROBLEMS, RATHER THAN WAIT FOR THEM. ONLY IN THIS WAY CAN WE LEARN HOW TO AVOID SUFFERING. IN HIS CASE, LAMA ATISHA’S “PROBLEM” WASN’T THE COOK; IT WAS HIS OWN FEELINGS OF ANGER OR FRUSTRATION STIMULATED BY THE COOK’S BEHAVIOR. IN HIS RESPONSE TO HIS TIBETAN TRAVELING COMPANIONS, ATISHA DID NOT DENY THAT THE COOK WAS INSUFFERABLE. INSTEAD, HE WAS INDICATING THE PRIMARY THRUST OF MIND TRAINING: IT IS A METHOD OF HANDLING ANY EMOTION THAT DISTURBS US SO THAT WE RETAIN OUR BALANCE AND SENSE OF INNER PEACE.

THERE ARE NUMEROUS TECHNIQUES TO HELP US DO THIS, BUT THEY REVOLVE AROUND A FEW BASIC PRINCIPLES: TRAINING OUR MIND NOT TO BE “ATTACHED TO” OR “INFLUENCED BY” OUR EMOTIONS, DESIRES, OR PERCEPTIONS, AND LEARNING TO TRANSFORM NEGATIVE EMOTIONS INTO THEIR POSITIVE COUNTERPARTS. IN LAMA ATISHA’S CASE, THROUGH HIS COOK, HE WAS PRACTICING REPLACING ANGER WITH PATIENCE.

AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION WITH MIND TRAINING IS THAT IT IS NOT “REFRAMING” OR JUST A FAITH-BASED FEEL-GOOD TRICK. THERAPISTS, FOR EXAMPLE, USE REFRAMING AS A COMMON TECHNIQUE IN THERAPEUTIC PRACTICE, AND SOMETIMES IT CAN BE QUITE HELPFUL FOR THE CLIENT. LOOKING ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, SEEING THE GLASS AS HALF FULL, IDENTIFYING THE BENEFICIAL

LESSONS IN AN OTHERWISE HURTFUL RELATIONSHIP: THIS CAN BE A GOOD, POSITIVE APPROACH. BUT THIS IS NOT MIND TRAINING, AND “REFRAMING” HAS LIMITED LONG-TERM USEFULNESS.

OFTENTIMES, REFRAMING CAN FEEL CONTRIVED. SOMEONE, SOME OTHER, HIGHER AUTHORITY OR CODE OF BELIEF, TELLS US HOW TO FEEL, AND SO WE TRY, EVEN IF WE LACK REAL CONVICTION.

REFRAMING CAN SOMETIMES BE ILLOGICAL; IT DENIES THE TRUTH OF ONE’S EXPERIENCE. WE MAY BE ASKED TO IMAGINE THAT A PERSON WHO DELIBERATELY HURT US DIDN’T REALLY MEAN TO HURT US. IN MIND TRAINING, THE INTENTIONS AND MOTIVATIONS OF OTHERS, ALTHOUGH RELEVANT, ARE NOT THE PRIMARY FOCUS. WE ARE CONCERNED WITH OUR POINT OF VIEW AND ITS ACCOMPANYING RESPONSE.

SIMILARLY, WHEN A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT OCCURS, WE ARE SOMETIMES ASKED TO SEE IT AS “GOD’S WILL” OR “PUNISHMENT FOR OUR SINS” OR THE WORKINGS OF “KARMA.” NOT ONLY DOES THIS FAIL TO EXPLAIN EVENTS, BUT IT OVERLOOKS THE REAL PROBLEM: HOW WE SHOULD DEAL WITH OUR FEELINGS OF GRIEF, RAGE, AND DISBELIEF. I CONSIDER IT “REFRAMING” WHEN WE ARE ASKED TO TAKE THE GOODNESS OF THE UNIVERSE ON FAITH. DON’T GET ME WRONG: FAITH IS IMPORTANT. INDEED, THE REASONS FOR EVENTS OFTEN ESCAPE HUMAN UNDERSTANDING, AND THE WORLD IS UNPREDICTABLE. ULTIMATELY, THESE DIFFICULT, EXISTENTIAL TRUTHS ARE WHAT MIND TRAINING HELPS US TO COPE WITH.

ULTIMATELY, IN BUDDHISM, MIND TRAINING IS A SPIRITUAL PRACTICE IN THE SENSE THAT ITS GOAL IS TO AWAKEN OUR INNER POTENTIAL.

HOWEVER, THAT IS NOT WHERE THE BEGINNER STARTS. INSTEAD, WE START BY ACCEPTING THE COUNTERINTUITIVE NOTION THAT WE MUST USE OUR PROBLEMS TO SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS. PROBLEMS PROVIDE THE RESISTANCE THAT HELPS US EXERCISE OUR MINDS.

WHEN PROBLEMS APPEAR, INSTEAD OF AVOIDING THEM, WE CONFRONT, UNDERSTAND, AND ELIMINATE ALL OF THOSE UNHELPFUL EMOTIONS AND THOUGHTS THAT ARISE BECAUSE OF THEM AND THAT HAVE RUN OUR LIFE SINCE THE DAY WE WERE BORN. IN TRUTH, WE ARE MERELY “RETRAINING” THE MIND. JUST THE IDEA THAT WE CAN CHANGE AND TRANSFORM OUR EVERYDAY

EXISTENCE IS QUITE ENCOURAGING BY ITSELF. IT IS IN THIS WAY THAT, IN TRAINING OUR MIND, WE BECOME OUR OWN THERAPIST AND ARE, BY MY DEFINITION, SPIRITUAL PRACTITIONERS. WHEN WE WORK WITH TRANSFORMING OUR MIND AT MORE ADVANCED LEVELS, WE ACTUALLY LOOK FORWARD TO CONFRONTING OUR PROBLEMS, JUST LIKE LAMA ATISHA. WHY? BECAUSE WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE PROBLEMATIC CONDITIONS OF THE WORLD WILL NEVER GO AWAY. IT IS SIMPLY THE NATURE OF LIFE. ALL WE CAN DO IS GET BETTER AT HANDLING THEM. WE UNDERSTAND THAT EVEN IF WE ARE CALM AND HAPPY TODAY, SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN TOMORROW TO CHALLENGE US AND THROW US OFF. PERHAPS IT WILL BE AN UNEXPECTED BILL, OR A MEDICAL PROBLEM, OR A PAINFUL BURIED MEMORY LYING UNDER THE SURFACE OF OUR CONSCIOUS MIND THAT ARISES AT THE DROP OF A HAT...LIKE A REAR-END COLLISION THAT COMES OUT OF NOWHERE WHILE WE SIT AT A RED LIGHT. THE RATHER UNCONVENTIONAL, "IN YOUR FACE" BUDDHIST APPROACH OF MIND TRAINING IS TO COURAGEOUSLY CONFRONT ALL OF OUR DIRTY LITTLE SECRETS AND DIFFICULT EMOTIONS WHENEVER THEY COME UP UNTIL WE'VE CHANGED THE NATURE OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM. THEN, INSTEAD OF BEING BOSSED AROUND BY OUR WORST TENDENCIES AND DISTURBED EMOTIONS, WE BECOME THE BOSS OF OUR OWN MIND.

EXCERPTED FROM THE BOOK THE MISLEADING MIND: HOW WE CREATE OUR OWN PROBLEMS AND HOW BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY CAN HELP US SOLVE THEM @2012 BY KARUNA CAYTON. PRINTED WITH PERMISSION FROM NEW WORLD LIBRARY.
ACTIVITIES TO CHANGE OUR PERCEPTION

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[CHANGE THE WAY YOU LOOK AT THINGS AND THE THINGS YOU LOOK AT CHANGE](#)

WHAT TO DO AFTER A RELAPSE?

DEALING WITH RELAPSE

WHAT TO DO AFTER A RELAPSE:

10 STEPS TO GET YOU BACK ON TRACK

WHILE PREVENTING RELAPSE IS THE BEST WAY TO ENSURE A SMOOTH PATH TO RECOVERY, SOMETIMES IT ISN'T POSSIBLE. IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS SUFFERED A RELAPSE, THERE ARE SOME CRITICAL STEPS TO TAKE AFTER RELAPSE OCCURS. THESE TIPS WILL HELP YOU GET CONTROL OF YOUR ADDICTION AGAIN INSTEAD OF THE OTHER WAY AROUND.

1. TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

ULTIMATELY, IT IS UP TO EACH INDIVIDUAL TO ADJUST THEIR LIFESTYLE AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR ACTIONS. WHILE THIS IS A RECOVERY STEP THAT REQUIRES DAILY PRACTICE, IT'S IMPORTANT TO APPLY THIS THINKING IMMEDIATELY AFTER A RELAPSE. IN THE EVENT OF A RELAPSE, YOU NEED TO ACCEPT THE FACT YOU MADE A MISTAKE. YOU CAN'T UNDERSTATE THE GRAVITY OF THE RELAPSE — YOU MUST ADMIT TO YOURSELF YOU ARE USING AGAIN. THIS LEVEL OF SELF-ACCOUNTABILITY WILL ALSO SUSTAIN YOUR MOTIVATION DURING THE INITIAL STAGES AFTER A RELAPSE. ONLY WHEN YOU ACCEPT THE FACT YOU NEED HELP CAN YOU GET THE HELP YOU NEED.

2. ACT IMMEDIATELY

TAKING ACTION IMMEDIATELY AFTER A RELAPSE IS VITAL TO GETTING BACK ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY. RIGHT AFTER RELAPSE, REMIND YOURSELF

WHY YOU BEGAN RECOVERY TREATMENT IN THE FIRST PLACE. THIS WILL GIVE YOU THE STRENGTH AND MOTIVATION YOU NEED TO FOCUS ON GETTING BACK INTO RECOVERY.

3. ANTICIPATE THE NEXT STEPS YOU NEED TO TAKE AND DON'T DELAY IN TAKING THEM.

ACT QUICKLY TO FOCUS ON YOUR RECOVERY AGAIN, SO YOUR ADDICTION CAN'T CONTINUE. BY WAITING TOO LONG, OLD HABITS AND THOUGHT PATTERNS WILL BEGIN TO WORK THEIR WAY BACK INTO YOUR LIFE. YOU MAY EVEN BEGIN TO FEEL AS IF IT WOULD BE EASIER TO GIVE INTO YOUR OLD HABITS AND BEHAVIORS BECAUSE STARTING RECOVERY AGAIN SEEMS TOO HARD. TAKING IMMEDIATE ACTION TO GET BACK ONTO YOUR RECOVERY PATH WILL PREVENT THESE NEGATIVE HABITS FROM TAKING HOLD AGAIN.

4. REACH OUT TO YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK HAVING A STRONG SUPPORT NETWORK IS VITAL TO ADDICTION RECOVERY.

THE LEVEL OF SUPPORT A PERSON RECEIVES IN THE MONTHS FOLLOWING THEIR INITIAL DRUG TREATMENT WILL PLAY A KEY ROLE IN PREVENTING OR CAUSING A RELAPSE TO OCCUR DURING THIS VULNERABLE TIME. NOT ONLY DO YOU NEED SUPPORT DURING AND FOLLOWING TREATMENT, YOU ALSO NEED SUPPORT WHEN A RELAPSE OCCURS. REACHING OUT RIGHT AWAY TO YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK WILL GREATLY INFLUENCE WHETHER OR NOT YOU TAKE THE STEPS TO GET BACK ON TRACK AFTER A RELAPSE. DRUG TREATMENT RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT THE LEVEL AND QUALITY OF SUPPORT AND AFTERCARE DIRECTLY DETERMINES HOW PEOPLE WHO HAVE RELAPSED WILL FAIR AFTER THE EVENT. OFTEN, THOSE WHO DO NOT RECEIVE ADEQUATE SUPPORT AFTER A RELAPSE WILL CHOOSE NOT TO CONTINUE WITH TREATMENT. ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WAYS TO PREVENT AND TREAT A RELAPSE IS THROUGH SOCIAL SUPPORT.

START RECOVERY ACTIONS ONCE YOU'RE ABLE TO REFOCUS YOUR MIND ON RECOVERY, AND YOU'VE TAKEN RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR ACTIONS, YOU SHOULD REACH OUT TO YOUR SPONSOR. SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE OPENLY

AND HONESTLY. REMEMBER TO WITHHOLD JUDGMENT OF YOURSELF AND STAY POSITIVE ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY THAT LIES AHEAD TO GET BACK ON TRACK. FIRMLY STATE TO YOURSELF AND YOUR SPONSOR THAT YOU ARE COMMITTED TO YOUR RECOVERY AND WILL MAKE IT YOUR SOLE PRIORITY. AS YOU WORK WITH YOUR SPONSOR TO BEGIN YOUR RECOVERY STEPS AGAIN, IT MAY FEEL AS THOUGH YOU ARE STARTING AT SQUARE ONE. YOU MAY BE INCLINED TO SKIP CERTAIN STEPS. REMIND YOURSELF THAT YOU ARE IN A DIFFERENT PLACE NOW THAN YOU WERE WHEN YOU BEGAN RECOVERY. THOUGH THE STEPS MAY SEEM REPETITIVE, YOU HAVE CHANGED AND CAN BENEFIT IN NEW WAYS WHEN YOU TAKE THE STEPS AGAIN.

5. GET PROFESSIONAL ADDICTION RECOVERY HELP

THE HELP OF A STRONG SUPPORT SYSTEM SUCH AS FRIENDS, FAMILY, COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND A SPONSOR IS VERY BENEFICIAL AFTER A RELAPSE. TO FULLY ADDRESS YOUR RELAPSE AND GET BACK ON YOUR PATH TO RECOVERY, HOWEVER, YOU NEED PROFESSIONAL ADDICTION TREATMENT. NOTHING CAN REPLACE THE KNOWLEDGE, CARE AND INDIVIDUAL RECOVERY PLANNING THAT A PROFESSIONAL CAN PROVIDE.

AN ADDICTION SPECIALIST CAN:

- HELP YOU DESIGN A CUSTOMIZED TREATMENT PLAN FOR YOUR SPECIFIC NEEDS
- CONTINUE TO PROVIDE MONITORING, SUPPORT AND ADJUSTMENT TO YOUR RECOVERY PLAN AS NEEDED
- GIVE YOU RELAPSE PREVENTION TOOLS THAT YOU CAN USE DAILY
- CONDUCT AND ORGANIZE FAMILY COUNSELING AND SUPPORT MEETINGS TO ENSURE STABILITY AT HOME
- ENCOURAGE EMPOWERMENT AND SELF-RELIANCE AS A HEALTHY BASE FOR YOUR NEW LIFESTYLE

- ADVISE ON AN AFTERCARE PLAN ONCE THE INITIAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM HAS ENDED
 - CONTINUE THE OPEN DISCUSSION ABOUT YOUR RECOVERY PROGRESS
 - WITH THE EXPERT HELP OF AN ADDICTION SPECIALIST, YOU CAN DEAL WITH THE RELAPSE, BEGIN THE RECOVERY PROCESS ANEW AND PREVENT FUTURE RELAPSES.
6. MAKE A NEW PLAN IT'S IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THAT RELAPSE DOESN'T MEAN YOUR DRUG OR ALCOHOL ABUSE TREATMENT PLAN HAS FAILED. IT SIMPLY MEANS YOU NEED TO REVISE YOUR PLAN. CONSIDER RELAPSE TO BE A NATURAL STAGE OF RECOVERY AND DON'T LET IT KEEP YOU DOWN. WITH HELP FROM YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK AND ADDICTION TREATMENT SPECIALIST, ANALYZE WHY YOUR RELAPSE HAS OCCURRED. ONCE YOU KNOW WHY IT OCCURRED, YOU CAN ADJUST YOUR TREATMENT PLAN TO ADDRESS THESE TRIGGERS. YOU MAY DECIDE YOU NEED TO RECOMMIT TO YOUR RECOVERY BY ENTERING TREATMENT AGAIN. WITH INTENSIVE TREATMENT, YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO FOCUS FULLY ON YOUR RECOVERY. YOU'LL BUILD YOUR FOUNDATION AGAIN, SO WHEN YOU TRANSITION BACK HOME, YOU'LL HAVE THE TOOLS YOU NEED TO FACE LIFE CHALLENGES.
7. REPAIR YOUR RELATIONSHIPS IT'S LIKELY THAT YOUR RELAPSE HAS IMPACTED YOUR LOVED ONES, INCLUDING YOUR FRIENDS, FAMILY AND SPOUSE. ONCE YOU'VE TAKEN STEPS TOWARD RECOVERY, IT'S IMPORTANT TO ADDRESS THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN DAMAGED DURING RELAPSE. EXPLAIN WHAT OCCURRED AND WHAT YOU ARE DOING TO GET BACK ON TRACK. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ALSO EXPLAIN HOW YOUR RELAPSE DOESN'T MEAN YOU'VE FAILED, AND YOU WILL BE TAKING FURTHER ACTION TO PREVENT RELAPSE FROM HAPPENING AGAIN.

TO REPAIR YOUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS, CONSIDER:

WRITING PERSONAL LETTERS TO YOUR LOVED ONES EXPLAINING HOW YOU FEEL AND APOLOGIZING FOR THE HURT YOU CAUSED SPENDING QUALITY TIME TO

RECONNECT WITH THE PEOPLE YOU LOVE INVITING YOUR LOVED ONES TO JOIN YOU IN FAMILY THERAPY IF YOU CAN DEMONSTRATE TO THOSE CLOSEST TO YOU THAT YOU ARE MAKING AN EFFORT TO INCLUDE THEM IN YOUR RECOVERY, THEN YOU WILL START TO FEEL MORE MOTIVATED TO CONTINUE. YOU WILL STRENGTHEN YOUR BONDS, WHICH CAN SUPPORT YOU ON YOUR PATH TO LIFELONG RECOVERY.

8. EXPECT STRUGGLE AND DISCOMFORT WHETHER YOU DECIDE TO ENTER INTENSIVE DRUG TREATMENT, OR YOU IMPLEMENT AN OUTPATIENT CARE PLAN, YOU NEED TO BE PREPARED FOR STRUGGLE AND DISCOMFORT. COMING BACK FROM A RELAPSE CAN BE A DIFFICULT PROCESS. IT CAN STIR UP PAINFUL EMOTIONS AND UNCOMFORTABLE PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS. AS YOUR BODY DETOXES AFTER A TRAUMATIC RELAPSE, YOU MAY BEGIN TO FEEL NEW LEVELS OF GUILT AND SHAME.

DURING THE INITIAL PHASE AFTER A RELAPSE, YOU MAY FEEL:

- LOWER SELF-ESTEEM
- SELF-DOUBT
- PERCEIVED JUDGMENT BY OTHERS
- FATIGUE AND LACK OF MOTIVATION
- AGGRESSION AND IRRITATION, SOMETIMES EVEN OUTBURSTS OF EMOTIONAL DISTRESS

ALTHOUGH RELAPSE RECOVERY CAN BE DIFFICULT, IT IS WELL WORTH THE WORK. YOU CAN TAKE BACK YOUR LIFE FROM ADDICTION AND GET TO A PLACE WHERE YOU FEEL PROUD AND FULFILLED.

9. LEARN FROM THE EXPERIENCE THOUGH RELAPSE CAN BE A TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE, IT GIVES YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN ABOUT YOURSELF, YOUR DISEASE AND WHAT'S REQUIRED TO TAKE BACK CONTROL. WITH THE HELP OF YOUR SOCIAL SUPPORT NETWORK AND ADDICTION TREATMENT SPECIALIST, YOU CAN REFLECT ON WHAT YOUR RELAPSE HAS TAUGHT YOU AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE YOUR HEALTH. A DEEP PERIOD OF REFLECTION WILL BE A SATISFYING AND LIBERATING STAGE OF YOUR RECOVERY.

10. ANTICIPATE NEW CHALLENGES

AFTER YOU'VE SPENT TIME REFLECTING ON YOUR RELAPSE, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO LOOK AHEAD AND PREDICT THE CHALLENGES YOU MAY FACE IN THE FUTURE. PREDICTING UPCOMING CHALLENGES WILL EQUIP YOU WITH A MORE IN-DEPTH PLAN FOR DEALING WITH POTENTIAL RELAPSE. THIS PRACTICE ADDS ANOTHER LEVEL TO YOUR FOCUS AND COMMITMENT TO YOUR RECOVERY. IT ALLOWS YOUR MIND TO SEE EXACTLY HOW YOU WILL HANDLE UPCOMING CHALLENGES SUCH AS:

- TRIGGERS AND DRUG/ALCOHOL ABUSE CUES
- EMOTIONAL STRESS
- SOCIAL PRESSURES
- FINANCIAL CHALLENGES
- PHYSICAL ILLNESS
- FEELINGS OF LONELINESS AND ISOLATION
- FAMILY PRESSURES

IF YOU CAN PREDICT THE POSSIBLE CHALLENGES YOU WILL FACE, YOUR MIND WILL BE BETTER EQUIPPED TO HANDLE THEM IN HEALTHY AND CONSTRUCTIVE WAYS WHEN THEY OCCUR. USE WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED FROM YOUR RELAPSE TO PLAN HOW YOU WILL FACE CHALLENGES AS THEY CONTINUE TO ARISE. THIS REPEATED AND CONSTANT PRACTICE WILL HELP CARVE NEW PATTERNS IN YOUR BEHAVIOR AND THINKING, WHICH IS WHAT ADDICTION RECOVERY IS ULTIMATELY ABOUT.

BREAKING THE RELAPSE-CYCLE WITH ADDICTION RELAPSE PREVENTION

IF YOU'VE SUFFERED A RELAPSE, IT'S IMPORTANT TO LOOK AT THIS EVENT AS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE. YOU'RE NOW BETTER EQUIPPED TO HANDLE YOUR RECOVERY AND ACHIEVE SUCCESS, BECAUSE YOU KNOW WHAT NOT TO DO AND WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR.

TO BREAK THE CYCLE AND PREVENT ANOTHER RELAPSE FROM HAPPENING, YOU SHOULD:

CHOOSE A LONG-TERM TREATMENT PROGRAM — UNDERSTANDING THAT RECOVERY IS A LONG-TERM PROCESS WILL HELP YOU MENTALLY PREPARE FOR THE JOURNEY AHEAD. BY COMMITTING TO A LONG-TERM PROGRAM, YOU'RE COMMITTED TO YOUR SUCCESS IN RECOVERY.

STRENGTHEN YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK — LIKE YOUR RECOVERY ITSELF, BUILDING AND MAINTAINING YOUR SUPPORT NETWORK REQUIRES COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION. CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON THE BENEFITS YOU RECEIVE FROM A STRONG COMMUNITY OF FRIENDS, FAMILY AND OTHERS WHO SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE. MAKE A POINT TO SPEND TIME WITH THOSE WHO SUPPORT YOU.

CUT TIES WITH NEGATIVE INFLUENCES — THOUGH IT'S EASIER SAID THAN DONE, IT'S CRUCIAL TO ONLY KEEP POSITIVE INFLUENCES IN YOUR LIFE. YOU MUST PUT YOUR RECOVERY AND HEALTH FIRST. THIS INCLUDES ELIMINATING TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS THAT DON'T SUPPORT YOUR RECOVERY.

FOCUS ON CREATING YOUR NEW LIFESTYLE — MAINTAIN FOCUS ON WHAT YOUR NEW LIFESTYLE LOOKS LIKE, WHO IT INCLUDES AND HOW YOU BEHAVE. MAKE SURE THIS INCLUDES A HEALTHY DIET, PLENTY OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, A FOUNDATION OF SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING AND PLENTY OF REST.

PRIORITIZE STRESS MANAGEMENT — AFTER A RELAPSE OCCURS, STRESS, ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION ARE COMMON FEELINGS DURING THIS TIME OF TRANSITION. IT'S IMPORTANT TO PRACTICE STRESS MANAGEMENT, SO YOU DON'T FEEL OVERWHELMED BY THE PROCESS. MEDITATION, MINDFULNESS, NATURE WALKS AND KEEPING A JOURNAL ARE ALL EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES THAT HELP YOU STAY CALM AND KEEP YOUR MIND POSITIVE.

REFERENCE:

[HTTPS://WWW.12KEYSREHAB.COM/BLOG/AFTER-RELAPSE-OCCURS](https://www.12keysrehab.com/blog/after-relapse-occurs)

END