

Getting Sober What To Expect

Beginning The Road To Recovery



www.sobertime.net

Getting Sober: What To Expect

SoberSources.Com

Introduction

When we finally make that decision to seek out help and sober up, we often feel very lost in the process. We have a deep fear of sobriety, and here are some things that you'll probably ask your self many times in the beginning:

How am I supposed to have a good time now?

What about my drinking buddies and social circle?

How will I feel if I just quit, after all those years of drinking?

Where will I find support?

How long until I start feeling better?

Is it really that hard?

Why can't I eat right, or sleep well?

Can I honestly pull this off, or am I fooling myself?

Look, we've all been there, and experienced those feelings above, and more. I know you're seeking immediate gratification and answers, but it takes time! How much time? Well, that varies from person to person, but the coolest thing of all – you don't have to do this alone, and just know that we understand what you're going through!

The early days of sobriety can either be peaceful and beautiful, or they very well may be torturous, horrendous, and tough – it's up to you, and how you want to approach it. Keeping a healthy positive attitude is paramount to your well being.

Reading this guide may contain the information you need to get started on the track of success. **Enjoy!**

This book is dedicated to those still struggling.

Withdrawal-The Early Days

So you've finally taken the challenge of conquering your demons, **which is great!** Guess what? The first bump in the road (and one that generally lasts 3 to 5 days, depending on how often and how much alcohol you used to consume), is **physical withdrawal**.

In fact, **the best and strongly recommended advice** for someone who decided to take the path of sobriety is to get in touch with their doctor, that way he/she can prescribe medication (which, would be temporary) to help get you through the early days of harsh withdrawal symptoms. This is on a case by case basis, because obviously, someone coming off of a case a day habit compared to someone who had 2 cans a day habit is likely going to have a more difficult time.

One of the problems that people face when deciding to quit is the pride factor. The person feels too embarrassed to see their doctor and decides to go "cold turkey" – which, isn't advised, especially for those who are coming down off a heavy habit. Having said that, there are many people who have gone the cold turkey route and succeeded, it all depends on the person.

Symptoms of withdrawal are, well, let's just say they're not a vacation to Disneyland. They are quite the opposite, and here is what you can expect during that early time after you give up the habit:

- 1. Shakiness**
- 2. Sleeplessness**
- 3. Loss of appetite**
- 4. Muscle cramps**
- 5. Anxiety**
- 6. Nervousness**

The symptoms above are the most common, and can usually be treated pretty easily. On the other hand, if you experience any of the following symptoms below, then it's a very good sign that you need to **get to a hospital emergency room** quick:

- 1. Heart palpitations**
- 2. Fainting**
- 3. Vomiting**
- 4. Diarrhea (for more than 3 days)**

5. Seizures

6. Delirium Tremens (hallucinations – the one where you either see or feel bugs on your body)

As already mentioned most common physical symptoms (from the first list) typically last between 3-5 days, so hang in there and keep a positive attitude despite it all. Alcohol withdrawal can actually be fatal, especially if you were a hard core drinker (you know if you were or not) so it's **definitely best to consult with a doctor** should you decide to quit. If you still aren't convinced to see a doctor, the best course of action would be to have a sober close friend or family member stay with you during that first critical week.

Again, alcohol withdrawal is usually not fun, but it does vary from person to person. It could be quite mild, or it could be a total nightmare, it all depends on you, maintain that positive attitude and keep your courage in tact.

It's best to avoid caffeine, drink plenty of fluids (which help wash away toxins), take a good multivitamin, and break your meals up into small portions through out the day. Eating a bit of protein before you go to bed will help you sleep better, and most importantly – no matter how hard it gets, **you made the right choice!** Get through it, and you'll come out to be that great person you always knew you were!

Don't give up!

Sleeplessness and Insomnia

So, you've finally decided to give up the bottle, and the one of the first things that run through your mind are, "great, now I can finally get good nights sleep!"

Game show buzzer noise

Sorry, wrong answer!

You see, during the course of your drinking, you managed to throw off quite a few chemical processes that affect all different kinds of things related to your body – including sleep. During the process of sobriety, your body will be working hard to re-balance critical chemical processes. The one that is causing sleeplessness is the Melatonin (the sleep hormone) and Serotonin chemical levels in your brain – which is what moderates and maintains your sleep pattern.

Remember the days of just passing out on the floor, only to wake up feeling nauseous, dehydrated, and just overall sick? Well, on the road to sobriety, depending on your condition, age, health, and usage history, it could take weeks, even months for your body to balance out those critical chemicals. So suffering from early waking after just a few hours of sleep or vicious bouts of insomnia is not at all uncommon. Lack of sleep won't kill you though but drinking will!

Don't worry though – there is hope, and things you can do in the mean time to help your sober body readjust. Once you're through the major withdrawal symptoms, you should start getting your blood flowing with light exercise. Walking, for instance, is a great way to start slow.

After you're comfortable with the light exercise and your body gets used to it, pick up the pace a bit, and try to get in 30 minutes of exercise 3-4 times per week. After that, try joining a gym, or some type of aerobics class. Cardio exercise is the best way to get your blood vessels open and begin removing the plaque inside your veins assisting your body in removing toxins. As you get into a healthy exercise routine, it helps your body adjust back to sobriety, and can actually make you feel great! Most importantly, it will put you on the path to finally getting a good night of sleep, which is priceless.

A couple of more tips to getting a good night of sleep (or a better one than you're getting now):

1. Eating a light, protein based meal helps settle the stomach for the night and will help you get to sleep sooner.
2. Melatonin, which is a **natural supplement**, combined with valerian or Sleepy Time tea will help get you to sleep faster and keep you asleep longer. Melatonin can be found in pretty much any pharmacy.

Side note: Sometimes you may find that you experience a heavy amount of dreams where you're using and/or drinking. These can be quite scary, and will usually result in waking up in a cold sweat. The key here is not to panic. Having these dreams is a result of your brain, and its way of detoxing and finding resolve. As your sober time adds up, you'll have them less often. If you have one of these dreams after long term sobriety, you'll find that it reminds you why you made the decision to quit in the first place.

The Emotional Rollercoaster

Does the following sound familiar?

You're happy
You're sad
You're up
You're down
You're laughing
You're depressed
You're totally insane

Chances are, if you've decided to go the sober route, you've either experienced all of the above feelings, or if not, plan on it.

Honestly, it can go so many ways; it just depends on the person. Sometimes they'll be riding on pink clouds all day long and filled with happiness, only to crash and burn into a major depression later that night – only to laugh hysterically right after. It's very strange!

When you were drinking, you didn't even realize that when your body would experience a wide range of emotions, you would just cover them up with alcohol or whatever it was that you like to self medicate with. You drank for many reasons – because you were mad, angry, lonely, joyous, happy, bad day at work, spouse/kids mad you mad...the list goes on. At the time, alcohol transformed you into a master of manipulation, and you could literally find an excuse to drink to just about any condition. Not only were you manipulating your friends and family, but you were manipulating **yourself**.

It really was a vicious circle, because when you were hung-over, you weren't concerned with your emotions, except those of guilt, and you could quickly cover those up with another drink! Because you were too drunk or hung-over, you didn't realize that you were having any emotions at all, and when they would finally start to peek out – guess what? You would take another drink and repeat the process all over again.

So, as you sober up, typically, you're pretty happy. Happy is good, and most people can deal with being happy just fine – but then, something happens which causes you grief, makes you mad or upset, and the first thought that enters your head – "I need a drink". Sound familiar?

But no! You're sober now, and you have to learn to deal with the emotions that normal human beings experience on a day to day basis! You'll find that you actually have to grow up all over again, and learn to face adult problems without turning to a bottle of whiskey as your counselor. It's not really your fault; after all, every time you had any sort of emotion, you immediately hit the bottle, so you never learned how to deal with that stuff on an adult level.

As you learn to conquer those emotions (which, will take some time), then you'll gain a new confidence in handling those types of situations sober, and that's why now may be a good time to **consider** the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), it can literally be a life saving resource during difficult times. If you're feeling overwhelmed, the alcohol craving is strong or encounter something you can't deal with, call a fellow AA member, or better yet, your sponsor if you already have one. Do some journaling, TALK it out with someone and do whatever you have to do – just don't take that drink, it's not worth it and the guilt you know all too well will be immense.

Some people find it easier to rise out of a dismal depression right out of the gate, but not all. If the depression and feelings of anxiety become overwhelming to the point that they threaten your sobriety, and affect your daily activities, then it's **crucial that you see a doctor**. Many alcoholics suffer from clinical depression, and don't even know it, you've masked it for so long with the bottle how would you know? Anti-depression/anxiety medications have advanced so much, that there are some great courses of treatment that your doctor can recommend to help you get "back in your right mind". Additionally, if you feel depressed when drinking and drink to pick yourself up be aware that alcohol is a depressant when metabolized! So in reality you are only exasperating those feelings of depression by continuing to drink.

Most importantly – don't panic. You were sick (probably for a long time), and you'll literally have to grow up all over again. Just know in your heart and mind that it's all worth it!

Sugar Binging and Sweet Tooth

Another common "problem" on the road to sobriety is the intense and often crazy cravings for sugary sweets! All of a sudden you want cookies, cake, pie, chocolate, and any other product that will satisfy your sweet tooth. You just can't get enough!

During your time as an active alcoholic, the quantities of alcohol you drank made your body metabolize the carbohydrates into sugar. This often leads to the sugar cravings after you decide to become sober, because not only do you crave alcohol (hopefully not to much), you now crave the sugar it created in your body! Typically, you'll find that the sugar cravings peak around the time that you used to drink (5 o'clock or whatever it was for you).

So the question is – what should you do? Well, let's put it this way, would you rather pick up a bottle of beer and ruin everything you've worked so hard for, or pick up two candy bars and have at it? If you're in your right mind, you should definitely choose the candy bar option!

That's why it's important to exercise, because chances are, you're going to sugar binge for a while, and while it's a healthier alternative than finding something to drink, it will sneak up on you eventually. A lot of former alcoholics find that they gain weight (which actually could be good for some people), but if it starts to become uncomfortable, just hit the gym a couple times a week, or take walks, and you should be just fine. It's a completely normal part of becoming sober.

Another thing to keep in mind is that many alcoholics are hypoglycemic. Actually, there is a physiological reason that alcoholics go through this, as well as crave more alcohol. If it gets to the point where it causes noticeable emotional or physical problems, you should see your doctor and ask him/her to recommend a good diet which is low in carbohydrates and sugar. If you seek further information on this, there is a more comprehensive look at it in a good book called, "Under the Influence", and "Beyond the Influence".

Most importantly, don't sweat this problem too much, because after all, you need to learn to crawl before you walk, and taking baby steps are key to becoming sober again. Keep it simple.

Relationships

When it comes to relationships and sobriety, different people will have different situations. Most commonly, when you finally become sober and take that big step to a new life path, you think, "Great! Everyone will be happy and supportive!" Honestly, it's best not to expect a welcome home parade just because you quit, or else you'll be quite disappointed. It's important to remember that during your time of sickness (which, for some people, could have been a very long time), chances are you've repeatedly hurt the ones you love most, and they're not just going to up and forget what you've done to them or what they have gone through watching you in your active alcoholism.

It's very important that you give your relationships time to heal, and let the loved ones in your life arrive at their own opinions of how your new path to sobriety is affecting you. If you're giving it all you've got, and doing the right thing, chances are good that over time, they'll soften up and start lending tons of much needed support to you.

Having said that, you need to keep in mind that there is a chance some of your close relationships won't survive, even after you decide to become sober. Too many fights, harsh words, scams, bad behavior, manipulation, and broken promises could very well drive a person away for good. This is tough to take in, but you shouldn't be too hard on yourself, as you have absolutely no control over what and how those people think. If you made an honest and true effort to make things right again, and they still go their own way, then it's just best to let it go, rather let them go even if it's very difficult to do so. It's hard to expect someone to trust you again overnight, especially after years of breaking that trust. Can you blame them? Put yourself in their shoes. It's not impossible though, and miracles do happen!

One very important thing to remember - Despite all the changes you'll experience in your new transformation, when you feel lonely, call up a sober friend, someone you trust, a fellow AA member for comfort and company. Don't expect a fellow AA member to sugarcoat anything, because remember, they've been there too, and they'll tell you the truth – but they're only a phone call away, and most of the time their support can literally be a life saver.

Avoiding Relapse and Staying Sober

Often times, you'll hear the saying "stopping was easy, staying sober is the hard part". While there is some truth to that, sobriety can sometimes be easy or hard. You should be proud of your life saving decision that you're about to go through. Remember, you've accomplished a very tough step in stopping, and now you're in recovery.

A majority of people who've stopped and stay that way will tell you it's because of the support they found along the way. True, there are many that do it all by themselves and have great success, but part of the recovery process is developing a whole new you, essentially growing up all over again, and that can be difficult, to say the least.

Many will ask themselves the 64,000 dollar question – "Why me?" Some know the answer, but you'll find that most don't. What's important is that you work on you. Aid the soul searching and self exploration by reaching out to others who understand the position you're in, and what you're going through. Seek out the "old timers", who are people that have a lot of sober time under their belts, and ask them how they did it. Listen to their story, and make note of what they do on a daily basis to stay clean and sober. Finding these types of people isn't hard, especially with the use of the internet. With a few simple searches, you can easily find massive recovery and chat forums where you can seek answers and help if you need it.

You may be asking, "What are my options now?", and "who can support me?" Thankfully, those are actually easy questions to answer, and most are familiar with Alcoholics Anonymous. It's the most popular fellowship of individuals today when it comes to finding like minded support. Many people fear that first time of walking in, but everyone goes through it, and it's not bad at all!

Nearly every town in most any country has an AA club somewhere. Look online, or through your yellow pages, and you should be able to find one with no problems. Also, if you're scared or nervous to go the first time, call ahead, and ask whoever picks up the phone to meet you before the meeting and take you by the hand to your first meeting. Seriously, you won't find a more understanding support group in the world when it comes to the support of those in the fellowship of AA.

Another valid concern when it comes to AA is the myths that it's a

religious cult of sorts. AA is not a cult, nor is it a religious program of recovery. If you are completely opposed to the belief of a Higher Power, then no worries! You can simply look for an Agnostic AA program to attend – there are quite a few out there! If you want to learn what to expect in your first meeting, simply do a Google search and type in something like "my first AA meeting", or visit one of many online forums that will soon be suggested and just ask someone – they'll be more than happy to help!

So AA is not your cup of tea? Well, that's not a problem, because there are other organizations and groups that you can try out as well. SMART Recovery focuses on the cognitive thoughts of individuals and has numerous tools available for use during the recovery process. Their website has an abundance of information on what SMART is, and how self-defeating thoughts can be changed into positive thinking, which will allow you to stay on the road of sobriety. Lifering, SOS, Rational Recovery, and Women For Sobriety are other fine organizations that you may find suit you better when it comes to remaining sober.

If you feel a bit lost about the changes occurring inside of you now that you're sober, reach out for help and support. The overwhelming feeling of relief you'll feel when talking to others who understand your situation will be a tremendous comfort. Knowing that you're not alone is an awesome feeling. Remember, you can and will recover, you will lead a healthy life, and being a slave to the evil bottle will no longer be necessary in your life! What a great feeling!

You're much stronger than you realize, and once you find the courage inside of you, you'll realize that being sober is a peaceful choice, the best choice, and the only choice.

Seeking Help Online

If attending a meeting, receiving some form of therapy or counseling, or speaking with someone in person is a tad bit uncomfortable for you at this point in time, then never fear – you have options! Sit down in front of a computer, and start searching for online communities and resources that support those with alcoholism and addiction problems.

Sober Sources Network (www.sobersources.com) is a fantastic way to start! The Sober Sources Network is quickly becoming a leading resource and information network when it comes to alcoholism and addiction. With over 20 websites offering forums, blogs, and directories, you're bound to find someone that will extend a helping hand to you!

Here is the latest press release regarding the Sober Sources Network:

March 31, 2008 – Since its launch in December 2007, The Sober Sources Network (www.sobersources.com) has quickly moved to the top of the list as a resource and support network for alcoholism and addiction.

The Network follows the successful launch of The Sober Village (www.thesobervillage.com) forum for adults in February 2006 and Sober Teens Online (www.soberteensonline.com) forum in May 2005. The Sober Sources Network incorporates over 20 sites that include detailed informative resources and blogs for the latest articles added to the network.

Recovery from addiction, regardless of the type of addiction, is a focus of numerous online sites. The concept behind The Sober Sources Network emerged from the realization that while online recovery resources and information suppliers are widespread online, there are very few websites that make available the comprehensive directories of resources and information that are seriously needed by those seeking assistance with addiction.

The Sober Sources Network mission is “to provide quick access to the information you are looking for which includes a client built directory and support for advertising your business on our domains.”

Because people can have multiple addictions, The Sober Sources Network is beneficial for those seeking help online. With the stress that attends addiction of any sort, people who are addicted or living with addicts need to access as much information as possible in the easiest manner possible.

The Sober Sources Network is the emerging leader in providing comprehensive and informative resources and support network for alcoholism and other addictions. As

well as the guidance offered, The Sober Sources Network provides constructive categories of resources that delve deep into addiction.

The categories include 12 Step Programs, Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, Alternatives to 12 Step Programs, Counseling Services, Eating Disorders, General Health, Government Resources, Hotlines, Mental Health Issues, Message Board Communities, Recovery Stores and Literature, Sober Living Homes, Teens and Young Adults, and Treatment Centers.

By being a one-stop supplier of information on addictions, The Sober Sources Network allows information seekers to reach information and enter forums where they can interact with others in the same situation. This provides seekers with many possible venues for recovery and many sources of support."

Suggested Communities specific to Alcoholism and Addiction Recovery:

The Sober Village at www.thesobervillage.com

Recovery Works at www.recoveryworks.info

Sober Teens Online at www.soberteensonline.com

When on the road of sobriety, knowing what to expect along the way can be a great comfort, and even motivating to know that everything you're experiencing is completely normal! It's important to reach out and seek help if you're feeling lost and confused about your situation. Literally millions of people are suffering, or have suffered from the same thing you have, and there are just as many in recovery!

Just remember, we do recover, and never ever, no matter how difficult it may seem, question your decision to become sober.

About the Author:

Chyrisse King, M.Ed. Has a masters degree in counseling and has several years experience in administering online message boards of which the last 5 years have been spent developing and administering online recovery forums. Chy is the owner of the Sober Sources Network which consists of over 20 websites devoted to alcoholism and addiction recovery. Chyrisse has spent many hours working with criminal offenders with substance abuse issues and this experience and additional research in addiction issues has allowed her to continue helping those in search of their own answers. For more information please contact: <mailto:info@sobersources.com>.

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