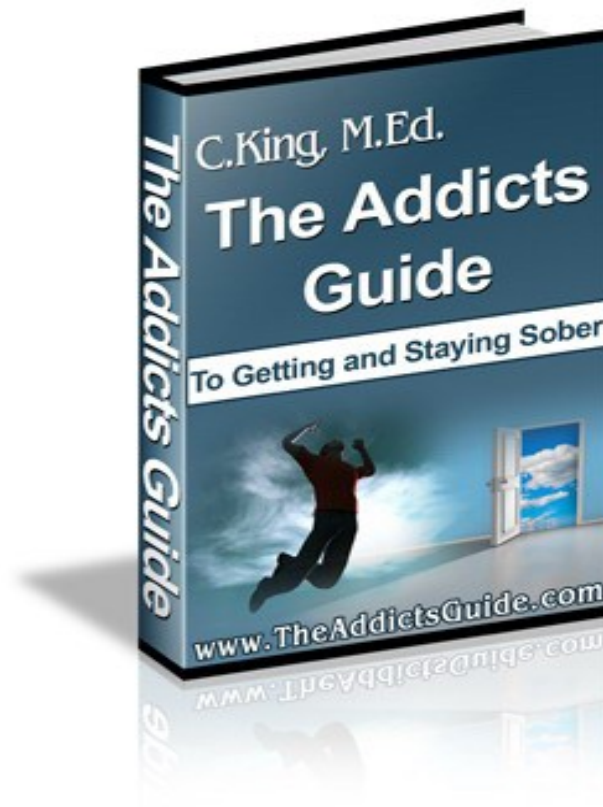


# The Addicts Guide To Getting and Staying Sober



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## The Addicts Guide To Getting and Staying Sober

*The solution to our pain and frustration, however valid is to acknowledge our own feelings. We feel the anger, the grief; then we let go of the feelings and find peace - within ourselves. We know our happiness isn't controlled by another person, even though we may have convinced ourselves it is. We call this acceptance.*

*Then we decide that although we'd like our situation to be different, maybe our life is happening this way for a reason. Maybe there is a higher purpose and plan in play, one that's better than we could have orchestrated. We call this faith.*

*Then we decide what we need to do, what is within our power to do to take care of ourselves. That's called recovery.*

**- The Language of Letting Go Journal** By Melody Beattie

## Introduction

Congratulations on purchasing *The Addicts Guide To Getting and Staying Sober!* I think it's important for you to learn a little about why I'm writing this guide and the credentials that I have in doing so. I have made it my mission to help as many alcoholics and addicts that are still suffering from their addiction, it's that simple. I have developed a vast network of resources called the Sober Sources Network, which incorporates over 30 sites to include forums, info sites, blog sites and many more. I have a Masters degree in counseling and have utilized my education and knowledge about addiction to help as many people as possible find their own solutions with addiction. Yes, I said find your own solution! But fear not, I'll help in providing you all the resources to do so. I am also a recovering alcoholic and my addiction lasted over 23 years. The hardest part for me in obtaining my own sobriety was overcoming the fear in doing so. The only regret I have today is that I did not find my courage sooner. Though my primary choice of using was alcohol I also did my fair share of experimenting with other substances. I am all too familiar with the problems, the heartache, the guilt, the shame, the remorse that being a slave to addiction brings. Despite the fact that daily I would tell myself that this is the last time, no more, I will start this deal tomorrow, I never did. You see I was what they call a high functioning

alcoholic, meaning, I had a job, I had a house was married had children but I came close many times to losing it all. I was barely able to maintain all that as well as keep up with my drinking and using, but after decades of doing that, it was apparent to me I could no longer keep up the pace of living that kind of life. It became pure hell and torment to do so no matter how many times I really wanted to stop. I just couldn't stop and truth be told I didn't want to stop. I was one of those who "didn't have a problem", or so I would tell myself. Alcohol and drugs were taking a physical toll on my body. My heart was about to explode. I was always sick. The hangovers and the next day guilt and shame became unbearable. My life in the later days revolved around getting drunk then facing the hangovers and misery. I had in essence stepped out of life. I didn't know me, I didn't recognize the person nor liked that person in the mirror, I had become a shell of a person in total isolation. Finally, I had had enough and I went in search of my own answers. I'm grateful to say I've been sober ever since. It wasn't easy at first but not as bad as I had thought it would be, I was up and down like a kid on a roller coaster, exhilarated as well as scared. Each day it got better, I kept trudging along giving it my best effort. I guess you could say I'm one of the fortunate ones and attribute my sobriety, to those that have crossed my path and have shown me how they did it. I also attribute it to myself, as I, like

you will did the work it took. I took responsibility as will you. It wasn't all bad I promise. I've listened to the suggestions offered, I've read the books, studied the various forms of treatment and mostly have listened and compiled that information in hopes of sharing it with others. I've talked with many alcoholics and addicts. My first question to them always is, how have you done it? In this guide I hope to share with you all that I have learned along the way from those old timers who have maintained their sobriety. During my first week of sobriety, I was privileged to meet a lovely lady who had been sober for 24 years. The conversation we shared together, the experience that she imparted to me made me want to also achieve that goal. So you see everyday that I'm walking the road to recovery. I'm always looking for the answers that have worked for so many so that I can share them with other people in hopes of them being able to achieve their own success in recovery. I want to share with you all that I have learned. We are all individuals our addictions are all different. There are no two alcoholics or addicts that are exactly alike, similar yes, exactly like one another, no. So with that comes unique approaches to recovery, we each must find what works best for us.

In this guide it is my hope to share with you all that I have learned along the way that has proven to show successful results, to include the techniques used in treatment centers, the various

programs of recovery available today, ( and there are many), information you may or may not find useful about 12 step programs, as well as share the many resources I have accumulated along the way. It is my goal for you that the information you will find as you read along will enable you to find your own Courage to believe in yourself, to have that awakening that you too can get and stay sober. I want to give you the tools and resources that will help you , as well as provide you several of resources to turn to should you feel that you need more support. There is a saying in recovery land, "You can't keep it unless you give it away", well I want to keep my sobriety and I love giving it away, I call it extending the hand. So here's to you my friend, believe in yourself, believe you have the courage and power to change, and begin your journey as I walk alongside you. I know in my heart of hearts you can do this, do not fear it, walk through it, work it like nothing you've ever done and find the person you no longer know in your mirror again!



## **So Let's Get Started On You!**

Throughout this guide there will be certain things that I ask you to do. It may be helpful for you to have a piece of paper, a notepad, and something to write with or better yet get a notebook to keep the information all in one place so you can easily refer to it often in keeping you focused and on the right path to getting and staying sober. Writing puts our thoughts in black and white, it's tangible and we bring to life on paper our feelings, emotions and desires. As you go through this guide take your own personal notes, make note of areas that you can relate to, jog down questions that you may have and become open to being self reflective, as there will be some tough questions and some things I will ask you to consider. There will be a few things I'll ask you to do that may seem hokie and very uncomfortable and even seem nonsensical to you, I'm not asking you to do anything I haven't done and remember I'm still sober! By going through the process of what I know has worked for not only myself but others it is my hope you too can finally get and stay sober! I know that many have questions as you begin this journey, I hope to answer them all for you. If something is not answered or not clear please feel to write me.

## **Don't Dwell on Why**

For many of us we are always asking "Why me"? It would be fair to say that no one wanted to grow up to be an alcoholic or addict, it is not one of those grand choices we make for ourselves when deciding what we want to be when we grow up. We have become alcoholics and are addicted for a number of reasons. Childhood trauma or abuse, abusive relationships and dysfunction among family, medical reasons, emotional despair, depression, grief, anxiety, the list goes on. The important thing to recognize is simply this. You either are or you are not addicted to alcohol and/or drugs. It is futile to ponder this question. You either know or you don't, and if you don't really know just yet, ask yourself if you are just not ready or willing to admit the troubles alcohol or drugs is causing you. This is the biggest fear based block most of us have. If you are not ready, that's okay too. We all get there when we are supposed to and not a moment sooner. You'll know when it's time. I don't believe it is necessary to hit a bottom either. If you are floundering and already grasping for a life line there is no need to sink further to a bottom. Why some of us are the way we are, well it's all relative, some may have the answers, some of us will never know the answer ( I fall in the latter category), the biggest step for you to make today is admitting to yourself the despair and problems your addiction is causing you. Are you truly happy with the

way things are going in your life? If you are not yet willing to recognize your own problems with alcohol or drugs than this guide may not yet be for you but keep reading as I hope to at least plant the seed for you to nurture.

## Getting Started Stopping

As mentioned earlier, the hardest part about stopping for me was facing the fear of what sobriety was to bring. The first thing to realize is quitting is never a bad decision. But it can be very difficult to get to that point of acceptance. I know many people don't like to write things down , but I will be asking you to do a lot of writing in hopes of getting you to do some self-exploration. I will also be asking you to do some journaling, and I know that this makes some people uncomfortable, but there is no greater value than putting to paper your feelings, the emotions you're going through and details that allow you to better see the benefits of making the choice of sobriety. Remember, I'm sharing with you, what has worked for me. One of the first things I did was to take a piece of paper and write two columns, one of them Positives and the other Negatives. Positives is all the positive things that can happen if I stop using. I've asked myself what is my life going to be like if I continue to drink and listed all of those things under the negative column. I then listed all of the hopes, goals and possibilities that awaited me if I was able to quit drinking under the positives column.

Lastly, I listed all that my addiction had cost me in the Negatives column. Take some time to complete this list. You'll be asked to refer back to it often reminding you during those difficult times why you

have made a great choice. Now for some this may seem like common sense. What I want you to do is to become aware and begin to acknowledge the problems that your drinking or drugging is causing you, what negatives in your life are making you miserable? We're going to work on getting rid of the negative part of our attitude as us addicted types have issues with negative self perception. As you write your negative list explore how those words going to paper are making you feel. Look at your negative list now, is this how you imagined your life? Is this how you want to continue? What can take away all that negative? What one thing can you do for yourself to make it all stop? You know the answer. It doesn't have to be hard once you find your courage and can walk through your fear.

I want you to face the fear head on because you are in fact fighting for your life, fear is simply thoughts based on emotions, don't let it prevent you from going where you want to go. You can walk through it. Your courage is there, I promise, the fear is real to, but walking through it will free you, of this I'm positive! Quit making excuses for why why you can't stop, you have procrastinated long enough so let's get over all that and get started stopping today.

Now let's be really honest here, as we explore certain things about your own usage of alcohol or drugs. If you haven't figured it out or if no one has ever told you you're probably quite skilled at being the

master manipulator. Today we stop manipulating. Today we stop making excuses. Today we stop feeling sorry for ourselves and we learn how to get off our pity pots. There is not one person or thing on this planet that will "fix" you other than you! Another thing we are going to quit doing starting today is trash talking ourselves. We are the biggest saboteur of our own recovery, because of the shame, guilt or blame we put on ourselves, we find ways to sabotage ourselves by the self defeating things we tell ourselves. We have reinforced this self defeating belief in ourself for so long and I'm here to say it is terribly counterproductive to what we want to achieve.

The excuses we've made have kept us stuck in stopping. I have heard all of the excuses people have used for drinking or drugging. Quite frankly, I'd say some of them quite horrendous . I can understand why and understand the need to erase the pain, but abusing ourselves and abusing our bodies will not help us work through those things in our lives, those things that have occurred that caused us great pain. There are healthier ways to face the pain and fear. I know for many the reason for using is simply to mask extremely difficult emotions and feelings going on inside you, but I promise you to mask feelings and emotions is no way to live.

You will never face the fear that keeps you in your addiction if you continue to cover it up with alcohol and drugs. Alcohol and drugs

changes the physical make up of the chemical process in your body and only heightens the despair you feel. If you have a history of depression you're simply compounding it each day you use your drug of choice. YOU are making you worse. As you begin to experience and explore what sobriety is about, you will come to see you will be faced with many emotions and feelings and for some this may be the first time you've experienced such feelings and emotions. I'm going to ask that you go through them all, experience them all, embrace each one as it comes with the confidence you will get through it okay. Write them down! Some may be bad emotions for you and some may be good emotions, but one thing about us alcoholics and addicts we have never been very good at experiencing emotions and this may be the first time we've allowed them to be explored without masking them with alcohol or drugs. This is a totally new experience for many, and may be the hardest part of the early days of your recovery.

If you feel as though you are on an emotional roller coaster that's okay, it's completely normal. You will be either exhilarated and on a pink cloud as we say or you may even be slightly depressed, this is normal. However, if the depression lasts more than a few weeks and continues to get worse please see your doctor. Many, many alcoholics and addicts are clinically depressed and have never been diagnosed with this disorder! As you go through your positives and negatives list

as you begin to become aware of the changes that are about to occur,  
I simply have one question for you, what is the payoff of staying in the  
same rut of addiction?



## The Day You Stop

Deciding the day you stop is a personal choice. Some prepare by setting the date and getting themselves prepared, both mentally and physically. Set a date that you know you can keep and try to select a period of time in your life where you will not have a lot of responsibility and stress around you. If you have the luxury of doing so, take time off of work, if not be sure that your work is not overwhelming at this time. Now pick the date and look forward to it, be excited about it and get ready for a wonderful life ahead. If you feel you need to go through inpatient treatment to detox then make that a priority and consider it to be a positive decision. Now I know that some people may balk at this suggestion. However, I feel it would be very incompetent of me to not provide you with the safest and best information about seeking out medical help for withdrawal or detox.

Each individual's withdrawal or detox varies. I've seen hard-core drinkers, with very minor withdrawal symptoms. I've seen minimal drinkers with severe physical symptoms. Each one of us is different. Please know that, ALCOHOL WITHDRAWAL CAN BE FATAL if not done under correct medical supervision. With that said, the majority of alcoholics I've come in contact with have been able to withdrawal safely and successfully on their own with a close friend or family member by their side. Seeking out medical advice and getting ready

to quit does have its many benefits. Quite often, your doctor will provide you with some prescription medication to help alleviate the symptoms you may or may not experience. You will know within 24 hours the severity of your withdrawal. I want you to be safe during this process and medical support can make all the difference to you in becoming successful in the early days.

The most common symptoms people encounter from alcohol detox are anxiety, sleeplessness, nausea, and sometimes the shakes. If you experience anything such as heart palpitations or fever, severe diarrhea, hallucinations or delirium tremens (DT's) or seizure, it is **IMPERATIVE** for you to go to the ER immediately so that they can provide you with the proper medical support. If you are going to be detoxing off of prescription pain medication it is strongly recommended that you begin to wean yourself several days in advance and not go cold turkey off of your medication . This can prove dangerous and I encourage you to work with your doctor on this no matter how difficult it may be to confide in him. The best advice is to consult with your doctor and inform him or her of your intentions. I do not suggest the cold turkey method for detoxing off of prescription pain medication.

If you are an opiate user, you may already be too familiar with the sickness that occurs from not using and as with any detox or

withdrawal it is best to seek the advice from a medical professional.

There are many alternatives to safe opiate detox. I would like to mention also the many benefits of consulting with a medical professional for safe opiate detox as there are some medications that will help with this process. If you choose to cold turkey, coming off heroin or crack cocaine and other opiate drugs on your own, please be sure you have somebody that you can trust with you at all times. Keep yourself hydrated, sleep as much as you can and try to consume light meals and food during this process.

On average, an alcoholic withdrawing from alcohol use, will generally experience the worst of withdrawal within the first 48 hours, with minor symptoms following for up to 5 to 7 days. Prescription pain medication users generally have a longer time of withdrawal and this may take up to several weeks. However, the first week will generally be the worst. As mentioned, everybody going through either withdrawal or detoxing from their drug of choice experiences it differently. Do people cold turkey and withdrawal and detox safely at home? Yes. Is it the best advice? No, and that's the reason I encourage you to speak to your doctor when making this choice to live a life free of drugs or alcohol.

## **Deciding If A Treatment Center Is Your Best Option**

I'm sure at some point most addicts and alcoholics have wondered if they are a qualifying candidate for a treatment center, rehab or detox facility. If you're fortunate enough to have insurance through your workplace than most providers now provide treatment to the employees for a specific period of time. This is where I personally take issue with some treatment programs and treatment centers. I feel that it is necessary in order to get a good foundation in sobriety and starting your recovery for you to have more than just a few weeks or a few days in the program. Depending on your health service provider, treatment centers will take you anywhere from 7 to 28 days sometimes 90 days, if you're more fortunate. If you're considering going to the treatment center I highly advise you to explore all the various programs, classes, courses, theory that each center that interests you offers. There are many good treatment centers and rehab centers available, and I would never discourage anyone from going that route, should they feel that is the best possibility they have at getting and staying sober. My thought is this, I do not feel the short-term programs offered in most treatment centers are a strong enough foundation at helping somebody go through the elements necessary for continued sobriety that I will mention in this guide as far as abstinence, behavioral changes, psychological and social well-being.

Generally you'll get a basic start at learning how to change your behaviors in the treatment program. It takes much more time, patience and self discovery to get and stay sober then what I believe a treatment center has to offer unless you are attending long term care.

However, if you have the luxury of going to a high end treatment center and can afford the cost of a long-term program then this may be a beneficial approach for you. Generally, you can expect a treatment center to provide you with elements of the 12 step programs and cognitive behavioral approach theory as a means of assisting you on the road to recovery.

The fact is, treatment centers are very expensive. However, there is one excellent program or treatment center that is free for most individuals who have already gone through the withdrawal and detox process. You will find this treatment center in nearly every state in the country. The Salvation Army has a very good program, they have a strong foundation and many have very good results with the patients that enter their treatment program and this is free! It is my personal opinion however that most people who choose to start a program of recovery on their own are just as capable with the right tools, information and resources and even support and can be successful without having to go to a treatment program. I'm sure most addicts and alcoholics have heard of the show *Intervention* on

A & E Network. If you have watched most of the program all the way through you'll see the results are equally balanced in those who succeed and those that don't.

Another fact to consider about treatment centers, they don't have any spectacular statistics which show a high success rate. Be certain they offer no guarantees either and don't rely on those that say they do as a guarantee of your own success. So there is the chance that you have gone into the treatment center, you've paid a lot of money or insurance is giving you your one chance to go through the program and then you relapse. So what happens then? You're back to square one. You're on your own again, and you have to start over. Granted, many people have gone through treatment and rehab programs several times, I was just speaking with somebody who had gone to 25 programs and he is still struggling, still has not found a solution, still using heroin.

So please weigh your options very carefully when considering a treatment program. Make sure you do your research online as well as ask for all the literature and information of what exactly the program and course outline is like. If this is what you feel to be best for you then by all means go for it. However, my suggestion would be to inquire as to the other programs that are available to you that can be found in either in your local community or online, and perhaps try that

route first and see if you can in fact manage your own recovery on your own without a costly treatment programs that in most cases will take you away from home. This is your recovery, and you must do what you feel best for you. I would never discourage anybody from going to treatment if they felt that this is the best for them.

## The Early Days of Recovery

The early days of recovery can be faced with joy and happiness or despair and depression. You have basically made what could be considered the best choice of your life. Upon going over your positive and negatives list you've either decided on a life of despair, leading to possible death, or sobriety, which will give you joy and happiness of life. Learning how to function in recovery is an entire process. It's not just about abstaining from your drug of choice. There are basically three elements of continued sobriety.

1. Abstinence
2. Behavioral changes.
3. Psychological and social health and well-being.

Sobriety is different for everyone. Just remember, you can get through life without ever having to drink or use drugs again. There are more people on this planet that do not use alcohol or drugs as coping mechanisms than there are that do. So be proud and embrace your new found commitment to yourself and begin to step into life again.



## About Abstinence

Abstinence is simply not using any mind altering chemicals. For the record, alcohol is a mind altering chemical. This does not mean however, you can switch one drug of choice with another. Abstinence means no alcohol or drugs. It does not matter if you were a coke addict, and rarely drank alcohol, and now think it's okay to drink alcohol. You want to keep your body free and clear from all foreign and outside substances which can potentially have a negative effect on your mental and physiological well-being. In the planning stages of preparing for your quit date, get ready and make arrangements to remove all substances such as alcohol, drugs, paraphernalia and even your favorite drinking glasses from your home. Get rid of it all, throw it away, give it to a friend but get it out of your sight. Don't store it, don't pack it away for memories sake as this could be detrimental to you when facing those triggers. It will make it much harder for you to relapse if everything you're accustomed to using when engaging in your addictive behavior is out of your reach. In the recovery world abstinent means absence of all drugs and alcohol.

Perhaps as you prepare yourself you can make one of your affirmations "I am free of drugs and/or alcohol". Keep telling yourself **this is a good decision**. Don't worry about never drinking again or never using again, if you put that word never into your vocabulary it

will prevent you from moving forward in that it becomes a fear of yours as well as becomes a deterrent for continued sobriety. As the 12 Steppers say, recovery happens one day at a time and this is so true. Each day you wake up you make that commitment to yourself that you will remain abstinent from drugs and alcohol. You have tried life your way with drugs or alcohol long enough not isn't it time to see how life will unfold for you without it? It can not be any worse right?

## Behavioral Change

Perhaps one of the most difficult things you will find that you encounter is learning how to change your routine. There are some very important changes that will be required of you if you would like to be successful on this venture. You may find you have to find new friends and give up some of the old friends that you have become all too familiar with, the friends who enabled you to continue. You must ask yourself what is keeping you stuck? What is keeping you from moving forward? What is preventing you from making those changes? Begin a plan of action on how you are going to change your routine. Here is where I will ask you to make another list. What are the things in life you could or want to do that you've not been able to do because of your addiction? Is there some hobby you've always wanted to engage in but never got around to? Is there something that needs to be done in your house or home, but has gone neglected? Are there people in your life you would like to reconnect with? Are there books you've wanted to read? Have you wanted to continue and pursue your education, or perhaps even find a new job? What are the things in your life you have wanted to do but have never gotten the chance to because you have always held your self back from doing so?

So, here we go again, make that list, begin to prioritize the things important in your life. If you are going to change your routine

you're going to have to change things. Nothing changes unless something changes. Read that last sentence again. You may even find it necessary to change some of the words in your vocabulary thus getting you to have a better self view of yourself. How often have you said to yourself. "I can't do that", be aware of the negative self talk that you say to yourself daily, and begin making those changes. Change those I cant's to I CAN! Learn to get out of the negative and think and act positively. You must practice this daily and do your very best to keep your spirits up. Let this work become your new routine. As you find yourself making progress in changing those patterns and routines, to a more healthy lifestyle reward yourself. Start treating yourself better, where do you want to go, what path do you want to take that will leave you in peace? Once you know that path and know your wants and desires, starting reaching and heading towards them. All that it takes is getting there and you can get there now, I am certain of it!

Now, here is another exercise I'm going to strongly suggest you do. I would like you to consider some positive affirmations you can tell yourself, in cognitive behavior therapy, we call this positive self talk. It's about changing the negative self talk. This will be a very uncomfortable exercise for you at first as it's one of those things that we don't normally do. It's something we do for ourselves in the

privacy of our own home at first. Affirmations like "I'm a good person", "I am a good mother", "I'm a good father", "I am a great employee", "I have wonderful qualities", "**I can remain sober**".

Remember, we don't need to mask the emotions with drugs and alcohol any longer as we're facing our feelings and emotions head on. What are three things you like about yourself? Those are going to be your affirmations to start with. Put them on a sticky post and place them on your mirror, put it on the dashboard of your car or any place in plain sight to remind you daily. Put them on your desk at work and your exercises is to say those affirmations to yourself. Say to yourself, I'm going to say my affirmations to myself three times a week. You decide how often is reasonable for you I'm going to use the example, "I can achieve my goals". So I am going to say to myself repeatedly three times a week, "I can achieve my goals", several times a day during the time I've set for myself. At the end of the week if I completed my exercise and I've repeated those affirmations to myself then it is time to reward myself with something I enjoy doing.

Go to the movies, get a massage, enjoy an activity. Have your favorite dessert, go splurge on your favorite food. However, in rewarding yourself remember that you are trying to change your routines. So a good idea of rewarding yourself would not be going to hang out at a bar with your friends or going to those old drug using pit

stops that you were all too familiar with. Remember, you're trying to do *good things* for yourself. Not only are we now learning how to unlearn old behaviors but learn new ways of rebuilding our inner-self and treat ourself better. Positive, positive, positive change! In doing good things for yourself you will begin to feel better about yourself. The better you begin to feel about yourself the more successful you feel thus, strengthening your power to change as well as your courage!

Your sobriety will be providing you joy and self worth again. This will be uncomfortable in the beginning, but the more you get used to start talking to yourself better, the more often you do it, the more natural it will become. After about the third week of completing this therapeutic exercise used in many professional therapy sessions, you'll be doing it without even thinking about it or feeling like you HAVE to. Remember you are sober now you're in a new place in your life. You're making better changes, you're trying to find out who you are and where you belong, you are doing things that are unnatural to you and as I'm sure you have not allowed yourself to love yourself. The life of addiction has kept us in a place where we sabotaged ourselves for so long.

## **Maintaining the Behavioral Change**

This next exercise is what I consider to be a long term homework assignment, and that is to journal. In my own recovery I found this to be one of the hardest things I did, however, remember when I told you when you put things to paper it kind of comes to life for you; you can see it in black and white, its tangible? I want you to find a quiet time, several times a week, if not every day in which you allow yourself to journal. Consider this part of your new routine. Write what comes to your mind, speak from your heart, become honest with yourself. Express how you are feeling. If you're having a good day write "I'm having having a good day"! If you're having a bad day. Try to find out what was causing that bad day. Each day we wake up we have a choice to make about our attitude. Did you wake up with the choice of saying well it's going to be a bad day? Did you already start your day led by the negative self talk and addictive voice? What is something that occurred that caused you to have that bad day? When in recovery, if we do not face that which upsets, angers, frustrates us and acknowledge it then we're headed towards looking for that excuse which will lead us to relapse and back to our old way of life. We are exploring ourselves probably for the first time, and therefore must learn how to acknowledge what we are feeling, express what we are feeling in an honest way with ourselves. By writing it down and putting

it in a journal you will have a diary or baseline of where your life is going and all the progress that you're going to encounter along the way. It's important to express ourselves in such a way that allows us to see where we have the possibility and opportunity to make room for improvement. If your boss made you mad at work for example, what happened exactly and what part did you play? See how deep you can dissect your feeling and emotions. Remember we choose to feel how we feel. The boss didn't MAKE you mad, you chose to be mad. If we take things as attacks against us we quite often tend to experience resentments, resentments are the biggest defeaters of sobriety. We will use resentments in any way we can as another excuse to go back to drinking or drugging. Another defeater of sobriety is expectations. I know for me personally my expectation of things was, quite often the biggest saboteur of my sobriety. So I personally have to work hard on my expectations and I ask you to do the same. Expectations will eventually lead to resentments which will eventually lead to anger or frustration, despair, and that old addictive voice coming back to haunt me, giving me permission to go out and use or drink. So I would have to catch myself and ask myself what in my recovery might I not be doing correctly that is causing me resentment? What is missing? Why am I not moving forward? Why do things feel so out of sync; and then when I journal I was able to recognize it and that's when I could go



about improving my self. When we don't take ownership for our actions in those things in life that happen to us daily, be it good or bad it can easily bring us back to that dark place and then the anticipation and questioning of ourselves begin, like grasping in frantic craziness for something to calm us, for many, that gnawing addictive voice leads back to using if you don't take care of your feelings first.

As mentioned already, one of the biggest road blocks of maintaining sobriety and moving in a positive direction in your recovery is resentments. The others are Anger, Procrastination, Grief, Rejection and Frustration. Think about these words for a minute. Do you see something in common with them all? I'll give you a hint, it ain't positive! All these words have a negative connotation. Meaning they are bad things that offer us no fulfillment in living, however, they are very real to us at different times in our life. If you find yourself feeling like any of these terms way to often then it's time for you to do some more reflective thought and work out the why's of those feelings. With exception to Grief, they are feelings that can be easily changed with a positive attitude.

### **Tips Towards a Positive Attitude:**

- Own what you say and what you do.
- Take responsibility for your actions and decisions.
- Try not to convince others they are wrong so you can be right.

- Don't engage in endless debate, you can only beat that dead horse for so long before it turns to dust.
- Be aware and acknowledge your anger.
- I love this little motto: Do you want to be happy or right? ( I know, sometimes being right would just be a nice I gotcha, but it's not healthy or productive either).
- Practice gentleness and patience.
- Stay in the Now. Don't project and worry about the What if's ... The past is history, the future has yet to come so we only have today.
- When in chaos restore your balance. Move away from chaos in your life.

**Remember that sobriety is not just about stopping using, it's about changing our behavior as well as our psychological and social well being.**

## **The Psychological Element**

### ***About Our Brain***

When we become abstinent from alcohol and drugs and begin a life of sobriety it is important to realize that there are psychological as well as physical effects this has on your body and your brain. Our bodies are remarkable things in that we are born with every chemical substance we need to live a healthy life. For those of us who became addicted however, the natural chemicals and processes we have been provided by our bodies is just not enough. When we abuse ourselves by taking drugs and using alcohol we inevitably are changing the makeup of the chemical processes in our bodies and our brain for the sake of that high. The pleasure center of our brain which releases all of the dopamine levels in making us feel good have been replaced and altered by our use of alcohol and drugs. So be aware, this process in reestablishing your new found health of the brain may take some time. But it's not a horrible process to go through, and most people don't even acknowledge or concern themselves with it. You may feel tired and sluggish and a little down in the dumps. I call it the grieving process. After all we have been asked to give up a huge part of that which allowed us to cope, almost like losing your best friend isn't it? This is due in part from your body not receiving the chemicals we became accustomed to replacing the natural chemicals with, which

made us feel high. There are many great books and articles about this subject, and I encourage you if you're looking for something to do to take the time and visit your local library or purchase a book that discusses more in depth the chemical processes of our body when we are addicted to drugs and alcohol. One book I highly suggest on this topic is *Under the Influence* by James R. Milan, PhD and Katherine Ketchum.

## Triggers and Cravings

You will find as you're changing your patterns, as you're changing your routines there are going to be specific things which trigger you for awhile. I ask you to work hard on changing your routine because it will help with the triggers. Triggers are those things that came so naturally in your using days that have yet to be changed that became part of your clue to ourselves "Time to use..." Triggers lead us to cravings, and we will all experience those cravings, and it will take time and patience for us to work through them so you must ask yourself and yes, here we go again another exercise, what things in your life where your triggers? Was it clocking out at 5 PM after work heading to the liquor store and grabbing your favorite bottle? (Routine right?) Was it partying in the club all night hanging out with your friends having a little bit too much to drink and realizing I need to go score some meth or coke? Was it waiting for the husband to come home from work after a hard day with the kids giving yourself permission to sit down and have that "one" glass of wine? Is it sitting in a particular spot in your house? Your favorite drinking chair? Is it the mere presence of being around a particular group or a particular person? Is it being in a specific situation that leaves you bugging wondering why does this not feel comfortable to me whenever that situation occurs?

Whatever that person place or thing is, that triggers you, you must be aware of them and learn how to find a new avenue of coping with them. Everybody gets off of work at some point, and so, if that was your trigger clocking out at five o'clock and going to the liquor store then make plans for that craving! I will say if one of your triggers has something to do with driving find new routes to take. I personally thought my car had a mind of its own, because it ended up at the liquor store every afternoon. So I had to take a new route, just the mere presence of seeing that store would trigger me. So it took me a while of going a different route before I was able to go by that store.

Realize throughout the early days of your recovery you must require extreme patience of yourself. You may be going along fine through the day and all of a sudden you have the intense urge to use, these are cravings, this is your body saying, I'm not used to this get me booze or drugs now! Actually, what is happening is your body chemistry is being set off like a fire alarm, most alcoholics will find these cravings to hit during the witching hour time of your use and is due in part to drops in the sugar levels in your body. So during this time keep hard candy with you or even indulge in a candy bar to take the edge off. They don't last long. Time your cravings, you will see the worst of it lasts 5-10 minutes, work through them, deep breaths, get

busy, occupy yourself quickly, get some exercise as exercise releases natural endorphins and helps with cravings. Don't get frustrated with the little things that really don't matter. First and foremost, above anything else comes your sobriety. Whatever you do, no matter the cravings, do not drink or drug! Do not! You've come to far at this point to go back, your goal is to get and stay sober and I believe in your ability to do so, there is no such thing in my mind as a hopeless alcoholic or addict, just those who refuse to look for and find their courage as well as make positive changes in life. Some simply prefer misery, but I know you are not one of those!

## The Social Element and Relationships

Right now at this point in your life you are beginning the road to recovery and walking on that road to recovery and discovering that road to recovery. You are the priority. Your sobriety must come first at all times, above all other things. The moment you put it at second-best will be the moment you are back out there drinking or drugging. So right now, it's okay to be very selfish. It's okay to say to the wife or to the husband or to the children, I'm sorry but I must take care of myself, because the moment you slip and you put sobriety second everything else goes to hell and I promise the moment you quit putting your recovery first everything DOES go to hell. Now, I'm not saying to neglect the normal responsibilities you have always had such as if you have children and taking care of them or if you have a spouse and being in a relationship with them. What I am saying is right now, you must express to those that love you best that you are going to be asking for their patience as well. It will all come together. It will all become natural, be gentle with yourself. You will learn the various ways in which to cope with those triggers, of changing your routine, of finding new avenues of enjoyment that give you pride and fulfillment and peace, because that's what sobriety will eventually give us.

I know it sounds like the early days could be a torturous and



uncertain time for some of us but that is because some choose it to be that way. Don't forget you will be going through a grieving process. But for the vast majority of us that have wanted to get this right for so very long sobriety is bliss, and that is because we choose it to be that way.

If you are changing your self talk, if you are committing to making those affirmations, if you are wishing to be more inspiring and open to learning more about yourself, if you are truly trying to get rid of the negative talk and the self-hatred and demoralization of yourself then you should be finding the blessings and beauty sobriety has to offer. Do you see the list of positives you made beginning to come true? Has your relationships begun to get better? Not to worry if this aspect of your recovery is taking some time. Those we have formed relationships with will take their own time in viewing us differently. Remember, we have given them reason to not trust or believe in us. Don't expect a parade once you've made your intentions known, it won't happen, they will continue to view the relationship with skepticism and uncertainty. They are afraid to of letting their guard down.

However, once you begin leading your life by example and the longer they watch the positive changes happen they will begin to trust again. It can take a long time so don't beat yourself up if things with

your significant other are not perfect over night. Now with kids, it's much easier to restore, however they do need time to trust you as well as they have their own fear of your past, live and lead by example, they are your children, they love you no matter what, let them talk to you and ask you questions. You would be so surprised at what those little minds can share and offer as support to you. Let them be part of that process.

If after a few weeks of sobriety and abstinence from your drug of choice, you're still feeling very miserable and guilty and feel like not much is changing and all you want to do is go back to using and drinking then there is something not going on in your life correctly, you're not making positive changes, you are not working on your routine and you are not participating in your own HONEST self-exploration. You may be going through the abstinence process just fine, but you are not sober.

Recall the three elements that make up sobriety? So back track and look at your lists, your journal and make some revisions. What exactly is going wrong or not happening you hoped for? Now how can you fix it? What action can you take to get where you want to go? I bet you're not treating yourself better, you're not finding your inner self and not allowing yourself to be content in freeing yourself. You're not rewarding the good things that you are doing for yourself.

Additionally, you may have insecurities you've not yet explored. This keeps people stuck from moving forward, not being able to recognize the fact you **do** have the courage and power to change all this.

Perhaps you're just not staying busy enough.

One of the other suggestions about recovery and coping with the routine, getting through the cravings and not giving in to the triggers, is to stay busy! Keep yourself busy, look for new things to do, clean all the closets in your house, if you have to, get a gym membership and exercise, take a class, find something that will keep you busy, active, engaged, but also that which will allow you to feel good about yourself. Haven't you felt bad enough about yourself long enough? How long in your life have you been miserable, self hating, thinking alcohol and drugs was your only friend and the only thing that made you feel better? Do you really want to continue life like that, being a slave to a substance? No, you are much stronger than that, I know you are. You can be miserable and drunk and drugged up or you can look for opportunity. I hope you choose the opportunity and peace sobriety has to offer you. Yes it takes a bit of work, yes it is going to take you being patient and yes, when all is said and done you will have accomplished probably the hardest task of your life, but you did it yourself because you found your courage and are finding "self". It's tough I know, doing all these activities and list making, reading,

writing looking for the magic "pill" to take it all away, but that's inside of you, it may be buried deep and you have to find it but for each of us it's there.

At some point when at a social event or amongst friends you will be invited to have a drink or engage in using. What do you say to those people? Well frankly, it's none of their business and I live by the motto, "It's none of my business what you think of me". You do NOT need to go into the gory details, you simply say, "No thanks", "Not drinking anymore", " Nah, I'm making some changes", Whatever you decide to tell them keep it brief. You are bound to run into these situations. So it's best to practice and prepare for it. What do I mean by prepare for it? I mean, pick a few phrases that you are comfortable with and practice these statements in the mirror. Say them over and over to yourself until you feel confident and comfortable with your self and you actually believe it. This is part of planning and taking action and getting yourself ready. When engaging in those situations with people you're accustomed to being around thus allowing you to feel comfortable and confident at saying no when approached or are invited to partake in use of substances. Think of it as preparing your arsenal of tools for your recovery. Remember that there's no person or any situation, that is worth using over.

No doubt you'll run into somebody who is persistent on this

matter. Remember, people should respect you and your decisions. If you encounter somebody who is perhaps a little too persistent politely say your goodbyes and walk away. You don't need the aggravation and frustration from someone who is obviously not respecting your space and decision. The first time will obviously be the hardest, but once you make it clear you're not going to be drinking or drugging it becomes easier each time after that and you'll even find yourself becoming proud of yourself!

When at social events always have a plan of action in place. Drive your own car to the events or make sure you have extra money for a cab in the event it becomes too uncomfortable and it's necessary for you to leave right away. Make no apologies for your decision if you need to leave. Use whatever excuse you like, whatever you do, quickly get back in your comfort zone. We all have these first times in which we are invited to a social event or occasion where we know that there will be drinking and perhaps drugs being used. Always always always have a plan of action in place, because remember your sobriety comes first. Above all people places and things.

## Getting Support

*"There are times when we may honestly say 'I am suffering; please help.'  
Just as there are times when it is appropriate to say  
' I see that you are suffering; I am here'"*  
*-David Brazier, The Feeling Buddha*

After years of trying to do it my way and accomplish sobriety by myself. I figured two decades was enough to tell me that I couldn't do it alone. That is not to say however that there are people who manage and obtain quality sobriety by doing it themselves without support groups, 12 step programs, therapy or other means of support. I believe there are just as many people who have maintained an accomplished successful sobriety without any support as there are that have used various programs. You will have to decide for yourself what will meet your needs and help and support you, but also help you remain sober. In a moment, I will explain the various programs of recovery that are available to you, but I would like to talk about being amongst people who understand and know where you're coming from and can relate to your personal story. There is no greater relief in seeing somebody or meeting someone who knows exactly what you are going through at various times in your sobriety.

Sometimes it is necessary to talk over what you're going through with another human being, someone who completely understands the issues you are experiencing and there is no better person to do this with than fellow alcoholic or addict in recovery. It is my personal

opinion, support groups of alcoholics and addicts are a huge bonus to any recovery program. I will say, that I did not want to share any part of myself, nor have to explain to anybody just how bad off I was by the end of my drinking days. I had become quite the isolator and I had remained as such for several months into the beginning of my own recovery. However, once the chemicals in my body were beginning to be replaced with healthier cells, and I began to experience things such as emotions and feelings and fear of what I was going through, I knew that I had to reach out to someone. So I will say that I am one of those whose foundation lies in the 12 step program of Alcoholics Anonymous. However, because of my own recovery and work I do in helping others I've become aware of the vast and many approaches that can be taken. So I'm not going to tell you go to a 12 step program or attend a meeting. Not yet anyway, I will leave that decision up to you, as I would like to explain the basic elements of the program so that you can make an informed decision for yourself.

When I went looking for recovery the only thing I knew of was Alcoholics Anonymous. I did not know there were other options available to me. I credit the beginning days of my recovery to the people in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, but I have since grown and extended my recovery beyond the 12 step programs in a variety of approaches that have worked quite well for me. You too will find

what works best for you. If you find something that brings you comfort than I highly suggest you stick with it.

The first time we open ourselves up to another human being who is understanding of our problems can be a highly emotional time. But the relief and release you will feel by doing so will be something you'll remember for a long time to come. To recognize that there are people like you with your same hurts and pains, your same addiction, your same issues, your same problems, your same fears is beyond explanation until you can experience it yourself. You may be saying to yourself. I'm not going to go to any meeting. I don't want to talk in a group setting. I don't want to speak to anybody about my problems, and that's fine. You may just not be ready quite yet. Maintain your level of comfort in sobriety at all times, never be made to feel you have to do anything that goes beyond that which makes you feel secure and comfortable in a recovery program or approach. You're changing everything about you so when making these changes it's to be expected to feel a little out of sorts and uncomfortable, no one is comfortable with change. However, I would like to encourage you to at least go and sit and listen at least 3 or 4 times, in 3 or 4 meetings you will know if it's the right place for you. One meeting won't be enough to give it a fair chance as you may have to find one more suitable in personalities to your needs. I've been to many meetings in



which people have never spoken a word and just sat and listened. For you ,that may be all you need to do as that was my approach in the early days of posts at meetings.

Thanks to the World Wide Web and the many applications of technology it has afforded us, you may find it helpful to first seek out help online. There are many recovery forums online, all of which have varying qualities that are beneficial depending on again, what is comfortable to you. Some are 12-step based, some are solely cognitive therapy based, some are a mix-and-match of both. Find one online you like best and become a member and just read the stories. Read the information provided and get to know fellow alcoholics and addicts. This is a very safe and comfortable way to explore the recovery world as you are in the privacy of your own home with true anonymity. This will make things much easier on you, should you decide to attend 12 step programs yourself or attend other group support programs for addiction. If I'm being honest, this is how I started my recovery. It wasn't until several weeks later that I went to my first meeting, encouraged by someone I've never met yet in person but have become very fond of as an online friend in recovery.

I didn't want to explain myself to anybody or tell anybody what I was doing. Certainly not my family as they would not believe me anyway and I started by looking for help online and found a wonderful

place in which I could become a member. I could be myself without having to fully disclose myself and found an abundance of support and cried when I realized there were people just like me in the world. This is where my vision to build the Sober Sources Network came from, and I have since developed a forum that I invite you to come to and visit and become part of, The Sober Village, [www.thesobervillage.com](http://www.thesobervillage.com). You will find The Sober Village to be a family atmosphere of people from all walks of life who have come together to support each other online, there are many friendships and relationships which have formed from this vision, and many people walking the path of recovery together.

## The Various Programs

Though there are numerous programs and options in seeking support and recovery tools I find these I've compiled for you to be the best in the "industry". Read through each carefully and see if one is appealing to you. At the end of the guide I'll provide you the information for getting more information on each. As well as provide you with some bonus materials on the worksheets and tools used in some of them. Using a variety of resources and tools in your recovery can only enhance it, you do not have to embrace one program over another but may find a mixture of them all to be beneficial for you if you have decided that you want to work on your own recovery, by yourself without a support group. Just know at all times you do not have to do this alone and you will find recovering alcoholics and addicts to be very generous people who want to help you.

### **Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous**

If you are looking for a group setting of alcoholics and addicts who use a 12 step approach than AA or NA may be a program of interest for you. The primary purpose of Alcoholics Anonymous and narcotics anonymous , is to stay clean and sober and help other alcoholics and addicts achieve sobriety. There are no rules in AA and NA only suggestions, however, there is a suggested program of recovery which involves you working the 12 steps of the program with another

member generally called your Sponsor. It may take you trying a few meetings before you find one that works for you. You will find there is no judgment or ridicule and no one telling you what you HAVE to do. It's a group setting of individuals sharing their story and daily progress of recovery and what is working and how they are maintaining their sobriety. For more information on the 12 steps and the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous and to find meetings you can visit their websites. (See My List of References at the end of this guide. )

### **SMART Recovery (*Self Management And Recovery Training*)**

SMART recovery stemmed from a type of therapy called Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy. (REBT, I'll provide you with a great work sheet on this as a BONUS!) There are pages and pages online that describe what REBT is, but it can all be summed up pretty succinctly:

*"We have control over what we think. What we think determines how we feel and how we behave".*

SMART Recovery® (Self Management And Recovery Training) helps individuals gain independence from addictive behaviors (substances or activities). Our efforts are based on scientific knowledge and evolve as scientific knowledge evolves.

### **Women for Sobriety (WFS), and Men for Sobriety (MFS)**

Women For Sobriety has been providing services to women alcoholics since July, 1976. The WFS [New Life Program](#) grew out of one woman's search for sobriety. (See *Turnabout: New Help for the Woman Alcoholic.*) Now hundreds of WFS self-help groups are found all across this country and abroad. Based upon a Thirteen Statement Program of

positivity that encourages emotional and spiritual growth, the New Life Program has been extremely effective in helping women to overcome their alcoholism and learn a wholly new lifestyle. As a Program, it can stand alone or be used along with other programs simultaneously. It is being used not only by women alcoholics in small self-help groups but also in hospitals, clinics, treatment facilities, women centers, and wherever alcoholics are being treated.

Men For Sobriety is a fairly new concept based on the WFS program. The purpose is to help all men recover from chemical addiction through the discovery of self, gained by sharing experiences, hopes and encouragement with other men in similar circumstances. Recognizes men's complex role in today's society.

### **Rational Recovery**

Rational Recovery® is the exclusive, worldwide source of counseling, guidance, and direct instruction on from addiction to alcohol and other drugs through planned, permanent abstinence. We use an exclusive method, AVRT®, which is by far the most cost-effective, dignified approach of all. Please note this is a fee based program.

### **SOS (Secular Organization for Sobriety)**

SOS is an alternative recovery method for those alcoholics or drug addicts who are uncomfortable with the spiritual content of widely available 12-Step programs. SOS takes a reasonable, secular approach to recovery and maintains that sobriety is a separate issue from religion or spirituality. SOS credits the individual for achieving and maintaining his or her own sobriety, without reliance on any Higher Power. SOS respects recovery in any form regardless of the path by which it is achieved. It is not opposed to or in competition with any

other recovery programs.

### **Life Ring** (From the Founder)

The hallmark of a quality treatment program is to match the treatment to the individual. We adopt that same approach in our self-help work. We encourage each participant to work out their own particular path and to use the group process as a workshop for that purpose. We publish a workbook, [Recovery by Choice](#), as a tool for building one's personal recovery program.

## Relapse Prevention

Depending on which program of recovery you adopt, you may often hear those say relapse is part of recovery. I for one am not one of those who adopt that theory. I think it is quite possible to get clean and sober and remain that way for life. I think using the excuse, relapse is part of recovery, only sets us up for future failure in that in the back of our minds, we will always have that lingering cliché "relapse is a part of recovery". So when I ask you to change your vocabulary, and change your thinking to a more positive way of life. I also want you to adopt my way of thinking, **relapse is not a part of recovery**. Or it doesn't have to be part of your recovery. Isn't it painful and difficult enough to do this once let alone over and over? Don't do that to yourself, I know you can do this right the first time! I have met many people along the way, including myself, who have remained sober since the day we stopped.

If you are one of those that have tried countless times to get clean and sober, but always find yourself going back you may not even be aware of the preliminary symptoms that do lead us to relapse. There are actually physical and mental warning signs that you should be aware of that can help prevent you from going back to your addictive behavior. So the goal in preventing relapse is to be aware of the warning signs that occur. Remember, your recovery is an active

process. You must always be moving forward in your recovery. The moment you slip backwards into your old behaviors and old thinking is the moment you are going to relapse. Sometimes people are going on in their recovery just fine, and all of a sudden there comes a time in which you start feeling very uncomfortable. You may have been sober three months, six months even a year, and all of a sudden you start feeling like your old self. This is called Post Acute Withdrawal Syndrome or simply P.A.W.S. (PAWS). What is P.A.W.S.? Most people are not aware they are going through this when it starts to occur. However, it is my hope that you are informed about this potential cause of relapse. You will hopefully be able to recognize it right away, enabling you to get your recovery back on track. The most prominent warning signs of relapse are as follows:

1. Difficulty in thinking clearly.
2. Difficulty in managing feelings and emotions.
3. Difficulty in remembering things.
4. Difficulty in managing stress.
5. Difficulty in sleeping restfully.
6. Difficulty with physical coordination and accidents.
7. Shame, guilt and hopelessness.

All of these components in part or combined are our immediate warning signs to you that you may be experiencing PAWS, or the



beginning signs of relapse. Essentially, what is occurring is you are forgetting to take care of yourself. You're forgetting to work on that inner you. Your forgetting to reward yourself and make positive changes. You may find yourself getting more and more defensive whining about others instead of yourself. You may develop compulsive behaviors and find yourself isolating more, you may even experience minor depression and feelings that nothing can be solved. You may have a sense of loneliness and frustration. You'll know if you're going through this as you're emotions will run rampant. What you don't know is the fact that this is your mind and body saying "I'm not comfortable just yet, let's go back to the old way". I call it the addiction talking. But you are strong and have already found your courage and can get through this and fight it off, just find your balance again and look for the stressors in your life and eliminate them! Rest assured, these are all normal symptoms of relapse syndrome and can be quickly changed.

By making you aware of PAWS, you will know, if you are experiencing something most go through and hopefully reassure you that you are not going crazy. Just because you are experiencing this change does not mean however you are bound to relapse! Let's make that real clear! Things are going to feel greatly out of sorts. You'll be more miserable than happy at times during this phase. At 6 months

sober I called it my melt down phase. Though there is very little research on why this occurs it is well documented in many resources and offered as an explanation as to why people end up relapsing. In short people do not understand what is going on with them during this time in recovery and grasp desperately at the old addictive voice thinking it will bring them back to normality and comfort them, oh my friend it will not! So what happens next, what should you be doing to avoid relapse? You're going to develop a plan of relapse prevention, relapse prevention should be an essential part of your recovery. The steps of relapse prevention planning, as suggested by Terence T. Gorski in his book, *Staying Sober: A Guide For Relapse Prevention* are as follows:

- Get control of yourself, calm down, breath, find some quiet time to relax and process what is happening.
- Do a self-assessment and find out what is going on in your head and life.
- Educate yourself more about relapse and what to do to prevent it.
- Learn how to interrupt those warning signs before you lose control.
- Learn how to become consciously aware of warning signs as they

develop.

- Ask yourself if your recovery program is helping you to manage the warning signs. Are you getting the right amount of support? Are you speaking with others? Have you been going it alone? Now may be the time to reach out to others who understand you?
- Explain to your significant others, what is going on with you, so they too can understand, as well as help you.

It's important to get control of yourself and prevent relapse by understanding what is going on. It is highly recommended that you turn to people that you can trust and depend on and who can help you take the necessary steps in maintaining your sobriety. If you find yourself unable to control your thoughts emotions and behavior perhaps it best to seek a professional counselor, or even a treatment center. It's okay to seek out professional help.

Remember you will do whatever it takes to remain clean and sober! When getting those emotions under control, review your history of addictive using, what are the warning signs that you would experience or as we've already discussed, what are the triggers that cause you to use? The more information you have about addiction and recovery, the better your chances of being successful at it.

I highly suggest that everybody educates themselves about

their addictions at all times by reading various authors in the field of addiction recovery. You will gain a vast amount of knowledge, as well as understanding as to why people remain addicted and have a hard time of recovery as well as continue to learn new techniques in maintaining your sobriety! Just as you are now reading this guide, become the expert on you! Recognize the warning signs that are leading to a possible relapse. Your problems may be various situations in your environment or something internally within. They may be job stress, health problems, emotional problems, memory problems. people problems, whatever they are, write them down in your journal and explore them. If there is a combination of things going on in your life that are causing you stress and frustration and anger and resentment journal on each topic. Remember writing is a very cathartic method of keeping your recovery in balance.

If you've been able to maintain a week, a month, three months, six months or hopefully longer of recovery you can always get it back on track. **Relapse does not have to be part of your recovery!** If you have managed at least 24 hours of sobriety then you have already proven to yourself you have the power to change and most importantly you found your courage!

## More Tips On Getting Started

Before you start each day clear negative chatter in your head.

Remember you get to choose your attitude, one of the things that keeps people stuck in getting started and getting sober is procrastination. There are varying degrees of procrastination that keep people stuck from moving forward such as waiting for the perfect time, being unrealistic and not taking action or always talking about it but never following through; maybe you have to face and walk through your fear because of worry. Remember there is nothing to worry about when making a positive change in life. The stubborn procrastinator always find an excuse for not progressing or taking action. If you find yourself stuck in making your commitment you may be suffering from procrastination, and it may be worthwhile to examine this aspect of yourself. What exactly are you afraid of and what excuses are you permitting yourself in procrastinating starting to get clean and sober?

As we discussed earlier, it will be necessary to change your routine, and with this comes breaking some of the old bad habits. There are good habits and bad habits. When we have certain bad habits we get very comfortable with them and to break them is uncomfortable. Habits keep us stuck and become in a sense, a convenience. Habits that are harmful to us diminish our inner self and

takes away some of our freedom. When you get into the habit of doing something it prevents you from exploring other ways to live. With addiction it takes away your ability to think clearly and prevents you from growing in a healthy way . You can change your bad habits! You may even find alternative ways of accomplishing those good habits. Even good habits like exercise can turn bad if not careful. I only use this as an example. You may be trying to achieve your fitness goals so hard, you end up injuring yourself or get bored and eventually give up. Bad habits like addiction get worse. When changing your habits start with something simple to understand and feel the discomfort it causes. It will just feel awkward at first. Which shoe do you put on first? If you put on the left shoe first switch it to the right shoe. Do you have coffee and then get the morning paper? Get the morning paper and then have coffee. Use one of your simplest habits to break, to explore how it will feel to change. To break addiction habits tell yourself the following. *I know I can change, I made a decision to change. This is a good change. I'm ready to change.* When making that list of goals you should have something in mind that will help you replace your bad habits.

You must unlearn the old behaviors. Anything that we've learned can be unlearned. This goes for addiction to when making the decision to quit drinking or using drugs. You are unlearning the old

behavior, and this is a good thing! Repeat those positive self statements daily to yourself. You want to change, I know you can change and you are taking back control now. Move one step forward each day, even if they are baby steps. You can always find ways to change for the better!

Rebuild the inner you as you are beginning the road to recovery. I hope that you are finding the benefits of living the sober way of life. Your focus is to get healthy in body mind and spirit. Developing a good diet and exercise routine in my opinion is paramount to your success. I'm sure that most of us who have abused our bodies with alcohol and substances for so long, have developed poor nutritional habits and inadequate exercise programs. Changing your diet to eat well and providing your body the best nutrition is the best thing you can do for yourself in restoring your body. Avoiding caffeine, sugars, white foods in excess will assist your body in quickly restoring itself. Exercise is probably the best thing I did for myself when getting sober. I dropped a lot of weight, began to tone my muscles and all my levels began to stabilize in a few weeks. I went from having a blood pressure of 165/130 to 120/70 in a few months. I went from a 350 cholesterol level to 160 in three months. Everything got better, the fog lifted, my mind became clear I got my high on getting fit.

I can not stress the importance of eating healthy and getting

quality exercise. Getting mentally fit is equally important. You already started by changing your thinking and working on a positive self-image and attitude. There are other ways to practice restoring mental clarity. You must learn how to relax. Find ways to occupy yourself. Stop and smell the roses enjoy an active yet calming lifestyle. Look for information on relaxation and meditation. There is an abundance of self-help information on how to do this. Yoga is something many people enjoy doing to help with not only physical and mental restoration, but spiritual improvement. Continue to improve on assertiveness and developing those positive self affirmations. Never forget you are developing a new you every day. You'll be changing for the better. So I'm time, with changes towards quality of life through your new routine, the work you are doing **will** pay off. Eventually, you will realize one day as you do the work suggested, *Hey! I didn't think about using today!* Mark that day! That's when you will know, you're being truly successful on your journey. That's the day, you'll know it's working! You're in recovery at last and achieving all the elements of sobriety.

Laugh! When was the last time you had a really good laugh? Do you ever recall having a laughing fit? Do you ever recall something that just sets you off and you can't stop laughing? You have tears running down your face so bad you've laughed yourself into crying?



Laughing is a huge way to release stress, frustration and anger. For me it had been so long since the day I had really laughed, the day it happened I shocked myself. I said to myself outloud, I laughed!, My husband said, "Yes you did, I forgot what it sounded like", sad but true. I often take myself too seriously anyway. So for me I have to work at lightening up, never take yourself too seriously, allow yourself the pleasure of laughter. It's a great healer. So laugh often!

## Spirituality

This is probably the most difficult aspect of recovery to help you with as I know it's very personal and private to each of us. So I'll simply say to take what you find beneficial from this part of the guide and leave the rest on the back burner for future consideration.

Spirituality is private and personal. I don't mean you must get religion or become religious, not at all. However, if you have strong roots in your faith, if you believe in God then consider reconnecting with your faith. I think we all can do well to have a level of spirituality for quality living. Please do not confuse spirituality with religion, though they can work nicely together. What I mean is find yourself by what you believe in. Do you believe that there is something much greater than you that exists in this universe? Some call this God, Buddha, Allah, universe, energy, Mother Nature, Spirit Gods, Spirit guides, whatever you believe in connect deeply with it again. If you have never held such a belief this may be hard for you, but I will ask you to try. I think this can be a huge component for a successful recovery. However, if it is something that totally goes against your belief system then do not feel this is cause for failure. The 12 step groups call this your Higher Power, others call it Higher Self, whatever you call it embrace it. I choose Higher Power of whom I call God. The thing I liked about AA, was I was allowed to choose the God of my

understanding. I had been far removed from my faith. I had issues with God, and how I was raised as a Catholic. I wrote down on a paper what I envisioned my Higher Power to be. I gave him qualities I felt belonged to someone greater than myself and that became the direction for my spirituality. You can choose anything you like I have a friend who chose his pet rock, another who chose trees, another who chose celestial bodies and a dear friend who chose HER Harley Davidson motorcycle. If we have something greater than ourselves to believe in we will always have something, or someone to turn over our problems to. This works well for myself and countless others: having something to turn it over to when things in life get too great to bear. Something to turn to, pray to, seek guidance from when we are scared can be great comfort when we have nowhere to turn. Reconnecting with your spirituality will I believe, make you complete, whole and fulfilled. When working with my Higher Power in seeking help and guidance I relied on the Serenity prayer. You may be familiar with it. You may not. I learned this prayer in AA, and I simply share it with you, because during the worst of the early days of my recovery, during every single craving, during the most difficult time as well as the good, this prayer has never ever failed me and it has become part of my new routine.

*God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

Connect with your spiritual side, find your inner self and watch the healing that will occur within you. Here are some comments by a diverse group of people as they explain their concept of spirituality. I hope this helps you in finding yours if you feel that it will help in your recovery. Recovery is a personal plan, of which you take personal responsibility.

- *Today, I will live with my pain and frustration by dealing with my own feelings. The thought of drinking has long since left me. It's that never ending battle between the good and bad inside of me. Trying to get rid of the thoughts in me that made me want to drink. My road is tough. Lot's of debris scattered all about. My road has pain and lots of misery on it. The biggest plus to my finding sobriety is my spirituality. I'm evil in my disease. I take people down to my level where ever I go in my disease. It's an evil world. My disease sits on the other side of the fence and growls at me every day. It's always out there. I can never let up on my recovery.*
  
- *I believe in something, greater than my self. whether it be God or Buddha ..the star's the moon...or great loving healing energy .Actually I believe in it all...So when I am needing something to pull me from my depths of darkness....and help me to dust my self off and carry on...I just believe...reach out. pray...I hope every one here has something that they can call upon to safely pick them up and carry them when they need to be .*

- *A religious person goes to church to stay out of hell. A spiritual person has already been there.*
  
- *What you believe and how you interpret and/or practice that belief, whether it be a HP or your chosen path of recovery, need not be apologized nor defended by you to anyone. It wouldn't matter if your God was Ursus, the great cave bear written by Jean Auel, or your method of staying clean was by walking over hot coals twice a day. These are yours, and therefore unchallengeable (although I might wonder how you do it w/o burning your feet J).*

*But seriously, I'm a spiritual person with my own personal belief in God. You don't have to apologize for yours...*

- *I was raised atheist.....so my path to spirituality has been a rocky one.....I was raised by my father to believe that there is no God.....that if there is a God bad things shouldn't happen.....he is a very intelligent person and his arguments are always so reasonable....which created a complex in me that has made it very hard for me to come into my now very strong belief in God.....and the connectedness of nature and life and all things.....and the fact that i have a purpose in this life that is higher than myself.....*
  
- *Meditation is a very important part of my daily spiritual life. I had read things and listened to stuff before coming into recovery, but never practiced it in earnest. Don't think I could make it through a day without it now, that is for sure.*

## **Implement Your Plan: Take Action Today!**

Let's take a look at your plan of action. Are you ready to get started to you ready to make the commitment. Are you looking forward to the new you, that is about to blossom, won't you be glad to get rid of the shame and guilt. Then let's look at what we've outlined thus far for you.

- Make a list of the Positives and Negatives related to sobriety and your addiction. Remember the positives should state the benefits of a sobriety. The negatives should state the problems your addiction has caused/cost you.
- Decide if treatment is for you and prepare for withdrawal and detox.
- Plan to change your routine and get rid of anything that may cause temptation.
- Make new goals and move toward achieving them.
- Write down and practiced daily your positive self talk.
- Make those behavioral changes and journal often.
- Explore emotions and plan for triggers.
- Be patient at all times with yourself. You are undergoing a major change, let your body heal and repair itself.
- Keep changing your routine and explore your new interests.
- Give group, online support, or other programs a chance, find

- something that works for you and stick with it.
- Recognize the warning signs of relapse. Be aware of them at all times!
  - Assess your plan of action often. Make changes that are always in your best interests.
  - Get healthy in body mind and spirit and work hard at it! Think positive!
  - Live in the now and never ever give in to any excuse to drink or drug. Remember you are responsible. You are not weak. Your courage is within you. And you do have the power to change!

I know it it's a hard step to take when it comes to admitting to ourselves the troubles we have gotten ourselves into with our drugs of choice. I know what keeps us stuck is the fear of sobriety and the unknown of what recovery will bring. What I also know is each of us has the strength to take the leap of faith and can appreciate the fact that life is better when sober. You no longer have to live in guilt and shame. You no longer have to live a lie. You no longer have to have the sadness and misery that goes along with this lifestyle of addiction. It is my greatest wish for you that you walk through that fear and give your life a chance, being sober. You only have to do it once. You can begin filling that dark hole inside of you with joy. You can step back

into life again, a whole person. I extend my hand to you to join me on the road to recovery. Please won't you join me?



## Helpful Resources

Sober Sources Network

[www.sobersources.com](http://www.sobersources.com)

The Sober Village

[www.thesobervillage.com](http://www.thesobervillage.com)

Sober Teens Online

[www.soberteensonline.com](http://www.soberteensonline.com)

Recovery Works

[www.recoveryworks.info](http://www.recoveryworks.info)

Alcoholics Anonymous

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

Narcotics Anonymous

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

Getting Sober: What To Expect

[www.sobertime.net](http://www.sobertime.net)

Recovery Match For 2

[www.recoverymatchfor2.com](http://www.recoverymatchfor2.com)

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