

TOTAL

An Operating Manual for the New You!



RECOVERY

Balancing head & heart, body & soul,
in recovery from chemical dependency

■ A Do It Now Foundation/Lifeworks Publication by Jim Parker

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First Things First



Knowing ignorance is strength.
Ignoring knowledge is sickness.

—Lao Tsu

It's a different world out there today. It is, at least, if you're making your way back from a problem with chemical dependency, and if you compare the way things are with the way they were a few weeks or months ago.

You can probably see it most clearly in your decision to stop using what you had been using—alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, whatever—that had been a pretty big part of your life.

Your life probably seems a lot more up in the air as a result.

It may be in shambles, it may not be. But the pieces of your life probably seem a lot more precariously balanced than before. And you're likely facing questions now where there had been only answers, and confronting uncertainty in a life grown comfortable—or at least predictable—with routine.

Your future probably seems equally up for grabs. You may be rethinking directions that, until recently, went without question. And suddenly, you feel an obligation to think through *where* you're going—and just as important, *how* you're going to get there.

That's what this book is about: How you're going to get to where you're going. We can't tell you where you ought to go with your life, but we can provide some tips on ways you can get yourself there, keeping yourself whole—and your recovery intact—in the process.



We'll do it by introducing you to some concepts that, weeks or months ago, might have struck you as a little weird or, at least, unnecessarily difficult—ideas about stress and nutrition and exercise that may make a lot more sense to you now.

We'll also make suggestions for activities you can easily incorporate into your life to make your recovery less difficult and more satisfying—both for yourself and the people you care about.

That's the real purpose of this book: to help you put the pieces of your life back together in a way that both makes sense and makes permanent recovery possible.

And it *is* possible. In fact, it could turn out to be the very best part of your life. It has been for me.

This book is dedicated to you. Thanks for giving me a reason to write it.

Don't Wobble!



In walking, just walk.
In sitting, just sit.
Above all, don't wobble.

—Chinese proverb

So where do you start to stop an addiction?
The best place is inside yourself. You have to believe you can (and know you should) get off chemicals before you can get anywhere.

So in case you haven't done it yet, or in case you're still thinking about it, or in case you've done it for a while but are thinking about it as a temporary sort of change (you may even already be looking forward to a week or a month or a year from now when you can stop not-doing it), we have good news and bad news:

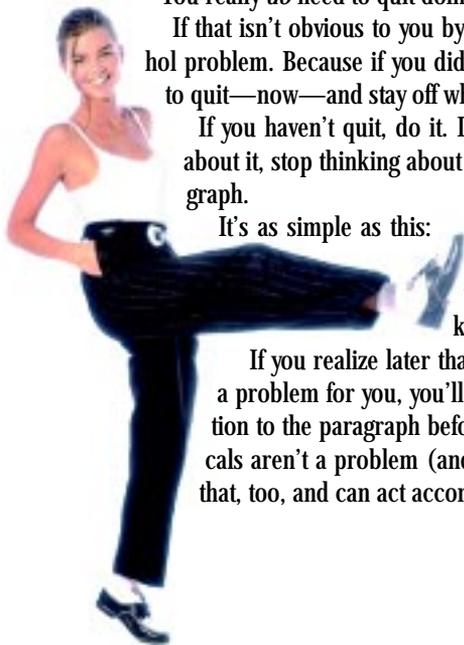
You really *do* need to quit doing drugs and alcohol. For good.

If that isn't obvious to you by now, maybe you don't have a drug or alcohol problem. Because if you did, you'd know the simple truth that you need to quit—now—and stay off whatever you've been on.

If you haven't quit, do it. If you have, keep doing it. If you're thinking about it, stop thinking about it and refer to the first sentence in this paragraph.

It's as simple as this: If you don't quit, you won't know if drugs and alcohol are your main problem. And at this stage of your life, you really need to know.

If you realize later that chemicals have been (and continue to be) a problem for you, you'll know what to do. (In fact, if you paid attention to the paragraph before last, you'll already be doing it.) If chemicals aren't a problem (and for some people, they're not), you'll know that, too, and can act accordingly.



If you're wondering how to quit, realize that there's really only one way: All together, all at once.

And while there are potential problems you should be aware of if you're strung out on alcohol, downers, or minor tranquilizers—including the risk of seizures (which means you should be under some form of medical supervision)—for any other sort of addiction, all you need to do is quit, pure and simple.

If you think you need help in getting that done, fine. Call a treatment organization or a doctor or a social service agency that can provide a referral, but call and get it done.

And once you get it done, keep it done. Make staying sober or straight what your life is about. Don't panic, thinking you'll never be able to do it—or never want to stay that way—for the rest of your life. Just take care of today's business today.

And don't wobble. Tomorrow will take care of itself.

Second Things Second

2 Accept your feelings.
Know your purpose.
Do what needs to be done.

—David K. Reynolds

So you've been off whatever you've been on for days, weeks, or months. Now what do you do? Good question, because this is where a lot of recovering people get stuck. And this is really what this booklet is all about.

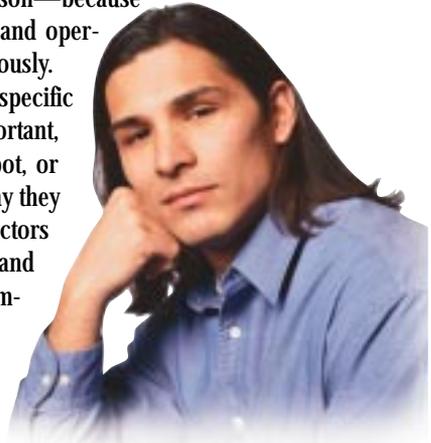
Because the simple fact of the matter is that quitting is the easy part of recovery.

Stop and think about it, and you'll realize how simple it is to get anybody to quit anything. All you have to do is tie them up and lock them in a room. They'll get off whatever they've been on—at least for as long as you keep them locked up. The trick is keeping them off when the door's open.

It's the same for any recovering person—because addiction is as complex as each of us, and operates on a lot of different levels simultaneously.

Whatever you were on—and the specific chemical or combination isn't that important, whether it was heroin or booze, pills, pot, or cocaine—chemicals affected you the way they affected you through an interplay of factors that are as unique as your thumbprint and as individual as your social security number.

Some factors are physical—say, a tendency toward low-blood sugar, for example, or an inherited intolerance



for alcohol. Others are psychological—whether you see yourself as basically competent, for example, or whether you're often anxious or depressed. Still others are more spiritual or existential in nature, and touch on your personal philosophy of God and experience of yourself.

It gets complicated—because *we* are.

And that's why any program of recovery that's going to have any chance of working has to address itself to all the different parts of you.

Because all of you was affected when chemical dependency got its hooks into your body and mind and soul. And until you get serious about getting *all*

The most important step after stopping is to commit yourself to a plan of **total** recovery...

of you into the recovery picture, you're likely to keep on having problems.

Not that you won't be able to stay off what you were on. That's possible. But you're not going to be 100 percent *you* again until you pick up all the pieces of your life, and that involves doing more than just giving up drugs and alcohol.

It's a lot like trying to put out a fire in a single room when an entire building is burning out of control. You might be able to cool things off for a while, but you're not going to keep them that way for long. To do it right, you've got to do it all.

That's why we say the most important step after stopping is to seriously commit yourself to a plan of *total recovery*, a plan that includes simultaneous work on your body, mind, heart, and soul. Because the simple truth is that until all of you gets involved in recovery, all of you ain't gonna get well.

And as long as any part of you is still messed up, you're potentially *all* messed up.

Risk Factors. *To put your own risk factors into clearer perspective, take a few minutes now and answer the questions in the Lifestyle Assessment that follows.*

Look closely at your strengths and weaknesses, problems and potentials. Then focus on your personal risk factors—whether diet, fitness, emotions, or lifestyle—in the weeks and months ahead.

Because recovery from drugs and alcohol really is possible and really does work—but only as well and as long as each of us do.

TOTAL RECOVERY

Personal Recovery Plan

Lifestyle Assessment

Circle the items that apply to you.

Nutrition

Are you overweight?

No 5-19 lbs. 20+ lbs.

Do you eat a variety of foods each day from the main food groups: (1) proteins (meat, eggs, nuts, legumes); (2) milk or milk products; (3) bread or cereals; (4) fruits; (5) vegetables?

Yes No

Fitness

How often do you exercise 20 minutes or more?

Daily Weekly Never

Amount of physical effort you expend during an average workday:

A Lot Some Little

How many miles do you walk or jog each day?

1+ Less than 1 None

Emotions

Are you depressed?

Rarely Sometimes Often

Do you feel that you get enough sleep?

Yes No

Does anxiety ever interfere with your daily activities?

Rarely Sometimes Often

Lifestyle

How many hours a day do you watch TV?

0-1 1-4 4+

Do you smoke?

No Yes

How many hours in an average week do you spend in constructive outside activities or hobbies?

4+ 1-4 0-1

Scoring Guide

Total each response and multiply by value shown:

<input type="checkbox"/> x 1	<input type="checkbox"/> x 3	<input type="checkbox"/> x 5	Your score:
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What Your Score Means:

11-20. Excellent. Congratulations! But don't stop now. When you stop to reflect on your successes, you stop succeeding.

21-30. Good. You've either begun to make important changes or you were in good shape to begin with. Keep it up!

31-40. Risky. Look closely at the areas you scored highest in. These are the key areas for you to focus on in recovery.

41+. Dangerous. Commit now to making serious change. If you don't, recovery is going to be hard—or impossible.

Understanding Addiction



Knowing others is wisdom.
Knowing yourself is enlightenment.

—Lao Tsu



efore we go any further, we first need to review some basic notions about what addiction is—and what it isn't.

That's necessary because research breakthroughs in recent years have revolutionized our understanding of how and why psychoactive drugs affect the brain, even shedding light on how the brain itself works to generate consciousness. And that has far-reaching implications for your trip through recovery.

🗨️ **'Addiction' vs. 'Dependence.'** We also need to define some basic concepts and terms. For starters, we should point out that throughout this booklet we'll use the word addiction to describe all types of dependence.

We won't make a distinction between physical and psychological dependence, mainly because we think splitting hairs about "addiction" and "dependence" is basically beside the point.

Too often, people make too much of words, reading into them things that really aren't there—or shouldn't be. The language of addictions is a case in point.

To many people, the term "physical dependence" means something a lot more serious and potentially life-threatening than does "psychological dependence," a phrase that's often tossed around as if it describes something minor, or even imaginary.

The fact is that *any* addiction is a serious matter, as anyone who's gone through one knows.

Similarly, we're not going to waste time sorting through theories of addiction, for the simple reason that it doesn't matter much in the context of where

we're going in this booklet—and hopefully where you're going with your life.

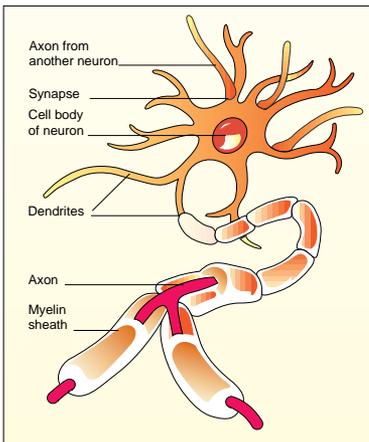
Let's just say that you used chemicals for the reasons that you used chemicals and I used them for the reasons I used them.

We had a problem and chemicals covered it up. Then chemicals *became* the problem.

🧠 **Endorphins: Turning the Key.** There is an aspect of addiction science that we should spend a little time with, though. It involves recent research into a group of body chemicals known loosely as “endorphins.” They may turn out to have *everything* to do with why some of us become addicts and some of us don't.

And even more importantly, endorphins may tell the some of us who do become addicts how we can reverse the process of addiction and accelerate the process of recovery.

Discovered by researchers John Hughes And Hans Kosterlitz in Aberdeen, Scotland in 1975, endorphins are molecules produced in the body that turn



Body-mind basics. Recent research has expanded our knowledge of the interplay between the external world of actions and the internal world of feelings. Shown at left, the basic unit of the body-mind connection: an individual nerve cell, or neuron.

off and on internal systems that regulate pain and pleasure, especially during times of stress or injury.

The existence of such a system had only been guessed at previously. But as research expanded our understanding of other brain processes, it also began to provide insights into addictions, and investigators gradually began to suspect that the body *had* to contain receptor sites for specific drugs for the chemicals to exert any influence in the body at all. One researcher even predicted how the system would fit together: like locks and keys.

Hughes and Kosterlitz found the key—at least the first one. What they discovered were short chains of amino acids, organic molecules sometimes referred to as “building blocks of life.” They named the first one “enkephalin” from the Greek words for “in the head,” where the substance was produced.

Later, more complex molecules were identified, including Beta-endorphin—a contraction for endogenous (or internal) morphine—and, in 1992, an internal cannabinoid (dubbed *anandamide*) that activates marijuana receptors in the brain. Endorphin captured the most early attention, because of the variety and desirability of effects—including just about everything from pain relief to relaxation—it seemed involved in.

Today, evidence ties the chemicals (and a broader group of other internally-produced chemicals like them) to the foundations of consciousness it-



Research shows that we all ‘roll our own’ endorphins (and produce our own Prozac®) by doing things that make them happen.

self. From pain to pleasure, appetite control to analgesia, these chemicals play a main part in many of the events that shape our lives—or, at least, that form our perceptions and feelings about our lives.

Most interesting about *that*, from a recovery perspective, is the growing body of research that shows some of the ways in which we can directly influence endorphin levels through activities that stimulate their production—that we all, in effect, “roll our own” endorphins (and produce our own Prozac®) by doing the things that make them happen.

And that brings us to the very interesting notion that we *can* change our feelings by changing our actions—a situation that has important implications for anyone recovering from a chemical dependency problem.

Me, for example. And you.

Re-Programming the Body

4 Though one should in battle conquer a thousand men a thousand times, he who conquers himself has the more glorious victory.

—Buddha

The obvious place to start in any plan of total recovery is with the body. The body is almost a thermometer of the soul and in a very real way its health and well-being reflects the state of order and integration present at deeper levels of our being.

The body is also the place where many of the more visible problems associated with chemical dependency show up. Nutritional deficiencies are common after extended bouts with drugs and alcohol. So is physical disease, fatigue, and a general state of disrepair.

And to begin to turn things around you have to begin to examine an idea that's so obviously true—and so often misrepresented—that it's joked about. It's this: You *are* what you eat.

■ Nutrition

Something we were withholding made us weak
Until we found it was ourselves.

—Robert Frost

Bad nutrition is such a pervasive part of our lives that it's almost invisible to most of us. But that doesn't mean it's not there.

Because nutritional deficiency is common—too common. In fact, a study at one U.S. medical center showed that 83 percent of newly-admitted patients



A rat fed a ‘typical American diet’ of coffee, junk food, and soda eventually shifted his preference from water to whiskey, when given the choice.

have at least one vitamin deficiency, and 68 percent have two or more. And note: These weren’t alcoholics and drug abusers; they were ordinary people taken from the general population.

There’s even evidence that dietary deficiencies can directly trigger chemical use patterns and preferences. In his book, *Mental and Elemental Nutrients*, researcher Carl Pfeiffer describes a study in which a rat placed on a “typical American diet of coffee, refined foods, and soda” eventually shifted his preference from plain water to whiskey, when given the choice.

What’s it mean? Plenty. For one thing, it means you’d probably better get started now if you want to bring yourself back *up* to zero. And it means you’d better make some serious changes if you want to stay above zero—and away from drugs and alcohol.

Since alcohol and drugs are notorious for depleting body stores of everyday vitamins, particularly B-complex vitamins, it’s possible that you’re already suffering a deficiency of at least one vitamin or essential mineral. And that could well be influencing the way you feel—and how well you cope with being suddenly straight.

To compensate, you should probably look into vitamin supplements for at least the short term and consider serious nutritional change for the long term. Because rats aren’t the only ones whose minds and moods are affected by diet. You are, too.

👉 **Starting from Scratch.** But where do you start in changing your diet?

Almost anywhere is better than nowhere. Probably the most important thing is to simplify. You can begin by reducing your consumption of fast foods and processed foods.

If you’re like most people, that should leave an enormous nutritional hole in your life. Fill it with natural foods, especially fresh fruits and vegetables. They contain trace elements that can improve health—and the absorption of other nutrients. Cut back on caffeine—or eliminate it altogether if anxiety or insomnia are problems for you. Limit red meats and up your intake of whole grains and bran.

One thing we need to emphasize is that we’re not trying to get you to give up anything in particular. What we are attempting to do is support you in a process which will expand your awareness of the ways in which eating patterns

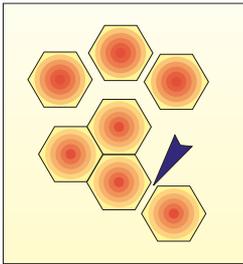
affect the way you think and feel and behave. And that's important stuff when you're doing something as difficult as dropping a drug and alcohol habit.

Unconvinced? Okay, but all you have to do to observe the body/mind food connection firsthand is by doing what many treatment professionals recommend that you do anyway: banish sugar from your diet.

☹️ **Sugar: The Primary Addiction?** That's because today, the average American licks, gulps, and guzzles between 115 and 150 pounds of sugar each year. And if that sounds like a lot, it is. A hundred years ago, we got by—pretty well, from most accounts—on no more than 5-10 pounds.

The result of all that sugar, according to many experts, is a massive strain on our internal regulatory systems. In fact, many researchers today consider sugar not only addicting in itself, but also a main culprit in addictions of all kinds.

Here's how it works: There are two basic forms of sugar molecules—simple sugars or carbohydrates (called mono- and disaccharides) and complex carbohydrates (called polysaccharides). All that distinguishes one from



Time release. Simple sugars (like the monosaccharides, shown at upper left) are absorbed quickly by the body, unlike the complex carbohydrates (below left), whose food energy must be “unlocked” by digestive enzymes and released over time.

another is the complexity of their chemical structure and the ease with which the body can “unlock” the individual molecules and release energy through digestion.

Complex carbohydrates take a lot of unlocking; they're broken down slowly, and release energy in an almost “time-release” fashion. Simple sugars, though, are easy to unlock—so easy, in fact, that they act as a nutritional “rocket fuel”—a nearly-predigested form of instant energy.

That would be fine if we were rockets. The problem is that we're not.

Because the fact is that the sharp rise in blood sugar we experience after eating simple sugars is followed by an equally sharp drop—usually in an hour or so—as the body works to bring blood sugar levels back into balance.

This happens because the body isn't designed for fast lift-offs and crashes. We don't tolerate rapid blood sugar changes well and, as a result, have evolved

a complex system to correct such shifts. The most immediate one involves the pancreas, which releases the hormone insulin in response to elevated blood sugar levels.

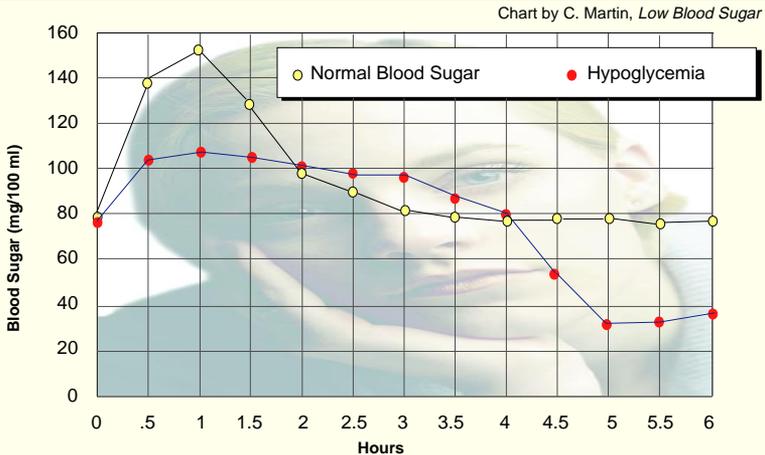
When insulin is released into the bloodstream, blood sugar immediately begins to stabilize as excess sugars are moved to the liver for storage. When blood sugar drops, insulin production stops and everything goes back to normal—in theory. In practice, lots of things can go wrong.

Probably the best-known problem is *diabetes*. It results from too little insulin and too much blood sugar (a condition known medically as *hyperglycemia*). At the other end of the spectrum—and more likely to affect chemical users—is *hypoglycemia*, a condition of too little blood sugar.

🧠 **Hypoglycemia—Fighting Back.** Lots of recovering people suffer from hypoglycemia and its effects, which can include fatigue, depression, confusion, anxiety, insomnia, dizziness, impaired concentration, irritability, moodiness, and other problems.

One researcher has even reported finding hypoglycemia in 95 percent of a tested group of alcoholics. And according to Pfeiffer, the hypoglycemia doesn't just show up after the fact; he says that, for many alcoholics, hypoglycemia “precedes and causes” excessive drinking.

■ SUGAR BLUES



Sweet sorrow. Hypoglycemia is so common in chemical dependency that some researchers think that sugar is a biological “trigger” in alcoholism and other addictions. Above, normal and hypoglycemic blood sugar levels in 6-hour glucose tolerance test.

So how do you beat it? Start by cutting out simple sugars from your diet, whenever possible. That means eliminating sugars (white, brown, or otherwise) and sugar-like products—including syrups, corn sweeteners, white flour, and heavily-processed foods. And while that might look like you're giving up the very best America has to offer, nutrition-wise, we promise you can

One researcher claimed he found hypoglycemia in 95 percent of a tested group of alcoholics.

live well without a morning bowl of Cocoa Pebbles and a lunchtime Triple Bacon Cheeseburger and Slurpee.

Other suggestions could easily fill this book—and a few companion volumes. We're not going to do that. We only want to encourage you to start yourself on the process. Notice the effects that different foods have on you and your feelings. From then on, it's your experiment.

Still, we don't want to understate our case, either. What you put into your body *does* have a very definite effect on the way you think and feel.

Overlook the relationship at your own peril—and the risk of your complete recovery from drugs or alcohol.

■ Exercise

To know and to act are one and the same.
—Samurai saying

The other side of the physical input-output equation is exercise, because the flip side of the energy we consume is the energy we expend. And the energy we expend in recovery is every bit as important as the energy we take in—and stop taking in. In fact, it may even be more important for lots of people, for the simple reason that one of the clearest channels for quickly increasing endorphin production in our bodies—and good feelings in our minds—is through exercise.

The relationship has only been established for a few years, but it's clear: If you want to feel better about yourself, *do something*.

What you do, exactly, doesn't seem to matter as much as it once did. Early endorphin research, for example, centered on running (which is why the phenomenon came to be known as "runner's high"). But today, researchers be-



lieve that any exercise that raises cardiovascular output substantially above the resting rate for a period of 30-60 minutes is likely to increase endorphin levels—and enhance mood.

So do what feels natural to you. If you're wired or otherwise stressed-out, run. If you like to dance, join an aerobics class. If you've ever been interested in martial arts, sign up for training in karate or aikido. Just *do something*—and stick with it.

Because the benefits of exercise are real. And while they don't always seem



Any exercise that raises cardiovascular output for 30-60 minutes can enhance mood.

to come easily (especially at the start), they *do* come if you work at them.

And the results can be life-transforming. In fact, there's good evidence that a regular exercise program during recovery will even undo the negative psychological consequences of addiction by throwing the entire addiction dynamic into reverse.

☺ **'Positive Addiction.'** One researcher who's studied the phenomenon extensively, Dr. William Glasser, has developed an intriguing theory around it. But to talk about it, we first need to do a little background work.

Glasser, a psychiatrist, sees the basic issue in addiction (and all of mental health, for that matter) as a contest between personal strength and weakness. He argues that we choose unhappiness in our lives because we don't think we're strong enough to ask for more of the love and acknowledgment we need. We're not stupid, only weak—and "negative" addictions are one of our favorite ways of proving it.

The problem with negative addictions, as we all know, is that they end in a downward spiral—feelings of inadequacy trigger continued use and continued use feeds feelings of inadequacy and despair, which feeds—you guessed it—more negative addiction.

The solution? To Glasser (and lots of recovering people who've picked up his "Positive Addiction" banner), the choice is clear: deliberately choosing positive addictions to replace negative ones.

Positive addictions *do* offer advantages. For starters, they increase mental strength and self-confidence—unlike negative addictions, which make us weaker and less self-reliant every time we give in.

They also help structure our time, filling up hours and minutes that we to

devote to drinking or doping (or *thinking* about drinking or doping), so there's that much less time to create problems for ourselves inside our own heads.

☺ **'PA' Activities.** So how do you go about getting yourself positively addicted? You work at it.

According to Glasser, almost anything that helps achieve an “out-of-mind” trancelike state of unfocused awareness can turn into a positive addiction, given enough time and practice. And even though running and meditation top his list of “PA” activities that people become addicted to, activities themselves can be active or passive, mental or physical. In fact, Glasser says only a few basic qualities seem really essential:

- ▶ You need to perform the activity every day or nearly every day—preferably for 40-60 minutes a day.
- ▶ The activity has to produce immediate personal benefits to become firmly established as an addiction.
- ▶ The activity must be noncompetitive. Competition puts too much focus on doing it “right,” or being better than others.
- ▶ You need to perform the activity in a unself-critical way.

Interestingly enough, Glasser developed his theory prior to the discovery of endorphins, which provided a scientific basis for understanding positive addiction. Still, studies since have consistently supported a link between “PA” as a theory and increased endorphin production—and mood enhancement—as a scientific fact.

Research into the relationship between endorphins and a runner's ability to endure pain have consistently shown significant increases in brain levels of endorphins in people who run or work out regularly. Other studies have confirmed lower levels of anxiety, fatigue, and tension, and heightened feelings of well-being and self-confidence after as little as 10 weeks of walking or jogging.

So where do you sign up? Right here, right now.

What do you do? Anything you want to do.

Although Glasser and others have pushed running as a near-perfect path to positive addiction, anything that kicks the body into overdrive works just as well. Swimming, bicycling, even brisk walking seem to offer the same benefits as running and meditation, which we'll discuss in a slightly different context in the next chapter.

If you'd like the benefits of a positive addiction just realize that “PA” as a self-administered therapy isn't for the faint of heart. Glasser estimates that a minimal involvement of 40-60 minutes a day is required at least 5 times a

week, although a daily regimen seems to work best.

Just begin by choosing an activity that looks workable to you, one that will handle a personal problem (weight control, for example, or insomnia) so that you get unmistakable short-term benefits, then stick with it for a specific, pre-determined length of time. Glasser recommends a minimum of six months, but other studies have shown that a shorter period will do just as well.

The point is to make a promise to yourself and keep it—and *keep* keeping it until you get the results you're after and the life you want.

Sound too tough?

Maybe. But thousands of once-negative, now-positive addicts say the difference is like night and day.

Maybe you will, too.

FEELINGS & FITNESS: THE 'EFFORT FACTOR'			
Type of exercise	Hours per week	Effort Factor	Score
Fast running or swimming		x 30	
Easy running, swimming, cycling, or karate		x15	
Fast walking (15 min./mile), aerobic dance, racquetball, basketball, rowing, soccer		x9	
Casual biking, skating, skiing, calisthenics, football, tennis		x6	
Casual walking, weight training, volleyball		x4	
Golf, bowling, baseball		x1.5	
Total Score			
<p>Mood Math. Multiply the number of hours you spend in an activity each week by the "effort factor" in column two. A total score of 75-85 is suggested for major mood enhancement. Don't feel that you're cheating if you pass on the "hard" activities at the top of the chart, though. "Easy" activities work just as well. They just take longer. (Chart by Bruce W. Tuckman, Ph.D. Courtesy of Runner's World.)</p>			

De-Programming the Mind

5 Be true to the thought of the moment and avoid distraction. Other than continuing to exert yourself, enter into nothing else, but go to the extent of living single thought by single thought.

—The Book of the Samurai

You usually don't have to look too far or very long to find a reason to justify body-oriented changes in recovery. You don't have to be particularly insightful to suspect that your body *has* to be affected by the chemicals you spent months or years swallowing, snorting, smoking, or shooting. *Or* that the best way to begin cleaning things up there is through fundamental nutritional and lifestyle changes on a physical level.

Similarly, most everyone will agree on the need for a basic shift in the way we've got our minds wired up if we're going to stay away from chemicals for any length of time and avoid the problems that lead to wanting just one drink, joint, line, or fix in the future.

That's what we're going to be talking about in this chapter: What you can do to extend and broaden the changes we talked about in the last chapter and apply them to changing the way you relate to your own mind.

Because the changes in nutrition and exercise and lifestyle we suggested earlier aren't enough. Without reinforcement and expansion on an internal level, those changes are likely to go the way of every other change you've ever made in your life: They're going to get forgotten. Then someday, they'll get remembered—as good intentions you once had.

To prevent that from happening, we need to find a way to reinforce those changes, extend them into the area of your thoughts and feelings, and lay the groundwork for “institutionalizing” the life changes you make in recovery as a permanent part of who you are and how you're going to be from here on out.

☺ **Seeing Patterns.** A key element at any stage of recovery is seeing the need for change as fundamental to survival. Now, we'll expand that idea a little by saying that the key to recognition is observation, and a main part of our approach to generating deeper changes is simply expanding our ability to observe ourselves—particularly our minds—in action.

It's not as complicated as it sounds. In fact, saints and swamis have been saying the same thing for centuries: *Know yourself.*

The importance of self-awareness should be obvious, but few of us practice it as if our lives really depend on it. And the reason we fail—in life and in knowing ourselves—is because we're so adept at identifying with our minds that we don't question its assumptions about itself and the rest of the world.

Well, we've got good news and bad news about that. First, the good news: We're *not* our minds—we're a lot more than that.

Now the bad news: We have to figure out who we are on our own.

■ Meditation

For the uncontrolled there is no wisdom, nor for the uncontrolled is there the power of concentration; and for him without concentration there is no peace. And for the unpeaceful, how can there be happiness?

—Bhagavad Gita

One of the best ways to begin figuring out what else we are is through the process of meditation.

There are as many different forms of meditation as there are people to practice them, but all revolve around one basic goal: stopping, at least temporarily, the flood of thought, commentary, and self-talk that flows through our minds.

Meditation has been studied extensively for years and offers all kinds of direct, tangible benefits—lowered heart rate and blood pressure, increased self-esteem and confidence, and expanded interpersonal effectiveness, among other things.

But the reason we think so much of it in the context of recovery is that it works so well in both filling up the time formerly set aside for addictive behaviors and in reversing the stress and depression that can trigger relapse.

Don't know how?

Don't worry about it. Meditation is one of the simplest things in the world to teach or learn.

If you'd like formal meditation training, you can contact any of a number of organized groups to arrange it. Prices, as in most things, can vary from a little to a lot, but unlike most things, when it comes to meditation you don't necessarily get what you pay for.

You get what you create—every day, once or twice a day.

☺ **The 'Relaxation Response.'** A basic, no-frills approach to meditation that seems to include all the essentials is passed along by Dr. Herbert Benson in his book, *The Relaxation Response*. According to Benson, all approaches

All approaches to meditation aim at the same goal—quieting the relentless chatter of the mind by seeing it for what it often is: noise...



to meditation aim at the same basic goal—quieting the relentless chatter of the mind simply by seeing it for what it so often is: noise.

Benson himself was introduced to the practice at Harvard Medical School in the early 1970s, studying the physical and psychological changes associated with one approach to meditation, Transcendental Meditation (TM).

The basic TM process that Benson originally studied involves the silent repetition of a word (often a Hindu name for God) called a *mantra*, accompanied by deep relaxation of the body. The technique worked—very well, in most cases.

But Benson didn't stop there. As he kept looking over his data, at the lowered metabolic rate and decreased anxiety levels of meditators, he wondered if the results reflected specific properties of TM or represented a phenomenon that's true about meditation in general. To find out, he repeated his experiments with a group he taught to meditate using the word "one" as a mantra, rather than a Sanskrit word specified by the TM instructor.

The results were clear-cut. "One" seemed to work as well as the meditator's mantras, at least in eliciting a deep state of body/mind relaxation. Benson immediately dubbed the state the "Relaxation Response."

Benson believes that deep relaxation is an inborn human capacity that's gradually fallen into disuse and disrepair over the centuries. That's happened because to survive in a hostile world, we've had to adapt a hair-trigger approach to sorting out potential difficulties in our minds by constantly creating different "what-if" scenarios that typically boil down to two basic choices: fighting or fleeing.

Nothing wrong with that, according to Benson, except that gradually we've lost the ability to relax fully and we need to relearn it.

How do you teach yourself?

Easily enough, as it turns out. Begin by finding a quiet place. Ideally, it should be comfortable (since you're going to be sitting in one basic position for about 20 minutes) and distraction-free, since interruptions can both break your concentration and make 20 minutes seem like a long time, indeed.

After a while, though, comfortable and quiet aren't even prerequisites. Experienced meditators meditate wherever they are—whether on a crowded commuter train or in their office between appointments. Still, for starters, it's best to find a reasonably quiet and comfortable place.

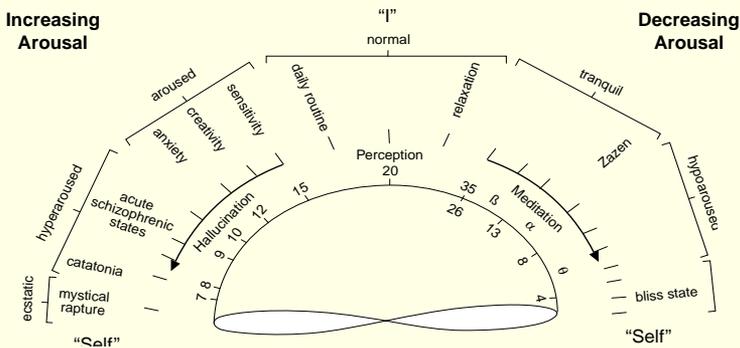
But not *too* comfortable. Try an armless straight back chair, but see that you're able to keep your spine straight and your muscles relaxed.

🧘 **Stopping the Mind, Step by Step.** Begin by closing your eyes. Take a breath, relax, and start to feel the tension flow out of your body. If you have a tough time with this (and many do), systematically tense and relax the main muscle groups of your body.

Starting with your feet, flex your toes and relax. Then tense and relax your ankles. Do the same in your calves and knees and thighs and hips and pelvis and abdomen and chest and back, upper arms, forearms, and fingers. Feel the

A CONTINUUM OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Chart adapted from R. Fischer. © 1971 Science



Mind Map. The chart above links subjective states of consciousness with EEG-monitored levels of electrical arousal in the brain. Since meditation reduces arousal, it can help reduce psychological stress and anxiety and increase self-awareness.

tension in your body dissolving as you bring it up to conscious awareness.

After you've become relaxed, begin to pay attention to your breathing. Nothing fancy here, just notice the rhythmic in-and-out flow of breath, and silently say the word "one" (or "Aum" or "calm" or any other one- or two-syllable word that seems to fit) to yourself as you exhale.

This is where you'll begin to notice the incredible tangle of disconnected thoughts that ordinarily command so much of our attention—all the things we didn't say or could have done, all the events we felt good/bad/indifferent about, all the slights and omissions dispensed and received, all the trivia that endlessly runs through our minds, that in fact forms a major part of who most of us consider ourselves to be.

When stray thoughts intrude (and they will), just notice them and, without getting angry at yourself for "not doing it right," simply go back to repeating the word you've chosen as a mantra.

Sound boring? It *can* seem that way, sometimes, usually when the mind needs quieting the most. But it can also be inspiring, restful, relaxing, and even fun.

Variations on the theme can include closed-eye visualizations, in which you form mental images to role-play your way through a problem, for example, or focus attention on a specific goal. But the basic premise remains the same: Stop the endless flow of self-talk in our minds and all sorts of possibilities open up.

That's all that meditation is about.

Because in spite of the mystical overtones often associated with the practice, it's only a technique to help focus awareness. If you're wondering what good *that* is, just think back to some of the best moments in your life. You'll notice that a relaxed, focused awareness is probably the only thing all your best moments had in common. Your mind got out of the way, and your soul (or your self—whatever you want to call it) took over.

What are you waiting for? Meditation is just like needlepoint, bowling, gourmet cooking, or anything else we've ever heard of. The only way to get good at it is through practice—preferably twice a day, every day.

You can settle for less. The only problem is that's what you get when that's what you do.

Self-Programming

6

Try? There is no try. There is only do or not do.

—Yoda, *The Empire Strikes Back*

All the changes we've talked about thus far have been aimed in the same direction: expanding our ability to be responsible for ourselves and our thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Still, there's a further place that we can get to. Because while it's fine to accept ourselves exactly the way we are, it's even better to take responsibility for making ourselves exactly the way we want to be.

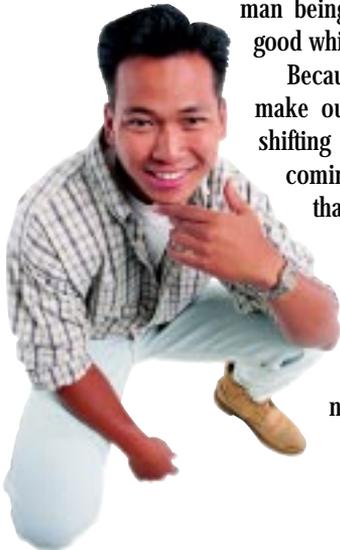
The problem is that change can't be forced. That touches back on one of the basic operating principles of the mind—that what we resist persists.

So how do we change? How do we override the programs that have gotten us stuck and led us down the path of chemical abuse and dependency?

This issue is one that has intrigued human beings as long as we've been human beings, and something that's likely to hold our attention a good while longer.

Because the fact is that no matter what we ultimately do to make ourselves change, real transformation only comes from shifting our awareness—by refocusing our attention, and becoming conscious of the often-unconscious mental machinery that runs our lives.

This is important stuff. Because in the act of observing our mental processes we create another layer of attention—a level beyond ordinary awareness, one that allows us to become increasingly mindful of the conditioned responses, reflexes, and fears that, until now, have really run our lives.



And in generating this layer of awareness, we literally create possibility out of impossibility, which is the first step in transforming our lives.

The next step is to *act*.

■ Standing Up To Fear

In just refusing to run away from something, one gains the strength of two...

—The Way of the Samurai

That brings us to the issue of fear, which is something that most of us get to confront sooner or later in the recovery process.

In fact, recent studies show that many—and perhaps most—alcoholics drink to relieve symptoms of anxiety. And when you hold something down for

Studies have shown that many—perhaps most—alcoholics drink to relieve symptoms of anxiety.

as long as some of us have been holding down fear, it's bound to bounce back—often with a vengeance.

In recovery, fear might come bounding back in the form of white-knuckled panic focused around specific situations or things (a fear of failure at a particular task, say, or an unease in meeting new people) or as a more general apprehension and dread.

But no matter what lights up the fear in your belly (and something does, for each of us), living with fear *can* be uncomfortable—particularly when we've shut ourselves off from our favorite fear-dampening abusable substance.

As you might expect, lots of rationalizations and justifications surround the items we fear most. And equally unsurprising, standing up to fear can be a tricky process, particularly when it rears its ugly head in the middle of the vulnerability and uncertainty that takes place in recovery.

So where do you start if you want to stop fear from running you?

Right where you are. Begin by telling the truth about your feelings to yourself and by allowing things to be the way they are—even if they seem lousy.

It's literally true that the things we resist persist, so until it's all right with you that certain things can trigger the jitters or even cold sweats, chances are good that those things will continue to run you—whether you like it or not.

So begin by accepting, without judgment or self-criticism, yourself exactly the way you are. Don't beat yourself up because of your limitations—or you'll only end up investing that much more energy in them.

The next step is to take responsibility for whatever you're afraid of.

Don't buy into the “poor me” script that you've unconsciously memorized about how things aren't your fault—or the “too late now” script where you tell yourself that you've screwed things up so totally that you'll never be able to make things right.

The only thing in our lives stronger than fear is courage, and the only way to summon courage is to create it by defying fear.

The fact is that while your problems aren't your fault, they definitely *are* your responsibility once you open your eyes in the morning. So take full responsibility for who you are, where you are, right now. Don't resist. Just accept your life—all of it—the way that it is, the way you've made it. Then if you really want things to be different, take responsibility for having them be another way.

There, we said it—the magic word in any program of recovery from anything: *Responsibility*. When we believe in it and act on it we literally produce magic in our lives. Fail to accept it or do anything about it and we watch the parade go by without us.

Often, taking responsibility for our lives leads us in the direction of fear itself. That's because we intuitively know that the only thing in our lives stronger than fear is courage, and the only way to summon courage is to create it by defying fear. In his essay “On Courage,” Emerson put it this way: “Always do what you are afraid to do.”

Believe it. Because it's the only way that it's done: We conquer fear by conquering fear. We don't do it by waiting until we feel stronger or until we think circumstances are better: We do it now or we don't do it at all.

Why not begin confronting your fears right now? Take a few minutes and list the situations that inspire the sweatiest palms or the biggest swarm of butterflies in your stomach. Then look over your list and rank the items in order of the fear they trigger. Then come to terms with them. Don't resist them or hate them or come up with a “What, me worry?” sort of artificial optimism. Just acknowledge that, yes, they sure do look familiar and, yes, they sure have run your life for a long time.

Then decide if you *really* want to come to grips with them. Maybe you don't want to (and maybe you don't even need to). If you decide you do, make another list—this time of commitments you're willing to make to increase your ability to cope with whatever it is you haven't been coping with.

Then *do something*. If you're afraid your marriage is falling apart, do something to fix it or at least to focus your ability to see the problem. If you're afraid of leaving your house or apartment, commit to some activity that will force you out, even if it's only to keep an appointment with a therapist. If you're afraid of speaking in public, sign up for a public speaking course at a local community college.

Whatever it is that we want to change requires only that we do something now. Fear scatters in the presence of honest, committed courage the same way that darkness vanishes when we turn on a light.

Just remember: Life-controlling fears and worries never just “go away.” We beat them or they beat us.

■ Dealing with Depression

Sometimes things are ahead and sometimes they are behind;
Sometimes breathing is hard, and sometimes it comes easily;
Sometimes there is strength and sometimes weakness;
Sometimes one is up and sometimes down.

Therefore the sage avoids extremes, excesses, and complacency.

—Lao Tzu

Handling depression in recovery is a lot like tiptoeing through a minefield, so you'd better do it right.

Advance planning can help. Because when you're depressed, you don't always recognize depression for what it is. You get so used to feeling down or defeated that depressed feelings start to seem like Business As Usual.

That's what makes depression so potentially deadly. You don't even know it's there. You think it's just the way things are. Or you think other people are doing it *to you* again.

So you bite your lip or slump in front of a TV or just sit on the hurt or anger or disappointment, and unconsciously chip away at the foundations of your recovery.

What else is there to do?

Well, for starters, you can begin to be aware of depression for what it is and beware of it for what it can be. Don't stand still and wait for it to grab you. And if it's already got you, make it turn you loose.

Here's the secret we always forget when we're down:

If you want to change your thoughts and feelings, *change your actions*. Get out and *do something*—but not just anything.

Consciously choose what most needs doing in your life *right now* and do that. If your sink's full of dirty dishes, and you don't feel like doing them, do the dishes anyway. Need clean clothes but hate to do laundry? *Do your laundry*. Feeling tense or depressed but too tired to do anything about it? Pull out your running shoes and put in a few miles.

In recovery, we have to make a conscious point of reminding ourselves that there is no reality that matters quite as much as the one we create for ourselves.

So create away. Because a fundamental principle of taking control of your life is to realize that *we are what we do*.

And if we don't do anything, what does that make us?

■ Choosing This

The five colors blind the eye.
The five tones deafen the ear.
The five flavors dull the taste.
Racing and hunting madden the mind.
Precious things lead one astray.

Therefore the sage is guided by what he feels
and not by what he sees.
He lets go of that and chooses this.

—Lao Tsu

Lao Tsu's words may seem simple, but they're as difficult to put into practice in today's world as they were when he wrote them 2,500 years ago.

Because even though choosing this—whatever's here, now—seems an obvious, effortless path to personal freedom, it usually doesn't turn out that way. In fact, "choosing this" can seem downright impossible sometimes.

And nowhere in life is the difficulty more clear-cut—and the need more compelling—than during recovery.

In one way or another, your life has come down around you. You may be in jail, in a hospital, an unemployment line, or a divorce court, but you're probably in trouble, in one way or another, wherever else you might be.

Because a basic truth about recovery is that most of us don't do it without feeling we have to do it.

Happiness isn't about getting what we want. It's about wanting what we get.



We either lose something (a marriage, a job, freedom, “sanity”) or feel that we're about to lose something that we value just as much before the cloak of denial we wrap ourselves in starts to slip away. Then, by the time we get around to actually *doing something* about our problems with chemicals, we usually have a stack of other problems to contend with—problems that can make “choosing this” that much harder.

Still, to borrow another ancient metaphor (also from Lao Tsu), a journey of ten thousand miles begins with a single step, and the single step we need to start with in recovery is in choosing where we are right now. Because if we haven't taken responsibility for being who we are, where we are, we're not going to get anywhere.

So take a moment now and choose this—whatever your *this* is.

As soon as you finish this paragraph, close your eyes and look at your life exactly the way it is, with whatever problems and possibilities you've created for yourself. As soon as you're sure that you've chosen *this* exactly the way it is, and when you're positive about who's in charge of making things change, open your eyes.

Choosing this is closely linked with a secret of happiness that saints and sages have known throughout the ages: that contrary to what most of us think most of the time, happiness is *not* about getting what we want. It's about wanting what we get. And every time we choose *this*, the way things are, we move closer to wanting what we get, which is where happiness hangs its hat.

And the closer we move to true happiness, the closer we get to who we really are.

Finding Yourself

7 Experience is not what happens to you. It's what you do with what happens to you.

—Aldous Huxley

After you've gotten off what you've been on and incorporated some of the changes we've talked about so far, you may be tempted to think that you've taken recovery about as far as it can be taken.

Don't believe it. Because recovery is a process of self-mastery that expands out forever and stops only when we do.

What all the processes and activities that we've talked about are designed to do is to expand awareness: awareness of chemical dependency as an opportunity rather than an obstacle; awareness of the relationship between body and mind, thought and action; awareness that our intentions can override our feelings as the primary factor in determining the quality of our lives.

But that's not as far as you can take recovery—not at all. Because the ultimate challenge is to make personal transformation what we're about all the time. And that's more than the ultimate challenge in recovery—that's the ultimate challenge in life.

Because if we can begin to see the truth in the proposition that we're not our minds and our opinions and our limitations, we begin to glimpse the deeper reality that no one else is, either.

And when we see that, we begin to see



that relating to people from inside the shell of reaction and fear and anger and pain that we usually operate inside in our interactions with each other is as ultimately false and unsatisfying as relating to ourselves from the web of perfectionism, stress, and depression that we lived inside as addicts.

Want to step outside those walls? It's *easy*.

Look for opportunities to expand yourself beyond yourself. Do things that, before you got yourself straight, you wouldn't have even *wanted* to do.

If you're still not sure what that means, just look around.

See what needs doing and do that. Pick up a broken bottle or a candy wrapper on the sidewalk in front of your home. Make it your responsibility to make life easier for the people you see every day and to make the world a better place for people you don't even know. Find opportunities to share who you really are—and not just what you think or how you feel about whatever was on television last night.

Just pull your attention off yourself and your thoughts and feelings and start focusing in on others—and making a difference in *their* lives.

Because the final lesson in recovery is the ultimate lesson in life: We get closest to our true selves when we most give ourselves away.

Maybe that means that we're really here for each other.

Or we're not really here at all. 🙄

R E S O U R C E S

Connections

It isn't possible, in a booklet of this length, to do much more than skim the surface of some important recent advances in addiction research and a few techniques of personal growth and discovery.

For this reason, we hope *Total Recovery* will serve as a point of departure for a much deeper—and much longer lasting—independent investigation on your part.

We also hope that you'll find the following resources (listed in no particular order) useful in continuing your work in recovery—and expanding your journey through life.

Just don't spend *all* your time looking for yourself in a book.
You're too important to the rest of us out here.

■ Suggested Reading

Everyday Zen: Love and Work. Charlotte Joko Beck. Harper & Row.

The Relaxation Response. Herbert Benson. Morrow.

Positive Addiction. William Glasser. Harper & Row.

Peace Is Every Step. Thich Nhat Hanh. Bantam Books.

Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life. Jon Kabat-Zinn. Hyperion.

Shaving the Inside of Your Skull: Crazy Wisdom For Discovering Who You Really Are. Mel Ash. G.P. Putnam.

The Hidden Addiction And How To Get Free. Janice Keller Phelps & Alan E. Nourse. Little, Brown.

Journey of Awakening: A Meditator's Guidebook. Ram Dass. Bantam Books.

Playing Ball On Running Water. David K. Reynolds. Morrow.

Journey to Ixtlan: The Lessons of Don Juan. Carlos Castaneda. Washington Square Press.

Compassion and Self-Hate: An Alternative To Despair. Theodore Isaac Rubin. Collier Books.