

■ Staying Straight

Once you've beaten your addiction for a while, you may be tempted to prove how far you've come by "handling" what you couldn't handle before.

Don't bother. This is the last obstacle in the path of recovery and the place where thousands of cool, smart, no-longer-recovering people went down before you.

Why stay straight? To expand your commitment to mastery in your life. And needing chemicals — coffee or cocaine, ephedrine or ecstasy — is the mirror image of mastery.



That's why the ultimate goal of detox and recovery centers on making the changes we've discussed part of who you *are*, not just some of the time or whenever you feel the bottom's about to drop out of your life, but a normal part of everyday life.

It doesn't have to be a burden. In fact, it won't be as big a burden as some of the problems you've been through already. And it can give the rest of your life the meaning you sensed was missing all along.

Why not give it a try? After all, you really don't have that much to lose—only a few

- a) problems,
- b) dependencies,
- c) insecurities, or (more likely)
- d) all of the above.

How many reasons do you *need*? ■



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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► *Taking a Stand
Against Addiction*

Even if you're banging by a thread

A Do It Now Foundation Publication by Jim Parker

■ Multiple Choice

You've woken up feeling the way...

- a) you're feeling now,
- b) you felt this morning,
- c) you felt last night, or even
- d) all of the above



for the last time.

And while you might not think you're chemically dependent, you *are* prone to overdoing it. In fact, you've spent a big part of your life overdoing whatever's been available to be overdone.

And although the substance you overuse is

- a) alcohol,
- b) marijuana,
- c) pills, or
- d) caffeine/sugar/other dietary cheap thrills,

you've thought a lot lately about changing—scrapping the junk-food, junk-feeling lifestyle you've gotten strung out on, in favor of something simpler—and more *real*.

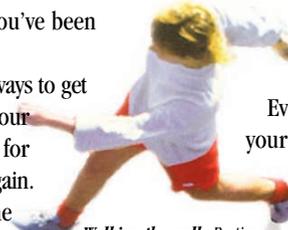
Congratulations! You're exactly where you need to be to create some real value out of this pamphlet.

It's about detoxifying from whatever chemicals *you* consider "everyday"—hard drugs and soft, controlled substances and otherwise, the same one(s) you've been using and are thinking of leaving behind.

In the sections that follow, we'll talk about ways to get off what you've been on, and how to keep your spirits up and your defense mechanisms down for as long as it takes for you to become yourself again.

What you do from there is up to you—the *real* you. You remember him/her, don't you?

Sure you do.



Walking the walk. Beating an addiction starts where you are right now.

■ Facing Facts

The first step in overcoming dependency is recognizing it for what it is. That's as true for a six-cup-a-day coffee habit as it is for a 12-pack-a-day continual beer buzz or a 60mg a day Valium addiction.

Your habit isn't different. If it creates problems in your life—in your relationships or job or feelings about yourself—the substance you're doing is really doing *you*.

The first step in overcoming any pattern of dependency is seeing it for what it is.



The point we're making has nothing to do with the pharmacological properties of specific substances.

And it's not meant to imply that dropping Drug A (PCP, say) is no different than dropping Drug B (Jolt® Cola) in terms of risk, nor is it intended to minimize the hazards linked to detox from long-term addictions.

In fact, we urge people with serious dependency issues (particularly long-term use of alcohol, cocaine, depressants, or narcotics) to consult a physician or treatment program before starting any detox regimen.

Still, we think that there's a lot that's potentially useful in looking at substance abuse as a generic problem: generic solutions, for one thing.

Stick around. And see if any of the solutions we uncover are generic enough to cover you.

■ Getting Off

Even though recognition is a first step in getting your life back on track, it's worth noting that simply *noticing* a problem doesn't make it go away.

The next step in resolving chemical dependency is to bring your use under control—if you still can—or to quit using altogether.

And while there *are* ways to *contain* a form of chemical dependency, there's only one way that's guaranteed to erase it, and that's to quit.

The specific forms that quitting can take can vary, depending on a user's biological and psychological make-up, the substance(s) involved, and the duration and extent of use.

Example? A high-octane coffee drinker might actually *increase* his or her prospects for recovery by withdrawing gradually, while a cigarette smoker or crystal user might find it impossible to quit a little at a time.

An easy way to discover which way works best for you is to just quit. Whether you're interested in cutting your use down or cutting it out altogether, it helps to discover the full extent of your involvement. And the only real way to do that is to stop doing what you've been doing and see what happens.

Still, whether you go cold turkey or slip into abstinence a little at a time, the ultimate outcome of detox is usually to stay off a substance for good.

And doing that takes a lot more than willpower.

It takes a revolution—a *real* revolution of body and mind, heart and soul. And it's aimed at a single goal: transforming the behaviors and beliefs that became a habit which eventually turned against you.

■ Deconditioning the Mind

The main battlefield the revolution plays out on is in the hills, valleys, and jungles of the mind.

Your goal here is simple: To become aware of the terrain and begin to reverse the processes that contributed to your dependency.

Emotional traits linked to “real” chemical abuse aren't that different from those underlying “ordinary” dependencies, especially a tendency toward compulsiveness and a low frustration tolerance.

But listing character traits doesn't explain addiction or help to stop dependency once it's started. That takes commitment and patience—and change.

Here are some issues you'll probably want to focus *your* changes on:

■ **Avoid situations that trigger automatic responses**, like hitting the bars during happy hour, if you're a problem drinker, or making detours past candy stores, if you're a chocaholic. Don't think of it as a life sentence. Think of it as the *period* on a life sentence.

■ **Learn new ways to deal with stress**. Almost everything from biofeedback to meditation and visualization techniques have been tried as anti-stressors and just about everything works, if you do.

Don't know how? Check the public library for books or video- or audiotapes on stress management, then get busy at getting *un-busy*.



■ **Develop a support network**. Get acquainted with new people who can support the changes you intend to make. Rethink the role of drug- or drinking-buddies, and decide whether they're going to help your commitment to change. If not, you'll need to make changes there, too.



The goal of these changes is to break the stranglehold of conditioned reflexes you've learned in the past, in favor of self-generated choices in line with the person you intend to be.

Revolutionary? Yes. Easy? No. Because the truth is that deconditioning involves a conscious shifting of focus from past to future, from what *was* to what *will be*, from automaticity to awareness, from habit to choice.

It's not always easy, or comfortable. In fact, it could be the hardest thing you ever do.

But people who've succeeded—and created major changes in their lives—swear that it's worth the effort.

Especially when you consider the alternative.

■ Reconditioning the Body

Important as it is, mental deconditioning is only half the story. Just as important are the changes you may need to make to recover your physical health.

That's because substance abuse can wreak havoc on the body, and real recovery requires at least *some* de-wreaking.

Here are some places to start . . .

■ **Nutrition**. Vitamin supplements can play a role in the early stages of detox to counteract nutritional deficiencies or metabolic problems linked to an addiction.



Also important, though, are dietary changes aimed at *correcting* long-term nutritional problems.

Regardless of what you may think (especially if your thinking on the subject is defined by junk-food TV ads), what you put into your body has a *real* impact on how you feel and relate to others. Engineers even coined a term to describe a similar process in computers: “G.I.G.O.”—garbage in, garbage out.

It's the same with any machine—and your body is a machine. Stop the flow of junk that you load up with and you'll see a similar halt in the flow of junk out of

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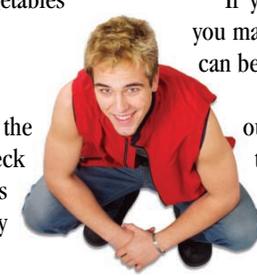
your life—in the form of scattered thinking and the roller-coaster emotions that come with the typical high-sugar, high-fat American diet.

A diet better-suited to recovery from almost *anything* is one that's low in fat, low in sugar, and high in complex carbohydrates. Other recommendations:

- ♥ Drink lots of water and avoid coffee and soda.
- ♥ Lighten up on processed foods and red meats.
- ♥ Eat natural foods, especially fresh vegetables and whole grains.

Still not convinced? *Then get convinced.*

If you heed our earlier advice and head to the library for resources on stress management, check out the nutrition section, too. A great overview is *The Hidden Addiction (& How to Get Free)*, by Janice Phelps, M.D. and Alan Nourse.



■ **Exercise**. Physical activity is another key element in detox, since exercise conditions the body at the same time it reduces stress and enhances mood.

Any type of activity will do the trick, but jogging, especially, is great at dispelling detox-related anxiety.

In beginning your exercise program, start slowly and build up to a daily schedule that you can live with—and stay with. Start each session by stretching and end with a “warm-down” walk or more stretching.

If you've never been particularly body-conscious, you may be surprised at how much fun getting physical can be after a period of inactivity.

And if you've been laying off jogging or working out for a time (while wreaking all the aforementioned havoc on yourself), you may be surprised at how far (and how fast) physical exercise goes toward getting you back in the pink, and back in charge of your life.

▶ Wake-Up Calls

Want to get out of the rut you've been stuck in? Then get into a **new** rut—one that you *choose*, one that might even make the world a slightly better place. It may still be a rut, but you'll like it better than your old one. Just don't forget to ask the desk clerk in your head for an occasional wake-up call, at least until you get used to waking up on your own. Stuck for ideas? You might want to try some of these:

🔥 **Do what needs doing**. Remember that candy wrapper you kicked on the street the other day? Pick it up next time, and throw it in the trash. When you do, you will have made the world a better place by exactly one iota. It sounds small, but it adds up. (Score 10 iotas for a broken beer bottle.)

🔥 **Smile**. You've got bills to pay, bumper-to-bumper traffic to contend with at rush hour, and a cold sore, but that's no reason to scare people with your face. If you really want to change, start by smiling at how ridiculous and wonderful and precious life is. It's another small thing, but if you take care of the small things, the big things will . . . well, *you know*.

🔥 **Volunteer**. Feel strongly about the spotted-owl? Legal access to medical marijuana for AIDS patients? Saving the rain forest? Connect with a local group that's trying to do something about it. If your interests are more general, call a local nursing home or shelter-care facility to see who needs you. Somebody does, and helping them will help get your attention off yourself and onto something—or someone—who needs it more.

And it's nice to remember, at least once in a while, that life pays us back for the good that we do with interest. ■

