

## Introduction to Recovery

Welcome and congratulations! Your decision to read this book as part of your recovery program will be rewarding to you. Congratulate yourself for your efforts so far.

I am assuming that you have had your moment of truth; you are ready to accept the fact that you have an addiction problem, and you are ready to start your recovery. If not, you should focus on that question before going on with this program. You will find "Personal Addiction Evaluation" a helpful place to start. If you are reading this book because someone you know has a chemical dependency problem and they aren't acknowledging it, educate yourself, and consider an "intervention."

If you are feeling bad about yourself, feeling that you are an "addict" or "alcoholic," it is important to give yourself a break. As Billy Joel sang, "You're only human." Everyone has had or will have major life issues to confront. Recovery from drug and alcohol abuse is just one of many types of recovery. The process of recovery is similar to recovery from a physical disability, the death of a family member, a poor business decision, or rehabilitation from chemical dependency.

It is important to understand that you are not responsible for your addiction, but you are responsible for your recovery. You have genetic, family, and social issues that have propelled you into addiction. You didn't start out using alcohol or drugs with a goal to be an addict, but anyone who has experienced life problems due to "using" and doesn't start recovery is choosing to be ill.

It can be frustrating (if not overwhelming) to start a new game without knowing the rules or even what the game is about. Don't Allow Yourself to Get Overwhelmed! Yes, you have a lot of work ahead of you, and you have the rest of your life to work on becoming the best you can be. By taking one day at a time, you can achieve all your realistic recovery and life goals. The most important thing is that you make a concerted effort to get started. The pilot of an airplane must go full throttle to get the plane off the ground. Once the plane is flying, the power can be reduced and the plane will stay in the air. Use this "full throttle" approach with your recovery.

By understanding "recovery," it will be possible for you to embrace it and make it your way of life. Recovery is not an event. You don't do it and then it is completed. Recovery is about truth, honesty, and love. It is a process of looking at reality, adapting, and moving on to a more positive and healthy lifestyle. To be successful, you will need to be involved in changing your values, beliefs, and ways of living. This is not something to resist unless you don't want to be healthier. It is something that most people will have to experience during their lifetime if they are to become and stay happy and healthy. Not entering recovery is a decision to embrace a self-destructive lifestyle.

NO ONE has perfect recovery, yet it is important to strive for it. I hope that you are excited about Your Recovering Future. You will receive so much more than you will ever give up. Recovery is a blessing.

Condensed, excerpts from **Chapter One: “Immediate Recovery”**

## A New Beginning: Introduction To Recovery

Your Recovering Future begins as soon as you have: 1) begun abstinence, 2) taken your first action step, such as your first counseling appointment, first 12 Step meeting, or first day in a treatment program, and 3) “surrendered” to recovery. You will keep it going, one step at a time.

Until you start recovery, you are stuck in a “pseudo” or partial recovery, a “nowhere land” with your mind fogged in confusion and your heart caught between two worlds. Treatment people call this the “pretreatment stage.” Part of you knows the reality of your “using,” but you are unable to give it up. The healthy parts of you aren’t strong enough to move you into recovery. You may role-play recovery, but the majority of you hasn’t started recovery. If you feel that you are in partial recovery, keep moving forward, one step (and a half) at a time, and nurture your progress.

You may not consciously want to “use,” and abstinence may feel wonderful. When this “pink cloud” collapses (and it will), your fall to earth will be much easier if you have begun to build a recovery structure.

If you really want to start your recovery, take action now - this very moment! If you genuinely cannot begin immediately, take action to insure that you will follow through. For example, sign and date a contract with yourself, post it on your refrigerator, and make an appointment with a professional counselor for the first possible appointment time.

### **IMMEDIATE TREATMENT**

**Medical Evaluation:** Get a complete physical examination as soon as possible.

**Detoxification:** Abstaining from drugs will cause your body to “withdraw,” called detoxification or “detox.” Your withdrawal symptoms may be severe. A common withdrawal level is similar to a mild to severe flu. It is best to be under the care of a physician. Be careful.

### **IMMEDIATE RECOVERY WORK**

To the degree that you were involved in your addiction, your recovery will create a void. Your emotional responses to that vacuum (loss, anxiety, depression, loneliness, etc.) will be transformed as you fill your life with positive, clean and sober people,

places, and activities. By creating this void, you have opened up the space in your life for recovery to enter. The void must not be left vacant or it will become filled by chance or worse! The following steps are essential for starting your recovery.

Recovery Contract: Make and sign a contract with yourself and possibly others. Make your contract clear, specific, and dated.

Staying Clean and Sober: Your initial decision to abstain must be supported with a plan to accomplish it. Avoiding, ignoring or denying the issue of using will not be enough. You need people for support, strategies for direction, and tools for development.

Consistent Recovery Focus: Find a way to remember to keep your focus on your recovery, especially during the times and at places or with people that you previously used.

Daily Recovery Activity: Choose an activity that gives you a concrete reason to be abstinent. An AA meeting, time with family or a church activity are some examples. Plan a week in advance.

Support System: The support of clean and sober or non-using friends and family will be invaluable. Affirm healthy relationships and reach out and start new recovering relationships. Emotional Support: It is essential that you have support to deal with new and difficult emotions and to develop and maintain healthy emotional development.

Mentor Role: You will greatly benefit from several roles: mentor, sponsor and counselor. They are guides who will be there for you through difficult times.

Reality Testing: Checking out your internal “reality” with the external “reality,” through feedback from others, gives you additional perspectives and solutions.

## **TREATMENT PATHS**

Check out different treatment options until you are certain that you have found the best one. The options are an inpatient or outpatient treatment program. Inpatient treatment is all day, seven days a week. Outpatient treatment is a few hours a week to intensive-multiple hours and days a week, or an individualized program with one or more sessions a week with a therapist, counselor, coach or group, and one or more 12 Step or other recovery meetings. It is essential that you are willing to accept more intensive treatment if you find you are progressing poorly or have returned to “using.”

Finding The Resources: Finding a counselor, support group, or treatment program can be pretty easy, but finding the right one that is a good fit for you is harder. Ask someone you trust, talk with your company’s employee assistance program, or check out local referral services or the yellow pages.

As “co-dependents,” your spouse and other family members should become educated about addiction, and probably will need their own treatment. They may participate in your treatment program or focus on their own. Alanon, Naranon and CODA 12-Step groups are usually available

Embrace and use structure. If you are not near any programs, build your own structure and use it consistently. Have healthy places to go, people to see, and things to do every hour and every minute of every day.

### Professional Counseling

Professional counselors, coaches or psychotherapists are available for individual, relationship, and family counseling. Not all professionals understand chemical dependency, have good skills, or will work well with you. You need to feel comfortable with your counselor's personality and style. Discomfort early on may be just your anxiety; give a qualified counselor a chance, unless you have a strong negative reaction.

Treatment or Therapy Group run by a professional can be very helpful. You should expect them to be well run and consistent.

### Self-Help Programs

Whether you make use of self-help programs in addition to a professional program or as your only program, they are available and quite valuable. The support of recovering peers is very valuable because they will support you and confront you (hopefully). You learn together, grow together, and hopefully form satisfying friendships. They will be there for you, whenever.

Because volunteers generally run self-help groups, there can be problems with consistency. If one meeting doesn't meet your needs, try another until you find what you need.

Alcoholics Anonymous: The fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous has a long and successful history. It is based on a spiritual-psychological-social program that has much to offer the recovering individual. Meetings are very available. <[www.alcoholics-anonymous.org](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org)>

Narcotics Anonymous: <[www.na.org](http://www.na.org)>

Cocaine Anonymous: <[www.ca.org](http://www.ca.org)>

Marijuana Anonymous: <[www.marijuana-anonymous.org](http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org)>

Al-Anon: A 12 Step-based program for the “co-dependent” families and friends of alcoholics. <[www.alanon.org.za](http://www.alanon.org.za)>. The drug abuser counterpart program is Nar-Anon. <[www.naranon.com](http://www.naranon.com)>. CoDA: Co-Dependency Anonymous has a general focus.

Rational Recovery: Rational Emotive Therapy is a non-spiritual, self-help organization for recovering from all addictions. <[www.positiveatheism.org](http://www.positiveatheism.org) >

Secular Organizations for Sobriety: S.O.S. is a non-spiritual, self-help organization for recovering from all addictions. Its focus is on self-reliance. <[www.secularsobriety.org](http://www.secularsobriety.org)>

Women For Sobriety: Women for Sobriety is a non-spiritual self-help organization, based on self-development. <[www.womenforsobriety.org](http://www.womenforsobriety.org)>

Men For Sobriety: M.F.S. is a sobriety group for men based on the format and principles of Women For Sobriety. <[www.informedmonton.com](http://www.informedmonton.com)>

The personal support of peers with similar issues is more comfortable than working with the scholastic professional. You learn together, grow together, and hopefully form satisfying friendships.

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## **RECOVERY RESOURCES**

The resources most commonly available are:

### Social Sober Centers

Sober centers offer support activities, recovery meetings, and a refuge from the “using” world. Usually they are started and supported by a group of recovering individuals and ask for minor dues. Some are supported by governmental funds. The most common names are the “Alano Club” <[www.grrr.net/alano](http://www.grrr.net/alano)> and “(City or Area Name) Fellowship.”

National Council on Alcoholism & Other Drug Addictions: N.C.A. offers education, crisis counseling, and treatment referrals to the public. <[www.aca-usa.org](http://www.aca-usa.org)>

Alcoholism (& Drug Abuse) Council: Alcoholism Councils are very similar to N.C.A.s, but they are not affiliated with them.

## **RESOURCE INFORMATION**

There are a number of possible sources for information and evaluation. Your “Yellow Pages” will be one of your best resources. Look under “Alcoholism Information & Treatment Centers” or “Drug Abuse & Addiction Information & Treatment Centers.”

American Society for Addiction Medicine, The: <[www.asam.org](http://www.asam.org)>

County services or county hospital: Consult your Telephone Book

National Institute on Drug Abuse: <[www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov)>

Relapse Referrals: Ask any referral resource or CENAPS Corp.: <[www.cenaps.com](http://www.cenaps.com)>

Adult Children of Alcoholics: <[www.adultchildren.org](http://www.adultchildren.org)>

Al-Anon/Alateen Family Group Headquarters: <[www.al-anon.alateen.org](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org)>

Debtors Anonymous: <[www.debtorsanonymous.org](http://www.debtorsanonymous.org)>

Emotions Anonymous: <[www.emotionsanonymous.org](http://www.emotionsanonymous.org)>

Gamblers Anonymous: <[www.gamblersanonymous.org](http://www.gamblersanonymous.org)>

National Association for Children of Alcoholics: <[www.nacoa.org](http://www.nacoa.org)>

Overeaters Anonymous: <[www.oa.org](http://www.oa.org)>

### Educational Resources

Hazelden Educational Services: <[www.hazelden.org](http://www.hazelden.org)>

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information: <[www.health.org](http://www.health.org)>

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism: <[www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)>

Bookstores: Many mainstream bookstores now carry some addiction and recovery materials. Where available, “Serenity” bookstores will offer a larger selection.

### Nutritional Resources

Pacific Biologic: <[www.pacificbiologic.com](http://www.pacificbiologic.com)>

## **Chapter Two: Early Recovery**

### **Introduction (only)**

Recovery is a major life transition. It will alter your relationships, your self-image, and your self-esteem. Your beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions about yourself, your place in the world, and your future will change. Yes, as a part of life, recovery is unpredictable, unsettling, and challenging. Yet, what an exciting adventure! It is yours for the asking, to be created as you choose. Many questions will come up for you: What will life be like without “using?” What will I have to give up? How will I have to change my life? Can I do it?

Like life, recovery can be represented as a half glass of water. It is both “half empty” and “half full.” If or when you choose to dwell on the half-empty part of recovery, you will be more aware of the negative. If you focus on the half-full part, you will be more aware of the positive. You will create in your life those things you think about most frequently and most intensely.

For most people, early recovery will be difficult and, at times, a struggle. Within a few months, it will begin to come together, and you’ll be starting to look forward to Your Recovering Future. Yet, people have different patterns of how they experience recovery. Some will feel good about it in the early stages and then get stuck and have difficulty between the first and second year. At any time in your recovery, if things become difficult and stay that way for several months, this is feedback that something is wrong.

You need to actively explore your issues and deal with them. This doesn't mean that you will get immediate insight and relief. It means that action is your best response for desired results. The problem may be something you can't do anything about for now, and you will need to live with it or grow through it.

Recovery is a process that will cause you to know yourself more intimately and to grow from within. It will open you up and rejuvenate your life. Ultimately, recovery is about your life being more and better than life was when you were "using." If not, what will keep you motivated to stay abstinent? Your recovery will happen if you focus on the half-full part of the glass. As you embrace your recovery and it grows stronger, you will find your life improving. You will have more and more opportunities to do the healthy things you desire, and eventually you will do the things you once only dreamed of doing.

*Good Luck,*

*Tom*