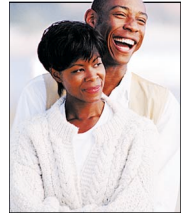


► New Directions

If you're newly drug-free, we have good news and bad news about your life: It's **yours** again. Now, all you have to do is make it worth living.

How? The details are up to you, but it's probably going to involve change, and it might not be fast or easy. But, it *is* worth it.

Because even though change can *look* more risky than the everyday grind (no matter *how* boring and frustrating the everyday grind may seem at times), it's part of life.



Serious fun. A secret to recovery is to take fun seriously—and to find ways of sharing it with others.

And if you stop and think about it, you may realize that the best, most exciting, most gratifying *fun* times in your life involved the most change—and often, serious change.

So try something new: aerobics or aikido, web-surfing or white-water rafting, public speaking or public service—whatever *you* think may help you connect with the future you want to live.

If you look hard enough, you'll see alternatives to an unhappy, stuck, chemically-dependent life *everywhere*.

In case you'd forgotten, you're a unique person who's perfectly designed to go out into the world and discover what you need—and what needs doing.

Now, all you have to do is go out there and do it. ■



This is one in a series of publications on drugs, behavior, and health published by Do It Now Foundation. Please call or write for a list of current titles, or visit our web site at www.doitnow.org.



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Just undolt

Cleaning Yourself UP!



► A guide to getting your head & heart (& body & soul) back together again for people who are becoming chemically independent

A Do It Now! Publication by Jim Parker

Chemical Consciousness The Upside's Downside

What goes up must come down. It's a basic law of physics. We call it gravity, but the principle extends further than simply explaining why apples fall down.

It also describes what happens to people when they pump themselves up with chemicals: Eventually, they come down, too.

It's the First Law of Chemical Consciousness—the old rebound principle. And it holds true no matter what your favorite psychoactive substance is—or used to be. Coffee or cocaine, alcohol or LSD, sooner or later you come down.



Captain Recovery. No matter how many times you've slipped up in the past, now's a great time to learn about gravity—or figure out flying.

And when you do, you'll notice that the First Law has a corollary: The higher you go, the further you fall. That means that once you *do* come down, you usually end up lower than you started.

What do you do about it *after* the fact? Well, a first impulse may be to use more of the chemical you started with (or even a different one) to get back up (or down) to where you started from. That's one option.

Of course, that ultimately leaves you even further down—or further *up* (or off) the wall, if you've been climbing one lately.

The other option is to stop the cycle completely. It's trickier, since it involves effort and patience on your part and requires putting up with feeling down long enough to let your body re-center itself. But it *can* be done.

That's where we come in.

In this pamphlet, we'll talk about ways of breaking out of the chemical-dependency trap and discuss techniques that can make the withdrawal process easier on *your* body and mind.

Gravity's revenge. The principle that Newton discovered after being bonked by an apple applies to the nonphysical world, too—sometimes with a vengeance.

The First Law

The higher you go, the further you fall. So give yourself space to land somewhere lower than where you started—and time to adjust to the new altitude.



Because even though time is a factor in freeing yourself from chemicals, a lot can be done to cut that time to a minimum, and get you back on your feet again—one day and one step at a time.

BodyTalk ► Body/Mind 101

Mind and body are inseparable parts of the same basic unit; what happens to one automatically affects the other.

That means that getting back to where you want to be will require paying attention to the needs of both.

Once you've gotten over your immediate reliance on drugs and/or alcohol (and you really *do* have to begin there), start with a general cleaning-up program, like the one outlined in the sections that follow.

It's designed to give your body what it really needs—exercise, nutrition, and rest—rather than the chemical substitutes you've been using as your personal gun, whip, and chair.

Poor nutrition doesn't just cause poor *physical* health. Moodiness, irritability, restlessness, fatigue, and many other “emotional” problems are often directly linked to poor nutrition.

So if you're not eating well, all you're eating is calories—and potential problems.

But what does “eating well” mean?

NUTRITION

It means eating the same stuff that your mom probably tried to get you to eat a long time ago: Veggies and fresh fruits and grains.

While you're at it, you might want to avoid heavily-processed foods and anything that contains ingredients you can't pronounce or spell, like polysorbate-60 or calcium disodium edta (whatever *it* is).

Also, cut back on caffeine and sugar, since both are almost *guaranteed* to kick in cravings for whatever you're trying to clear out of your system.

Since chemical use tends to deplete vitamins and minerals in the body (especially the B vitamins), supplements are also a **great** idea.

It's a tricky subject, though, since all vitamins aren't the same. Some—like vitamin C and the B-complex vitamins—are water-soluble, so your body only uses what it needs and excretes the rest.

Other vitamins, though, are fat-soluble (such as A, D and E), and can build up to harmful levels in the body.



▶ Run Away From Problems!

Along with proper nutrition, exercise does a lot to tone the body and tune the spirit.

Because not only does sustained activity improve physical fitness, it also triggers a surge in the body's production of **endorphins**, the chemical messengers that act in the brain to increase positive feelings and reduce stress.

You might have heard about endorphins as the basis for the so-called "runner's high."

It's not hype. Runners **do** report an expanded sense of well-being after a run.

But increased endorphin levels have been linked to activities other than running. In fact, recent research shows that **any** intense physical exercise can trigger the same response.

That means that swimming, walking, or almost anything else that gets the heart thumping and the muscles pumping can inspire a major uplift in mood and outlook.

Try it—even if you don't really feel like it.

After all, you've been doing what you **feel** like all along. And look where **it's** got you. ■



If you want to know more, contact a nutritionist or ask someone knowledgeable at a local health-food store.

Remember, though: *Everyone* has an opinion about nutrition, and what works for someone else (alfalfa sprouts on carob-chip Tofuti?) may not work for you.

So listen to your body. And if you don't feel your absolute *best* (both physically and mentally), listen some more. There's still room for improvement.

SLEEP

Good-old, tried-and-true sleep is another key element in *any* body-cleansing program. There's just no substitute for the rest and revitalization that sleep can provide. It'll help you adjust psychologically to the changes you're going through *and* reduce feelings of burnout in the bargain.

So if you really want to be responsible for yourself—and you're serious about staying off whatever you've been on—start giving your body the natural sleep it needs.

If insomnia's a problem—and it often is for cleaning-yourself-up people—check out the section on exercise at left.

Here's why: Sleep disturbances become a lot less of a problem for people who are committed to doing whatever it takes to handle them. You'll be surprised, for example, at how easy it is to fall asleep once you commit yourself to a serious jogging or aerobics program.

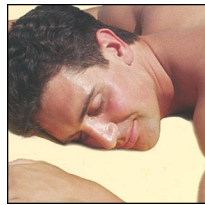
And besides, what self-respecting ex-dope fiend or alcoholic would want to waste all those free endorphins?

▶ BODY/MIND 201

The second step in recovery involves "re-centering" the mind and emotions to break the habits that contributed to your dependency.

This process can involve taking up almost anything from meditation to mah-jong, but it ultimately requires breaking habits of the past that have kept you from fully enjoying the present without a chemical crutch.

As you've noticed, drugs don't "cure" problems.



One night at a time. Sleep can work wonders in helping to rebalance the body and mind.

Quiet Mind

Stress is usually one of the biggest pieces of excess baggage that recovering people carry around, and something each of us needs to unpack sooner or later.



What they *do* is insulate us from problems—which may feel nice for a while, but which rarely resolves anything. By managing problems with chemicals we forget other, more effective ways of dealing with them.

Now, you're going to have to teach yourself all over again. And the best—and possibly the most all-encompassing—place to start is learning to manage stress.

STRESS

One of the biggest reasons any of us ever had for self-medicating with drugs and alcohol is something we all still have to deal with: simple tension.

It's usually one of the biggest pieces of excess baggage that recovering people carry around, and something each of us needs to unpack in one way or another, sooner or later.

The big question for most newly clean-and-sober people is a simple one:



Dressed for excess. You may feel this tangled at times, but things don't have to go this far—not if you learn to handle issues that used to drive you over the edge.

How do you start *unstressing* when you're an expert at *dis*-stressing?

For starters, you need to learn to identify tension and beat it to the punch. Then, if you've gotten used to clobbering it with something pharmacological (say, a six-pack or a joint after work), find a **new** way.

You might try something as simple as taking a shower, for example, or learn a meditation technique.

Don't know any?

Then check out the box below. It describes a stripped-down, no-frills approach to meditation that answers another age-old question about the mind: *How do you turn the damn thing off?*

Just remember that the ability to cool yourself out psycho-emotionally (whether via meditation or not) is just like everything else: Practice makes perfect.

■ The 15-Minute Meditator

One of the most up-to-the-minute methods for beating stress happens to be one of the oldest. It's meditation, and in recent years, it's been dusted off and demystified and studied in depth by researchers, who consider it one of the best tools for managing everyday tension and anxiety.

Learning to meditate has never been easier, either. One researcher, Herbert W. Benson of the Harvard Medical School, offers an introduction to the basic elements of meditation in his book, *The Relaxation Response*.

According to Dr. Benson, all you need to do is follow these main points:

1. Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed for 15 minutes or so.
2. Close your eyes and relax all the muscles in your body.
3. Focus your attention on your breathing, silently repeating the word "one" (or any other one-syllable word, such as "calm") each time you exhale.
4. When thoughts intrude, simply return your focus to the word "one," as you exhale.

And don't push. Meditation's aim is to expand awareness by *temporarily* turning off the machinery of the mind. And while that's a great goal, don't realistically expect to do it for more than a few seconds at a time any time soon.

Still, if you try it, stick with it. Benson recommends a twice-a-day schedule (mornings and early evenings work for most people) if you want to get good at it—and get all the physical and psychological benefits linked to it. ■

MEDITATION

