

Wisdom for the Win in Recovery

Brought to you by:



Scan this code get your buy your copy of
Getting Started in Sobriety or visit
<https://amzn.to/3Z99z2K>



Scan this code to download all of my contact
on social media or visit
devonfitzpatrick.com/sober for more content

The Purpose of Life Through Phases of Recovery

Active addiction - *Get Messed Up*

Early Sobriety - *Get Sober*

Continued Sobriety - *Get BETTER*

Sobriety is transformational. It enables us to recover what we lost to addiction, including ourselves. Many of us lost ourselves in addiction and our lives went with it. Our finances, relationships and health were in ruin. We forgot what it was like to feel happy and whole. We lost touch with our integrity, love, and honesty. Fortunately, recovery can give all this back—and more!

When we choose to live free of alcohol and drugs, we open the door to a new world. In doing so, we open the door to an entirely new version of ourselves. Our integrity returns. We reconnect with spiritual principles and become guided by a higher order of reality. We find ourselves happy without the need for any chemicals to do the heavy lifting.

Slowly, we return to health and feel a sense of vitality. Family, friends, and colleagues begin to see us as someone they can trust and respect. Without drugs and alcohol draining our bank accounts, we reach a place of financial stability. Finally, we feel ready to take on life as it is without the need to escape in intoxicated oblivion. We enter the new world, and become the new *us*. Is it time for you to get started in sobriety? If so, read on!

Core Principles of Whole Person Wellness

1. Regular Physical Activity
2. Clean, Healthy Eating
3. Practicing Mindfulness Daily
4. Ensuring Financial Stability
5. Cultivating Positive Relationships
6. Continual Self-Improvement
7. Meaningful Service to Others
8. Peace With the Universe

Exercise: **Imagining Life Without Drugs and Alcohol**



What will your life be like without drugs and alcohol? What will be the difference in you, your relationships, finances, health, and so on? The decision to remove alcohol and other drugs (AOD) from your life's equation may be one of the most impactful choices you ever make. Let's take a moment to imagine it now:

Take some deep breaths. Slow down your mind.

Now, look to the future—1, 5, 10 years from now. Imagine the peace, the health, the happiness you feel living sober.

Begin visualizing the progress you've made without AOD holding you back...

*Now freeze on a particular day. Feel the sense of freedom you will have then, here in this very moment. Experience that joy, easiness, vitality, and fulfillment as if it is happening **right now**—this is the life you can create by committing to sobriety.*

Now, visualize what might happen if you choose to continue in addictive patterns.

What happens to your relationships? Your mental and physical health? Your finances and career?

It's scary, isn't it?

Return to this exercise as often as you need to help motivate you in your journey of recovery.

It has been found that self-efficacy is perhaps the greatest predictor of sobriety in substance abuse recovery. Those who stay sober the longest are the ones who believe they can do it.¹ It's like Henry Ford said, "Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right." *Be intentional about fostering your faith in your own recovery on a daily basis.*

Strategy: **3 Steps to Develop Self Belief**



-
- 1) *Surround yourself with encouraging people who have long-term sobriety.* This is one of the greatest benefits 12-step communities offer! Seeing their success will empower you to be successful in sobriety, too. It is especially good to get phone numbers of recoverees you resonate with who you can talk to at a 1:1 level about life and call when you need a good word to keep from going back to the old ways.
 - 2) *Make happiness happen!* When we feel good, we are more likely to make healthy, wise choices. This is covered in depth in part II. Summary: exercise, meditate, eat fruits and vegetables, drink water, get enough sleep, and stay connected in life-giving relationships.
 - 3) *Acknowledge your wins.* Every day you go to sleep without a drug or a drink in your system is a win! Acknowledge this triumph by simply saying to yourself, "I am so happy I made the choice to be clean and sober today." These are like tally marks on your score card that can give you a much needed boost of confidence when times get hard. The same holds for milestones like 1 week, 1 month, 3 months, etc.

¹[Rates and predictors of relapse after natural and treated remission from alcohol use disorders - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

Reflection: **Building Your Life Brick-by-Brick**

Consistency and patience are your greatest allies for transforming your life coming out of addiction. Addiction has many, many downfalls—but let's be honest—there are reasons we drank and used for so long. We may reach a point in early sobriety when we think, “Is this really worth it?” Be patient, trust the process, consistently make high-quality decisions, and invest in yourself. If you do this, you will see the almost limitless power the recovery holds from transforming your life.



Each day, each decision is a brick. They all stack upon one another to form a life we have built for ourselves through hard work and dedication. Are you ready to build?!

Challenge: **Hitting Your “FVW” Quotas**



The simple call to action here is to reach your *Fruits-Vegetables-Water (FVW) Quota*. This amounts to ~3 servings of fruit, ~5 servings of vegetables, and 1/2 your weight (pounds) in ounces of water. Hitting these quotas on a regular basis will improve:

- Happiness, feelings of wellbeing, and life satisfaction
- A sense of contentment, calm, and optimism
- Focus, clarity, and energy
- Symptoms of depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues

It may seem daunting to leap directly from almost no fruits and vegetables with little water intake up to your FVW quotas. I recommend starting with what feels comfortable and enjoyable, then steadily elevating to this goal. Here are some simple strategies to get there:

- Start your day with a tall glass of water
- Eat one salad every day (this can be 2-5 servings on its own)
- Sneak in a fruit or vegetable and glass of water with every meal
- Use a water tracker app if it is difficult to remember *to* drink and *how much* you have drank
- Consume drinks like tomato juice and smoothies instead of soda
- Identify your favorite fruits and vegetables; keep them on stock in your pantry and fridge
- Begin to *see yourself* as a person who loves and regularly eats healthy foods—this identity shift can be a powerful driving force in *any* life transformation

Meditation: **Flipping the Light Switch**



-
1. *Close your eyes and place your hand over your heart*
 2. *Breath in through your belly, hold, and release even more slowly*
 3. *Bring to mind a positive thought of gratitude, compassion, love, hope, whatever else your heart desires*
 4. *Visualize positive energy like light, stars, or fireworks traveling from your heart to your mind*
 5. *Continue breathing, visualizing, and holding this positive for 1-2 minutes*

Do you feel that?! That is called heart-brain coherence. The effects of heart-brain coherence can last for up to 4-6 hours. I like to reach this state throughout my day to experience its benefits almost constantly. I do one of these meditations in the morning, one around lunch time, another after work, and once more before bed. However, this is *your* practice. Experiment with HBC and use it as a way to feel good *without* drugs and alcohol or other addictive behaviors.

“When you own your breath, no one can steal your peace.”

~Wim Hof

Reflection: **Shoveling Dirt to Feel Whole**



*Every day we stay sober,
Every moment spent with a loved one,
Every healing thought and positive feeling,
Every healthy food choice and decision to exercise,
Every minute of meditation, reflection, and prayer
Every meeting, group, and counseling session we attend
Every act of legal, economic, and household responsibility
and so on, and so on—*

*All these are like a shovel full of dirt. We dig, scoop, and pour them into our lives.
With enough shovel fulls, we fill the emptiness inside and begin to feel whole.*

*In wholeness, there is no longer an intense drive to fill this hole with destructive,
addictive behaviors. Instead, we choose to live a healthy life with the natural highs
of uplifting moments and abiding joy that life in sobriety has to offer.*

*When we look back and ask ourselves, “How did I become whole? When was my
emptiness filled?”, we realized that the gnawing pain of the void inside was not
filled in any one moment. Rather, it was a long series of small, positive
choices—little shovels full of dirt—that brought us our newfound peace, fulfillment,
and liberation.*

The Cycle of Sobriety

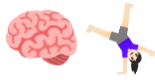
As we work on ourselves and our lives, we become more and more integrated. We connect with parts of ourselves that have been wounded and find healing with care and time. We detach from the false versions of ourselves that were created through the chaos of addiction. We begin to feel a sense of “Good, Orderly Direction” in our lives that brings peace and progress where we only knew destruction and despair. Recovery brings us many gifts. Our daily choice to refuse our drug of choice allows us to restore our lives into working order and feel a sense of wholeness. It is a **virtuous cycle** that goes something like this:

The Cycle of Sobriety



Entering the cycle is the most difficult part. Once you get it going, though, it can really take off! After using the practices in this book and committing to abstinence, you will begin to make a full turn away from life of addiction and step into the glorious light of freedom from alcohol and drugs. It begins with that initial act of bravery in the first days, weeks, and months to not go back (even if you really want to). Eventually, sobriety will be second nature and instead of wondering how you will ever stay sober, you will wonder how you were ever addicted in the first place.

Strategy: **Whole Person Sober Shift**



-
- **Immediately change your thoughts.** *“This wouldn’t be a good time, this would be an invitation to disaster.”*
 - **Generate a powerful emotion.** *Meditate on the hardship of your past, the promise of the future, and why you want to stay sober. This will produce a heartfelt feeling of importance.*
 - **Take definitive, redirective action.** *Message back, “Can’t hang now, about to hit an AA meeting. You can come though, if you want!”*
 - **Make a shift in your environment.** *Leverage psychology by going outside if you were inside, or getting to another room, changing the show you’re watching, or grabbing a nice non-alcoholic beverage. When the craving/desire/temptation hits, do something different so your brain associates that newness in the environment with the end of that situation.*

Reflection: **Statement of Recovery**



I choose to be free of alcohol and drugs. They no longer serve me. My life is better without them. They have taken control of my life, but I am taking back my control!

By this choice, I am opening the door to a new life, a new me. This new life in recovery is healthy, stable, happy, and fulfilling. I choose this life over my life in addiction, no matter what—one day at a time.

Exercise: **SOBER Outcomes Plan**

Strategic Outline Building Enhanced Recovery Outcomes Plan



1. **Predicting Pain**

- a. At the top of the page write, “What if I go back to _____?” (insert drug of choice)”
- b. List the fears you have about how your life may go if you relapse *and especially* if you decide not to get sober again
- c. Take several deep breaths. Soak in the gravity of this situation. If this was emotional for you, please, take a break. This is the hardest part—it gets better from here!

2. **Prevention-Preparation**

- a. Now, list all the people, activities, mindsets, habits, coping skills, et cetera that you can use to stay sober
 - i. Such as:
 - Call my sponsor every day for the first month and hit three-five meetings per week
 - Workout 4-6 times a week
 - Meditate for 5-15 minutes everyday
 - Facetime with daughter at noon every day
 - Write a gratitude list every morning soon as I wake up
 - Replace the thought, “I am such a loser,” with “I am an overcomer”
 - Volunteer at the animal shelter once or twice a month
 - Go to church and meet one new person each week
 - And so on, and so on, and so on
 - ii. Challenge yourself! Can you get to a list of 30? 50? 100? 200?

3. **The Prize of Perseverance**

- a. Now, let's dial in on the benefits of long-term, continuous sobriety
 - i. Write a list with as much detail as possible of the benefits of sustained sobriety. Do your best to be clear, vivid, and specific to activate the mechanisms in your brain which will help to create those realities.
 - ii. Once again, take a few deep breaths. Drink in the difference between the pain of relapse and the promise of recovery. This is a big deal! This is not easy, but it is worth it.

4. The Price of Passivity

- a. The final piece is to list the dangers of taking sobriety for granted without working a rigorous program. How could we start slipping in a way that leads to relapse? What would the warning signs be? How would we react, then, if faced with temptation? Here is what this list could look like:
 - i. I can get bored or have too much free time on my hands
 - ii. I could get overwhelmed and not be in the habit of using my new coping skills
 - iii. I could turn to drugs or alcohol when I get depressed instead of my mental health team and my new wellness practices
 - iv. I might get caught off guard if I bump into an old using buddy
 - BONUS POINTS for writing a plan next to each item on this last list!

This fear-setting exercise adapted from Tim Ferris can be a powerful tool for better decision making in stressful situations like removing addictive substances from your life. That's a hard choice! We became addicted for a reason—we like getting drunk and high. Even when you put AOD behind you, you will still think about them, have desires, cravings, and urges. It would be an easy choice to go back to them. Now, though, you see how that would lead to/continue a hard, hard life. However, even though it's a hard choice to say "no" to yourself, you can see from #3 on this exercise, that the hard choice of sobriety leads to a much easier, happier, more rewarding, loving, and fulfilling life.