

Starting Over

***A guide to recovery through a new future
Becoming an addict who chooses not to use***

By: _____

Starting Over is a guide to recovery for those ready to become someone new. Based on the beatitudes, *Starting Over* offers a different approach to recovery. If you are an addict who struggles, who is wanting—hoping—to become someone new, this program was written for you.

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About the Author

See Introduction Recovery Exercise Page 18

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

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Cover Image: Iceland at noon

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Starting Over

Are you ready to become someone new, someone who lives clean and sober, who chooses not to use? *Starting Over* is a program based on the beatitudes that uses nine keys to offer a different approach to addiction and recovery.

Introduction

For those who have struggled with the disease and pain of addiction and the unyielding obsession of satisfying its hunger, *Starting Over* may offer a different approach. Consider the end of the addiction process. Where is your addiction going? Where will it eventually take you?

If you are like other addicts, it is reasonable to assume that overdose and death may be in your future. Part of the struggle related to addiction is that our tolerance increases just as our willpower decreases. This escalation in tolerance requires that we dive deeper into addiction more often if we are to maintain the same measure of pleasure or relief from pain.

Since overdose may be in your future, why not let your addiction take you here and now? After all, it's likely to happen eventually.

This may seem like a sarcastic or grand statement meant to get your attention or shame you into rehab, but what if it is not? Seriously, what could free you, if not death?

Let's view addiction as an adversary, a competitor beyond our abilities and skills to overcome. With no chance of ever winning, the most logical strategy is to lose. Why not just stop playing a game you cannot win? Why not choose a new game with different rules? Within those new rules, we are allowed to begin again. How many times have you been to rehab? How many years have you spent in prison? How many promises to yourself and those you love have you broken? How many more will you break before the end? If there were an easier way, a "back door" out of addiction, wouldn't you have found it by now? If there were a magic pill to boost your willpower and self-discipline, to make you hate being high, wouldn't you have taken it?

At an addict's funeral recently, her children said to those at the reception, "She is finally free, free from all her demons, free from her pain and heartbreak." They were right. She was finally free, but at what price? She was gone. How sad that she couldn't enjoy it, celebrate it, or find peace in her newfound freedom. That may sound callous, but it's true. Her life was over.

But What If?

What if, after death, the addict could be reborn as **an addict who chooses not to use**? What if, in surrendering the past, we could win the war raging within us and reclaim the future? Could the answer be as simple as giving up on our old life and starting over?

Within this example, we think of ourselves as two separate individuals with separate interests. Your past addicted self calls to you from yesterday to continue the self-destructive path you were on. Your future self, a clean and sober you, however, is calling from tomorrow, asking you to leave the past behind and become **an addict who chooses not to use**. A new version of you

A new version of you requires a change in thinking.

requires a change in thinking. Often in recovery we believe we can recover our past and filter out or manage any addictive elements and influences. But the truth is, there is no filter or program fine enough to remove all the past influences of addiction. Recovery requires a clean break, a fresh start, a new beginning. By relinquishing our past and any victory over

addiction through our own strength or self-discipline, we free ourselves to start over and salvage our future.

Like...

Like ending a toxic long-term relationship in order to find happiness in the possibilities ahead, we divorce, move on, so we can separate from our old love in order to find a greater, more meaningful way of living.

Like folding on a bad card hand, we stop putting in chips and fold. We give up on what we have already put in the pot and hope for a new game with better odds of winning.

Like rebooting a computer after viruses and malware have rendered it unusable, shutting everything down, we can restore a new, more advanced operating system. In *Starting Over*, we reprogram, reinvent, and redefine who we can become.

Nature hates a vacuum. Even a vacant inner-city lot is overcome with growth when left unattended. Unless we replace one appetite, love, or life for another, we will most certainly fail.

Starting over gives us the opportunity to plant a new crop, farming hope for a new future.

If insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results, wouldn't it follow that sanity is found in radical change and transformation? How long will you fight your unwinnable battle? Like declaring bankruptcy in the face of unpayable debt, we surrender our addicted selves and become someone new.

We all know the endless stories of the lone hero going willingly to their death in an unwinnable scenario for the survival and love of another. Might your addicted self of yesterday make a heroic

sacrifice to break free from the past to save your future, allowing you to become **an addict who chooses not to use**? Are you willing to give up who you were for who you could be? Can you see yourself embrace powerlessness and surrender any victory over addiction, to start over as a new you: **an addict who chooses not to use**?

Are you willing to give up who you were for who you could be?

Sobriety Is Not the Goal

Often we hold up sobriety as the ultimate objective, but to what end? Honestly, why be sober if you have no purpose or passion for life? Let's view sobriety not as an end in itself but a means to a greater end, a tool we use to discover the exciting future ahead of us.

In the war of addiction, the first casualty is always the hope and promise of tomorrow. The hope and promise of tomorrow is where we find renewed purpose and passion for life. This passion for life can burn so bright within us that we would fight the temptations of the moment to hold on to it. Our sobriety finds meaning and purpose within the passion of a redefined future.

Let's view sobriety not as the goal but as a tool that helps us achieve a greater, more lasting goal, one of self-discovery and hope.

Building a New World

The goal of *Starting Over* is to build a new world that includes a new you: **an addict who chooses not to use**. The goal is more than overcoming using through chemical alternatives, or boosting willpower through self control, or removing temptations (although these play a part).

The goal is more than waking up sober one day at a time in a constant, unyielding mental tug of war with addiction.

The goal is newness of life, finding a new you with new passions and purpose that do not include addiction. This new life is the recovery that is essential to overcoming the constant pressures of addiction and finding long-lasting sobriety. Not using then becomes one of the steps or tools to finding this more meaningful and fulfilling life.

Steps

Steps are always found within a structure like a home or building, and their purpose is to help us climb to a higher level of living. Any steps that lead us toward sobriety must include a reason for climbing them other than just sobriety itself. Why be sober if you have nothing to live for, no passion in life?

Sobriety is not an end in itself, rather, it is a means to a greater end—living on the second floor of life, discovering a greater, higher, more meaningful way of living. This is where our old, addicted

Sobriety is not an end in itself, rather, it is a means to a greater end—living on the second floor of life, discovering a greater, higher, more meaningful way of living.

life fades as background noise, which helps us overcome the constant pressures of temptation and enjoy long-lasting sobriety.

When we think of those we admire for overcoming addiction and substance abuse, it is clear, their lives now are radically different from when they were using, almost as though

they were another person entirely. Painfully, deliberately they divorce their old selves to become someone new and Start Over. Could it be that the person you are looking to become is not behind you in your past but ahead of you in your future?

Redefining Recovery

What is recovery? Some definitions include: “a return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength.” Since we can never escape our past and its memories, we know that any “return to normal” is an unrealistic expectation. For many of us, our first thought is to seek our childhood and the comfort, security, and stability it may have provided. Others imagine neighbors, friends, and relatives who enjoyed a more stable, loving, and tranquil life. Although we may incorporate parts of our past and salvage the best aspects of our hopes and dreams, our addictions have changed us. We are not the people we once were. Therefore, it is critical to our recovery that our thinking is not to “recover our past” or get back what we have lost. These memories may be wonderful and good, or they may be horrible and filled with pain. Neither makes for good foundational materials for the future.

Reclaiming the Future

Recently, an addict said, “I just want my old life back.” The response was a simple, “Why? That old life led into addiction; any part of it most likely would lead you back there again. Wouldn’t it be better to leave that life behind, declare bankruptcy, and start over with a new life with new hopes and possibilities?”

We must redefine recovery not to look behind to recover what was lost but to look toward a new future. Only a foundation focused on the future is strong enough to hold up under the pressures and temptations of addiction. If addiction is a future where pain multiplies like interest in a bank account, accumulating a debt that no one can pay, then bankruptcy on that debt is our best and only choice.

Recovery “From” vs. Recovery “To”

When we speak of recovery, we are not “recovering from,” we are “recovering to.” We are reclaiming a new future that once was lost to us. We reclaim the future by surrendering the past and present. It is recovering that which is coming, bringing with it the hope of tomorrow,

a tomorrow worth escaping addiction for, recovering into a new life.

Before you now is a blank sheet of paper and in your hand, the pen. Who will you be? What future will you write? You are free to reinvent yourself and become **an addict who chooses not to use.**

We reclaim the future by surrendering the past and present.

The Keys of Starting Over: An Overview

The *Nine Keys of Starting Over* are broken up into four groupings.

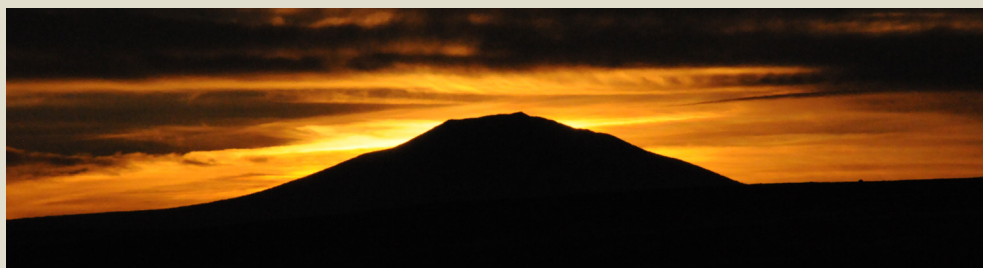
1. The reawakening keys of Poverty and Sadness.
2. The reinvent keys of Humility and Hunger.
3. The reinvest keys of Kindness, Sincerity, and Goodwill.
4. The revival keys of Disconnect and Resolve.

The first two of the nine keys address our past addicted self. The last two keys focus on cementing our resolve and protecting our sobriety. The five remaining keys and the majority of this program, however, are dedicated to and celebrate the new person we are becoming—the addict who chooses not to use. Investing in your future and having a clear vision of who you can be are essential in overcoming any addiction.

Reawaken

The reawakening keys of Poverty and Sadness help us address the structures of addiction within us. We begin to reawaken as we confront the hold that denial and prideful self-empowerment have over us and acknowledge our need and the unmanageability of addicted life.

Poverty



Recovery is admitting you are at the end of your rope and want to begin discovering a new life.

Through poverty—where we lack our own strength, our self-empowerment, control, or cunning—we embrace the pain as an inevitable and unavoidable part of our recovery. In poverty, we confess our lack and our weakness. We acknowledge that we will never overcome addiction through our own strength, willpower, and cunning alone. In reaching the end of our rope, we divorce our old addictive love and begin a new future. We reawaken like the phoenix, a new person, **an addict who chooses not to use**. In poverty, we confront the internal unseen and cease any self-medication. In surrender, we win back our future by becoming **an addict who chooses not to use**. We embrace pain as a companion and confront our denial.

Sadness



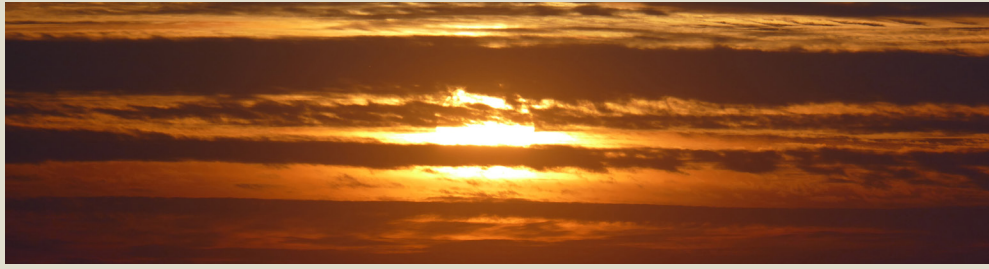
Recovery is a deep remorse and sadness over our broken past. It is finding genuine comfort and hope in the future.

Through sadness, we awaken to a clear understanding and an honest look at the brokenness of our past. Any veneer or glossing over of the damage we have done to ourselves and others disqualifies us from becoming **an addict who chooses not to use**. The pain of our past, its memories, and feelings are a part of who we are. Using displacement and our behavior, we discover our true location and begin plotting a course toward healthier choices. With sadness we courageously seek out the origins of our pain, giving ourselves the room and grace to forgive ourselves. In sadness, we learn to feel again, bringing to the surface and embracing our broken past that includes our pain. We transform these painful memories into the signposts that lead us toward a new future.

Reinvent

Within the reinvent keys of Humility and Hunger, we lay a new solid foundation, a structure with new hopes and priorities. We dig deep, putting in a firm foundation, framing our new home with the solid materials of a willingness to change and an openness to the help of others. We begin building a clear and positive vision of our future. We divert or redirect the river of our desires toward healthier choices. We embrace time as our most precious gift and begin asking ourselves, “What do I want?”

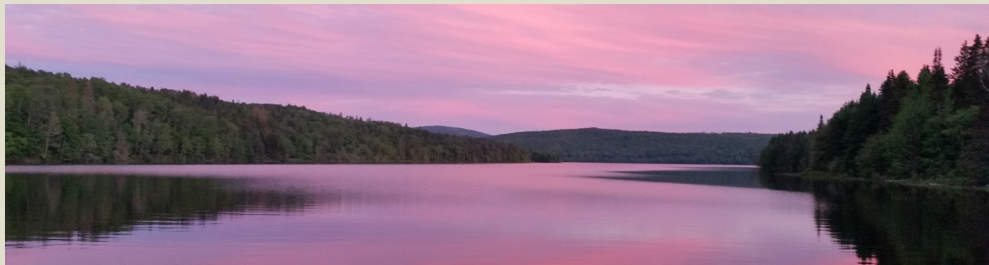
Humility



Recovery is a willingness and openness to receive help so that we can find contentment with the world around us.

Through humility, we break through the isolation, walking into the light of community and connectedness by embracing a meekness and willingness to accept the help of others. We learn about ourselves through our interactions with others. We learn of the battle between the present and future self and commit to advocating for our future using commitment devices. We hold dear a clear and positive vision of our future selves as our greatest commitment device.

Hunger



Recovery is a hunger to change and a willingness to be changed, finding fulfilling new purpose and hope in life.

Through hunger, we divert or redirect the river of our desires, finding new and exciting directions toward healthier choices. In hunger, we embrace time as our most precious gift and begin asking, “What do I want?” We resolve to recover a new future rather than recovering the past. We begin the redefinition of our old building as we accept with humility the permission to become someone new. Without qualifications or requirements, we are released from the past. We are free to become whomever we choose.

Reinvest

By reinvesting with the keys of Kindness, Sincerity, and Goodwill, we repopulate this new future with ideas and passions that become our new selves. Becoming someone new requires time and patience. These investments are small deposits every day in the savings account of life. We decorate this new future with acts of kindness toward ourselves and others, we learn to live in the moment, transparent about what we think and feel, we embrace a spiritual awakening by helping others in community.

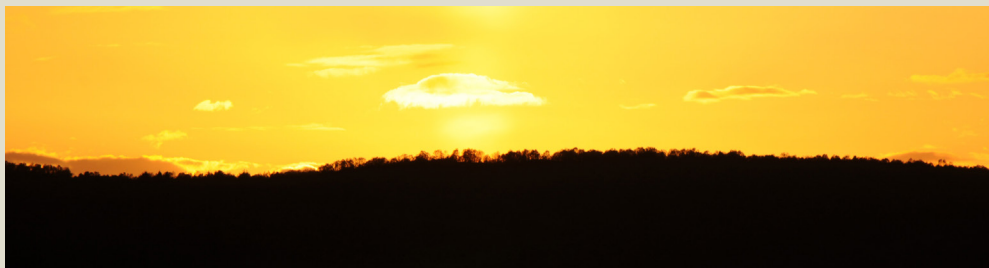
Kindness



Recovery is a genuine compassion and empathy for others, discovering a desire to help and restore.

The first and most powerful expression of kindness is found in how we think about ourselves. To be kind to the person in the mirror, to be gracious and forgiving to yourself is the foundation we stand on in extending kindness toward others. Just as hatred toward ourselves becomes the anger and hostility we pass on to others, so the compassion and forgiveness we extend toward ourselves becomes the kindness we give to others. Through kindness, we understand that there is healing in helping others, teaching us to reach outside of ourselves as a way of resolving our issues. We invite virtuous cycles by becoming deliberate about acts of appreciation and generosity. We learn that the issues of our lives are fruit. This fruit is the offspring of what we have planted, and we must take responsibility for it. With kindness, we become farmers of hope through deliberate acts of generosity.

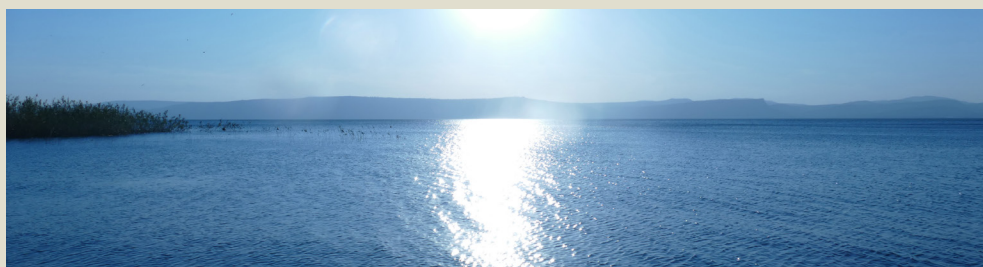
Sincerity



Recovery is living transparently, unafraid of consequences, and discovering a new way of living life on life's terms.

Through sincerity, we learn to live transparently. No longer afraid of what others may think, we become willing to expose our weaknesses and live in the moment, transparent about what we think and feel. We learn to reconcile the conspiracy within us by revealing it, bringing it out into the open, and allowing others to help us. We begin a habit of journaling and dialoging with others as a way to realize our healing.

Goodwill



Recovery is consideration and cooperation through compromise. It is finding a spiritual awakening allowing us to discover our role and place in a new life.

Through goodwill, we learn to help others in community, finding new purpose and contentment. We embrace a spiritual awakening as a means of continual growth. In goodwill, we discover that compromise can be a good thing. In goodwill, we join with others who are helping. We learn that goodwill begins with ourselves, never placing our sobriety at risk through self-sabotage. We learn to start with one small thing to begin stepping toward the largest healing.

Revival

In the revival keys of Disconnect and Resolve, we plan the care of our new future by putting in place strategies for success. We protect this future by connecting to others. We learn to leave behind the relationships of using friends and family. We examine our triggers and invest in new people, places, and things. We embrace sobriety as a tool of self-discovery. We form a battle plan for the path forward including meetings, programs, and sponsorship, and begin addressing our craving thoughts.

Disconnect



Recovery is saying goodbye to our old lifestyle and relationships, discovering new meaning in family, friends, and a healthy, hopeful future.

Through disconnect, we learn that severing relationships with using friends and family is an essential part of recovery. Addiction, like a ladder, is a process that uses each rung to tempt us. We learn about triggers—the people, places, and things of our past used against us. We invest in discovering healthier people, places, and things who celebrate who we are becoming, **an addict who chooses not to use**. We recognize the pull of social media to tempt us. We confront our triggers in both the short term and in the long term.

Resolve

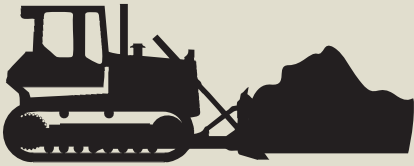


Recovery is not taking criticism from addicts personally but using it to see the brokenness of others and as a sign of our own recovery accomplishment.

Through resolve, we commit to sobriety and learn never to underestimate the power addiction has to call us back to using. We learn not to take the criticism of addicts personally, but rather in empathy, we see it as an indication of our recovery accomplishment. We acknowledge that friction with using friends and family is a compliment. In fact, we should be concerned if there is no friction. We now can begin developing a battle plan for success in the war to maintain sobriety. We acknowledge that no filter is fine enough to remove our addictive past. We recognize the craving inner voice and commit to compassionate confrontation to the speaker within.

Building a New Home

Think about the *Starting Over* keys as building a new home. The reawakening keys of Poverty and Sadness help us address the structures of addiction within us. Poverty and Sadness represent the first steps in building a home. We begin by clearing the land, removing old structures and debris which represent our past of addiction with its denial and prideful self-empowerment, acknowledging our need and the unmanageability of addicted life.



In the reinvent keys of Humility and Hunger, we dig deep, putting in a firm foundation, framing our new home with the solid materials of a willingness to change and an openness to the help of others. We begin building a clear and positive vision of our future. We divert or redirect the river of our desires toward healthier choices. We embrace time as our most precious gift and begin asking ourselves, “What do I want?”



In the reinvest keys of Kindness, Sincerity, and Goodwill, we complete our new home by adding furniture, hanging pictures on the walls, adding window treatments, purchasing appliances, and gathering all the amenities needed for our new life. We beatify our new home with acts of kindness toward ourselves and others, we learn to live in the moment, transparent about what we think and feel, we embrace a spiritual awakening by helping others in community.

In the revival keys of Disconnect and Resolve, we plan the care of our new home by putting in place strategies for landscaping, cleaning, and maintenance. We protect our new home with a state-of-the-art alarm system interconnected to outside services, such as the fire and police departments. We learn to leave behind the relationships of using friends and family. We examine our triggers and invest in new people, places, and things. We embrace sobriety as a tool of self-discovery. We form a battle plan for the path forward including meetings, programs, and sponsorship, and begin addressing our craving thoughts.



Together, these nine keys invite you to Start Over by building a new life—a home of your own choosing—filled with hope and possibility. There are no qualifications or requirements other than wanting to become **an addict who chooses not to use**.

How to Use this Program

Starting Over was created for all addicts. All of us suffer from addictive behaviors whether chemical, emotional, or physical. We all demonstrate compulsive or habitual ways of thinking and doing what we know is self-destructive but are unable to halt those ways or thinking. The term, “addict” is used with deliberate vagueness to incorporate all addictive or habitual behaviors that become destructive. If you are an addict who is wanting—hoping—to become **an addict who chooses not to use**, this program was written for you.

The goal of *Starting Over* is to build a new world with a new, drug-free you within it, as you become **an addict who chooses not to use**. The goal is more than overcoming addiction through chemical alternatives or boosting your will power through self-control and self-discipline or by removing temptations. The goal is more than waking up sober one day at a time in a constant, unyielding mental tug of war with addiction. All these aspects play roles in recovery; however, the goal is the embracing of the newness of life. Each key will contain an element of self-discovery and reflection necessary to unlock the past, so that we can move into a new future.

Each key will contain an element of self-discovery and reflection necessary to unlock the past, so that we can move into a new future.

Resolving past trauma and finding a new you with new passions and purpose that do not include self-medication are essential to long-lasting recovery and overcoming the constant pressures of addiction.

Allow this program to help you build your new world and become a new you within it. Reinvent yourself and redefine yourself in the uniqueness of who you are without your addiction. There are no qualifications or requirements needed—other than wanting to become **an addict who chooses not to use**.

Now, here, as you are reading this, you can be born anew, you can begin again. Within your new life, you can redefine and reinvent yourselves so loudly that the calling of your past fades as background noise. You are released from your past. You are free to become whomever you choose.

The Power of Choice

Within the recovery community, there is an ongoing debate as to the roles that disease, disorders, medication, and willpower play within addiction. Regardless of where you might fall in this discussion, there is one aspect of recovery that is common among most opinion leaders: choice. All addictions begin with a choice; all recovery from addiction is energized by choice.

Starting Over is based on the beatitudes found in the Sermon on the Mount, a teaching of Jesus regarding the choices we make and the outcomes of those choices. *Starting Over* is a program

that celebrates the addict's choice to become someone new, someone different. The choices we make define who we are and who we will become. If we consider addiction to be a disease or a disorder (substance abuse disorder), we still need to choose to participate. In any recovery, this choice separates the addict we were and empowers us to become someone new: **an addict who chooses not to use.**

You Are the Author

You are unique. There can be only one you. Because of the diversity of who you are, there is no magic wand or silver bullet, no program or method that can help everyone. Your recovery will be as diverse as you are and as individual as the journey that brought you to addiction. Because of this uniqueness, only you can be the author of your recovery program. What works for you may not be the same as what works for another addict.

Consider yourself the author of *Starting Over* as you write and make notations in each chapter. The extra room is provided with the questions and exercises along with ample space for notations and reflections. The more you consider yourself the author of this workbook, the greater it can aid you in becoming someone new.

The more you consider yourself the author of this workbook, the greater it can aid you in becoming someone new.

As the author of your own program, everything is on the table: 12-step meetings, speaker meetings, big book meetings, prescribed drugs, sponsors, rehab, and *Starting Over*. All these should be considered and used as you find them helpful, as no single remedy will match you perfectly. Only you can be the mentor of your recovery because only you know your failures and successes, secret sins, and deepest longings. Because of this uniqueness, only you can be responsible for your recovery; its success or failure rests entirely with you.

Keys—Not Steps

Starting Over and its keys are not steps we climb in succession, one building on the next. Instead, keys are applied as uniquely and individually as you are, and depend on the doors and locks within your addiction. There is no graduation from a key, no final step, chapter, or higher level to reach. Keys are always available to you to help open doors that seem closed and to guide us through difficult times. Keys are like the needle of a compass guiding us toward calmer waters and better long-term outcomes.

Since there is no prescribed order to the keys, they can be applied equally, simultaneously, or independently. There are no numerical values to the keys, rather a one-word description representing one of the principal aspects of the key. They are guideposts, signs on the roadway, to help reach better destinations.

Reinvent Yourself

Each key will end with an account or testimonial of success in reinvention. This program is the permission to become someone new, permission to rediscover and redefine your life. This redefinition of ourself looks toward the future as addicts who choose not to use.

Recovery Questions

Recovery questions are found at the end of each key with space to write your personal reflections and responses as to how each key might be applied. The goal of each question is consideration. Have you considered what the question means to you? This form of self-discovery, which was created and proven long ago, allows us to teach ourselves using our own words and history to recognize deeper internal truths.

Recovery Exercises

At the end of each key are exercises. Each exercise is challenging in its own way. Complete each exercise to the best of your ability. Do this multiple times during the various stages of your recovery to discover how to include in your life those keys most meaningful to you.

My Recovery Journal

One proven method to help with recovery is to use a journal to write down your thoughts. Much of the labor and work of overcoming addiction comes in the form of a dialogue with ourself and

Journaling allows our internal dialogue to take form on paper where it can be seen and processed.

with others. Journaling allows our internal dialogue to take form on paper where it can be seen and processed. This might seem uncomfortable at first, but like most things, we become better at it the more we do it. In time, journaling can become a joyous cornerstone of our recovery process.

Do not allow embarrassment over poor spelling, grammar, or lack of education rob you of the essential tool of journaling. Write in whatever language is most comfortable, and express yourself, remembering that only you will be reading it. Journaling is a skill that we develop with time and patience. Begin slowly, trying to write something every day. When you do write, try to write as quickly as possible allowing your thoughts to flow freely to the page, not stopping for spelling or grammar. Start with a sentence or two, then a paragraph or two, then a page or two.

Journaling is private; no one should read your words without your permission. Use the key as a prompt in the space provided at the end of each key to begin the habit of doing the hard work of recovery through journaling.

Relevant Terms

Many recovery programs use the same or similar terms in different ways. To help clarify, the definitions below give us an understanding of how they will be used in this program.

Sobriety: Sobriety refers to our drugless mental state. It is abstinence not only from alcohol but also from all mind-altering substances that have not been prescribed by a doctor. Sobriety is the absence of all forms of self-medication and is, therefore, not confined just to substance abuse. It also can refer to other self-destructive behaviors and habitual ways of thinking.

Recovery: Recovery refers to the hope of a new future and leaving a self-destructive past. Recovery does not refer to reacquiring a past we have lost to addiction or making up for lost time and resources. It is a recovery of what can be. Recovery is recovering the future still ahead of us by redefining and reinventing a new hope for tomorrow. We do not recover “from,” we are recovering “to.”

Self-medication: Self-medication refers to taking any medication or mind-altering substance (everything from alcohol to heroin), which has not been prescribed by a doctor. Self-medication is not confined just to substance abuse. It also can refer to other self-destructive behaviors and ways of thinking that provide temporary relief.

Using: Using refers to the practice of self-medication, which brings with it a lifestyle that includes using. This lifestyle includes behaviors and habitual ways of thinking and feeling which can become self-destructive.

Addiction: Addiction is a dependence or continued use of any mind-altering substance not prescribed by a doctor. It is also inclusive of compulsive or habitual ways of thinking and doing that are self-destructive. It may also include the lifestyles, environment, and behaviors that come with addiction. The term, “addict” is used with deliberate vagueness to incorporate all addictive or habitual behaviors and lifestyles that become our self-medication. It is the need or hunger to not be without or not do without either emotionally, mentally, or physically.

An addict who chooses not to use: **An addict who chooses not to use** is the continued state of sobriety we strive toward in recovery. Our addictions have changed us. The addict will either be using or fighting not to use because the middle ground of a truce with addiction is gone. We will never lose our past with its memories, but in a new and purpose filled future, we can learn to live above them. We can recognize their presence, and commit to never satisfying those memories, urges, and desires. Learning to live within the dissonance, the imbalance, and discomfort of not using, even though you want to use, is how we become **an addict who chooses not to use**. This choice is made every day, every hour, and sometimes each moment to keep the momentum of sobriety.

Reinvent Yourself

Cassius Clay reinvented himself. In his early twenties, he switched religions and changed his name to the now-famous Muhammad Ali, transforming the sporting world forever. Some know who Cassius Clay was, but most know Muhammad Ali. Changing your name may or may not be an option, but it is certain that you must change the way you think about who you are. This program is the permission to become someone new, permission to rediscover and redefine your life. This redefinition of ourself is not as an addict, but as an addict who choose not to use. Within our new life, we can redefine and reinvent ourselves so loudly that the calling of our old addictive past fades as background noise.

Introduction Recovery Questions

In what way do you think *Starting Over* may offer a different recovery approach? _____

Do you view sobriety as the goal or as a tool to a greater goal? _____

Are you recovering “from,” or are you recovering “to,” and what does that mean? _____

What is the first casualty in the war of addiction? _____

Are you willing to leave the past behind? _____

Is there a filter fine enough to remove all addiction’s influences from your past? _____

Will going back to your old life help you stay sober? _____

Do you think you could manage your addiction if you tried harder? _____

What does “Doing the same thing...expecting different results” mean to you? _____

What is the opposite of “Doing the same thing...expecting different results”? _____

What is a more lasting goal than sobriety? _____

Where does sobriety find its purpose or meaning? _____

Do you understand how the keys are like building a home? _____

Are you willing to begin the hard work of recovery? _____

Why are you here? _____

Introduction Recovery Exercise

Review the following exercise and complete it the best you can.

- 1. By:** In the space provided at the beginning of your book, fill in the “By” with your name. You are the author of this workbook.
- 2. About the Author:** Space is provided in the following page under “About the Author” to write about yourself as the author of your own recovery program. Discuss such topics as:
 - Who you feel you are and what is important to you
 - Family and friends
 - How did you get to this program?
 - What influences led you to your addiction?

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Reawaken

The reawakening keys of **Poverty** and **Sadness** help us address the structures of addiction within us. We begin to reawaken as we confront the hold denial and prideful self-empowerment have over us and acknowledge our need and the unmanageability of addicted life.



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Reawaken with Poverty

Recovery is admitting you are at the end of your rope and want to begin discovering a new life.

Through poverty—where we lack our own strength, our self-empowerment, control, or cunning—where we embrace the pain as an inevitable and unavoidable part of our recovery. In poverty, we confess our lack and our weakness. We acknowledge that we will never overcome addiction through our own strength, willpower, and cunning alone. In reaching the end of our rope, we divorce our old addictive love and begin a new future. We reawaken like the phoenix, a new person, **an addict who chooses not to use**. In poverty, we confront the internal unseen and cease any self-medication. In surrender, we win back our future by becoming **an addict who chooses not to use**. We embrace pain as a companion and confront our denial.

If we view addiction as an adversary, a competitor that is beyond our abilities or skills to overcome, the best chance of ever getting beyond addiction is by losing to it, walking away from our broken past and toward a new future. How long will you fight your unwinnable battle? How many times have you been to rehab? How many promises to yourself and those you love have you broken? How many more will you break before the end? If there were a back door out of addiction, wouldn't you have found it by now? If there were a magic pill boosting will power and self-discipline, wouldn't you have taken it?

In poverty, we confess our lack and our weakness. In powerlessness and unmanageability, we acknowledge that we will never overcome addiction through our own strength, willpower, and cunning. Poverty says, “I am poor,” “I am not strong enough to fight this unwinnable battle.” In poverty, we find the end of our rope, giving ourselves permission to surrender what was, to begin

again building a new future with new hopes and dreams. Poverty is an acknowledgment of our lack, our weakness, so that we can receive the help we need.

It is not enough to admit addiction, nor is it sufficient to acknowledge a struggle with addiction. Are you ready to surrender, embracing your weakness by stopping all self-medicating addictive behaviors? Only the desperate, those with everything to lose, those with the most at stake, are ready to leave addiction behind and begin life over again. In losing, we find new freedom to Start Over. We must be willing to take the farthest step of admitting: “I have lost the battle of addiction; I will never win control over my addiction.” To embrace poverty is to declare bankruptcy on unpayable debt, to stop playing a game you cannot win to start a new game with different rules. In poverty, we relinquish any victory over our addiction; in poverty, we cast aside prideful self-empowerment. In poverty, we lose the war of addiction in order to begin something new, ceasing all self-medication and management of our addictive behaviors. In losing, we win back our future and begin building a new life as **an addict who chooses not to use**.

The Rope's End

Honesty is a requirement for overcoming addiction. If you are here for any other reason than a long-lasting, permanent recovery, you are wasting your time. The Poverty Key speaks directly to the heart. Why are you reading this? Why are you in a meeting that is reading this? Are you at the end of your rope? To admit, to acknowledge, to confess, “I am poor,” “I am empty,” “I am killing myself,” opens us up to receive something new. It is the beginning of becoming **an addict who chooses not to use**.

No one can occupy two spaces at the same time. If we want to discover a new place and way to live beyond addiction, we must be willing to move off our current location. The addict who says, “I just want my life back” ignores that the life they want back is the life that led them to addiction and most likely would lead them back to it again. To find the end of our rope is to begin the journey away from addiction, moving off of the familiar and comfortable, and into the painful unknown.

Wanting to Want

“What do I want?” holds the key to forming your future self and diminishing the momentary impulses of addiction.

What do you want? What we want will speak directly to what we get. Many of us have been here before, confessing addiction, leaving sober only to fall once again. The answer lies in a clear understanding of what you want and a complete surrender to that desire. The question, “What do I want?” holds the key to forming your future self and diminishing the momentary impulses of addiction. Honestly ask yourself, “What do

I want?” You may not have a direct answer to that question, and the future may seem cloudy and

distant for you. For now, we begin by asking ourselves the question, “What do I want?” By asking this simplest of questions, we begin growing in the ever-evolving journey of life.

One aspect of what we want as **an addict who chooses not to use** is permanent long-term sobriety. A requirement of all sobriety is honesty. Honestly, ask yourself, “Do I want to be permanently free?” Are you ready to spend the rest of your life without it? An honest answer to that question may be “no.” If that is the case, then ask yourself, “Do I want to change what I want?” If the answer is once again “no,” then this program has nothing to offer you. No program or rehab can overcome the addict’s own will to use. If, however, you are willing to change what you want, to nurture new desires, wanting to be free of addiction, that desire can transform into the poverty required of **an addict who chooses not to use**.

The longer we struggle and fight our addiction, the longer it will absorb our strength; the harder we work to pay the debt, the more debt we incur. To want peace in our lives is to give up our broken past, and to declare bankruptcy. In this figurative language, we allow addiction to win over our addictive past and free ourselves to reinvent and redefine the future.

To want peace in our lives is to give up our broken past, and to declare bankruptcy.

We, abandoning any thoughts of controlling our using and rise again by starting over in a new future, as addicts who choose not to use.

Lost at Sea

On November 23, 1995, the U.S. Navy’s Lance Cpl. Zachary Mayo was strolling alone on a catwalk, stories above the dark Indian Ocean in the rear section of the aircraft carrier USS America. Without notice, a wind gust lifted him up and over the railing around 3 a.m. Instantly he found himself in the middle of the Indian Ocean with no land, no help, and no lights in sight except those trailing off the aircraft carrier as it sped on its way toward the Gulf of Oman, leaving him behind. Not being able to see land in any direction, the vastness of the ocean stripped away all pride and vanity. Any sense of control and self-empowerment were taken away with each hour that passed by. He thought to swim, but to where, which direction? There was no doubt he could not save himself; rather, he surrendered to the vastness of the ocean, waiting for death or something other than himself to save him.

Characteristics of addiction include pride and arrogance that refuse help. One of the fruits of addiction is a self-empowerment and pride that refuses any help that does not involve drugs or threatens drug use.

The “self” of “self-medication” speaks so loudly that calmer and healthier voices are drowned out. The helplessness of addiction is evident to everyone except the addict.

Like Zack Mayo, we must find the end of our pride and arrogance by cutting through our denial. Only when we see things as they truly are, can the walls of self-empowerment break down and the healing process begin. Zack Mayo spent nearly two days in the Indian Ocean before a Pakistani fishing boat stumbled upon him. Half dead, he came out of the Indian Ocean a different man than the one who had fallen in.

Many of his worst traits had fallen away by losing the battle of self against the vastness of an ocean. Trauma and pain change us. They transform what we want out of life. Many changes are not positive or easy, but in the context of addiction and self-medication, often we find that only deep and cutting pain awakens us to the needed change, to the decisions and actions required for recovery.

Trauma and pain change us. They transform what we want out of life.

God's Alarm

Our bodies come equipped with an alarm system that lets us know when something is wrong and when something needs attention. It is called pain. Pain can be the road map leading us to find what is broken. Pain is to be harnessed and used as a method to recognize deeper issues, such as the cause of the pain. If you go to the hospital with pain in your arm, a doctor can use that information to discover the root cause of the pain: Your arm is broken. The problem is not the pain—it is the broken arm. There will be pain before you go to the hospital, there will be pain when the doctor sets the bone, and there will be pain afterward during the physical therapy. Your pain is an unavoidable and constant companion throughout the healing process and the requirement of recovery.

Pain's Gift

Pain's gift is its diagnostics. Knowing the root cause of self-destructive behavior is often difficult for us to see and admit about ourselves. The roots of our pain likely are hidden in the past by layers of emotional uncertainty. Addiction usually creates a lower tolerance for pain because the first tendency is to self-medicate and numb the pain. Pain to an addict is an enemy to be medicated into submission. Pain to **an addict who chooses not to use** is a diagnostic companion, the harbinger of healing. Dealing with life's physical and emotional challenges can be extremely painful. Addicts avoid pain by numbing it, postponing the needed healing, creating more pain, which, in turn, demands more medication.

For the addict who chooses not to use, pain is to be embraced as a constant

For the addict who chooses not to use, pain is to be embraced as a constant companion leading us to the root of our deepest issues.

companion leading us to the root of our deepest issues. Recovery is a painful process and part of our healing journey.

To overcome addiction, it is essential to unlock the door of pain. Physical, emotional, and mental pain have been hidden, stored up, collecting, waiting to find its release. Recovery will evade us as long as we try to escape the pain that accompanies it. Pain is unavoidable; it is the price of recovery. Any recovery that costs us little will be short-lived. The value of our recovery is purchased in the currency of pain and discomfort—the pain and discomfort we have avoided and postponed in addiction. To free ourselves from pain we must allow ourselves to experience it, to embrace it, to feel it, and acknowledge it for the gift it is.

Recovery's Promise

Recovery's promise is not a life free from pain and conflict, whether internal or external, but one in which our pain finds a larger purpose and meaning within a new life. All of life contains the balance of pain. The birth pangs of child labor are the price required of motherhood, one of the greatest joys life can provide. If you want a bed of roses, you must be willing to work in the garden. If you decide to buy them at the

flower shop, still a price is paid for someone's bended knee and dirty fingernails. Yes, hardship, struggle, and pain are required parts of the healing process. Even the boredom and ordinariness of life without addiction is part of the pain required to overcome it. It may seem that addiction improves all of life's experiences,

but at what cost, at what price? Life without addiction may sometimes seem painfully boring and ordinary, but it can be filled with a satisfaction that no addiction can provide. Recovery's promise is a new, reinvented future free from addiction and filled with possibilities and purpose.

Recovery's promise is not a life free from pain and conflict, whether internal or external, but one in which our pain finds a larger purpose and meaning within a new life.

How Do You Interpret Pain?

Pain can be a signal to act out your addiction, or it can be a diagnostic gift, the alarm or signpost signaling that you need to make a change. Embracing pain as the inevitable fruit of addiction points the way to what must change and is the beginning of a journey toward reawakening.

"I wish you all the pain you need to change" is an expression that speaks to the heart of the matter. Do you need to fall off the back of an aircraft carrier to find the end of your rope, losing your pride through the hopelessness of an ocean? What will it take to rid yourself of arrogant pride and self-empowerment? How much pain will be required to bring you to the decision of wanting something more from life than addiction? Will it be your pain or the pain you bring to

others, those you love, and who love you? Is their pain enough for you to want change? Will you value your future more than your addiction today?

The Poverty Key speaks to us all. Happiness and recovery are found at the end of your rope, a place where prideful self-empowerment is cast aside for the empowerment of that which is greater than self and greater than our addictions. This is a future you can define for yourself as you decide what you want and how badly you want it.

Confirmation Bias

Poverty and pain are requirements of recovery pointing the way to what must change. Denial can short-circuit the benefits and progress of pain's diagnostics value, minimizing its needed impact.

Poverty and pain are requirements of recovery pointing the way to what must change.

The psychological term for denial is called confirmation bias, which relates to how you make decisions when confronted with information that is opposite of what you think. Often, we will weigh the facts and choose the best outcome for both the short term and the long term. Confirmation bias refers to an unconscious distorting of facts to maintain a worse choice that appears to be less

painful in the present moment. With confirmation bias, we tend to approve of that which we subconsciously feel more comfortable with. We ignore or distort any perspective, information, or fact that speaks out against our entrenched position. Like Novocain at the dentist's office, denial provides temporary relief both from the immediate discomfort and from the mental stress that something we love or want is hurtful to us.

We see the concept of confirmation bias in a mother allowing and making excuses for the bad behavior of a child in the supermarket, rather than causing a scene in front of others by correcting the child. In the long term, the child may be better off with the correction; however, in the short term, excuses and denial win out over the social anxiety of the supermarket.

All human beings have some form of confirmation bias. Addiction employs this unconscious deception to make a worse choice, ignoring the mounting evidence that the bad choice is killing them. The healthier choice is discarded. Subconsciously, we calculate that the pain and stress of not using, of the withdrawals and lack of pleasure satisfying an addiction bring us, would be greater. This may be true in the short term or at the moment, but not in the long term.

The Long-Term Problem of Addiction

For the addict, subconsciously unseen below the surface of the mind, denial focuses all of its attention on the most immediate: the pain we are feeling now. All other considerations are postponed. What the addict fails to realize is that addiction is a long-term problem. Denial often comes in the form of a short-term solution to a long-term problem. Our past addicted selves

call to us from yesterday to continue the self-destructive path we were on; however, there is a future you, a clean and sober you, calling from tomorrow, asking to leave the past behind and become **an addict who chooses not to**

use. Overcoming addiction requires us to break out of the familiar and look toward our future, thinking long-term about recovery by not building on what was—the familiar—but starting over, a new you. Recovery requires a new start, a redefinition of who you are, a long-term future without addiction.

The addict's tendency is to subconsciously choose the lesser pain by satisfying the addiction-sabotaging recovery efforts without our conscious knowledge. Our judgment and understanding are infected with the potentially destructive self-interest. The addict will always think they are right, that only they have the full, complete picture. Within the addict's mind, they are the only ones with clarity. We may call it excuses and denial, but the addict will not. To the addict, it is “the reason why.” With deliberate ignorance, the worse choice becomes their best choice.

The Silent Killer

Carbon monoxide is a toxic gas. It is colorless, odorless, and tasteless, therefore cannot be seen, smelled, or felt. It is a hidden killer of many each year because they are unaware of its presence. Since it is undetectable, a special meter or alarm is used to help make us aware of its presence and danger. Like carbon monoxide, confirmation bias is the hidden killer of addicts; it keeps the addict focused away from any long-term consequences. Part of coming to the “end of your rope” is conceding that confirmation bias is within you now, like a parasite, working to undo your sobriety. Denial works behind the mind's eye, unseen in the subconscious, manipulating, orchestrating the logic of continuing addiction without the addict's knowledge.

Knowing There Is an Unknown

What then is the “carbon monoxide alarm” to warn of denial? What is the mirror to see the internal unseen of confirmation bias? Knowing that there is an unknown is a large part of dealing with denial. To assume that you are under the spell of self-deception is the beginning of seeing it, the beginning of the poverty needed to chart a new and better course. Denial is an unconscious part of who we are. It works within us behind the mind's eye to influence our decisions. It is part of the way our personalities and addictions deal with difficult and painful issues. Knowing that confirmation bias plays a role in our addictive behavior and decision-making becomes a part of the self-critical thinking needed to overcome its unseen influence.

Denial often comes in the form of a short-term solution to a long-term problem.

Are You in Denial?

It's a good question! Most might answer, "Of course not, I'm in a recovery meeting," or "I have been sober for years." These statements are exactly what a person in denial might say with loudness and insistence. Remember, denial lives below the surface, out of view from the mind's eye. The beginning of overcoming the unseen is to assume it exists. We buy a carbon monoxide

Remember, denial lives below the surface, out of view from the mind's eye.

alarm without knowing if it is present in our homes, hoping to prevent a catastrophe. Wisdom dictates that we assume the need for it. In the same way, the addict must assume they suffer from self-deception. If you feel that you are not in denial, assume that feeling is self-deception and move in the opposite direction by bringing it out into the open and discussing it with a trusted friend. If you bristle

at the question with loud certainty, if you are uncomfortable or insulted that someone might confront you, ask yourself, "Why?" Only pride would keep you from exploring that which you cannot see about yourself. By taking this course, if you are indeed not in denial, things will only be clearer and you the stronger for your humble self-evaluation and more prepared to meet the challenge when such confrontation is needed. Becoming self-critical and being comfortable with self-evaluation, having the humility to acknowledge you may be wrong, assuming that there are parts of our subconscious that we cannot see, are part of the poverty needed to become **an addict who chooses not to use.**

The Internal Unseen

It may seem silly but do you realize that you have never seen your own ears? It's true. First hand with your own eyes you have no idea what your ears may look like. A mirror or photographs help, but how do you know, really know without being able to see them? It seems that we were created to need sources outside of ourselves to see and know things about ourselves that are hidden from view.

Denial holds many similar truths. We need outside sources to know things about us that we cannot or will not see about ourselves. Others often can see the internal unseen long before we will allow ourselves to see it. These trusted

friends and accountability partners become our "carbon monoxide detectors" helping us see denial before we do. They help us acknowledge that the toxin of confirmation bias may be at work within

We need outside sources to know things about us that we cannot or will not see about ourselves.

us sabotaging recovery efforts with unacknowledged self-interest. These brave heroes, the trusted friends and loved ones of our recovery, become the eyes and ears of the internal unseen helping you see self-sabotage and self-deception for the denial that it is and confronting us with it.

Imagine for a moment if we were in a boxing match with an invisible opponent, a foe we could not see but was visible to our coach outside the ring and the spectators beyond. They may call to us, yelling, “He’s on your right,” or “Duck.” Becoming in tune with the voices beyond “the ring” and acknowledging our need for others becomes a vital part of identifying and overcoming our denial.

Again, Are You in Denial?

So, again, “Are you in denial?” A better answer to that question may be, “Why are you asking, do you see something in me that hints of self-deception?” Having trusted friends and accountability partners around you to see what you cannot about yourself and who are willing to ask the hard and direct questions is essential to recovery. Just as vital is the willingness on our part to respect that confrontation and receive it as an act of loving concern. Our responsibility is to put pride and self-confidence aside and listen with self-critical thinking. If anger or hostility, or any prideful self-empowerment is your immediate response, recognize it as an addictive defense mechanism and embrace this outside view of your internal self. Becoming comfortable and accustomed to confrontation and self-critical thinking is essential to seeing the internal unseen.

Any conversation about coming to the “end of our rope” must include the internal unseen. How can we embrace our poverty if we are in self-deception? Until we admit we self-deceive to continue our addictive behaviors, until we acknowledge that the toxin of confirmation bias is at work within us, until we admit that our judgment is infected with unknown self-interest and not trustworthy, we will not escape the grasp of the parasite of addiction.

Reinvent Yourself

Domenic Scarpa was born to both Italian and Irish parents. It was said of their large family, "On one hand was a glass of wine and a glass of beer in the other." In March of 1998, Domenic went before the court with the support of his father for his sixth DUI. In the past, he had pleaded innocent and fought the charges; this time, he plead guilty, and the court-mandated a two- to five-year sentence. Domenic worked hard, reinventing himself in prison. He became a model prisoner involving himself with church groups and outreach programs and was out in two years with three more on parole.

Today Domenic is the pastor of a church of four members, his son, two daughters, and his loving wife, Jodi. Together they live a modest but happy life filled with friends, family, and each other. Twenty years of sobriety have passed since that court date in 1998 when Domenic began the reinvention of himself. He credits the love of his father for helping him begin the journey and the love of his family for helping him continue it.

Do you have a drug and alcohol problem? Are you having trouble picturing yourself clean and sober? This program is the permission to become someone new, permission to rediscover and redefine your life.

Poverty Recovery Questions

What do you want? _____

Are you at the “end of your rope,” ready to fight for a new future? _____

Do you think you could manage your addiction if you tried harder? _____

What diagnosis does your pain reveal? _____

Can your decisions and life choices be trusted? _____

How many times have you been through rehab? _____

Is your pain a positive or negative thing? _____

Are you willing to exchange pain for sobriety? _____

What is “recovery’s promise?” _____

Are you in denial? _____

Do you have someone who will speak to you in hard and direct questions about recovery? _____

Are you ready to listen to others speak to you about denial and self-sabotage? _____

Are you unwilling to let others speak to you in a direct confrontational but loving way? _____

What is your "Carbon Monoxide Alarm?" _____

What is there about yourself that you have minimized or been in denial about? _____

Who might you consider a trusted friend or accountability partner? _____

Poverty Recovery Exercises

Review the following exercises and complete them the best you can.

- 1. Eulogy:** Let us, for a moment, imagine that in the future you have died of a drug overdose. A terrible thing to think about and a ridiculous assertion, but for the sake of the exercise, let's try to think in these terms. The minister or funeral director has asked for a eulogy to be written, which will be read at your memorial service. Below, using a minimum of 1,000 words, write a eulogy for the funeral of your addicted self. Let it begin as below and include all the key points outlined under "things that must be addressed." Honesty is a requirement, so do not hold back, and remember that only you choose who will read this eulogy.

Hi, everyone, thank you for coming. My name is **(Your Name Here)**.

I knew **(Your Name Here)** better than anyone and that is why _____

- *Tell your family and friends about your love for them. Name each of them specifically and include personal remembrances.*
- *Recall and recount your happiness and health before using. Name specific activities you enjoyed with specific people, like sports or school, music, or favorite pets.*
- *Address your drug use and addictive behavior.*
- *Confess you were not strong enough to overcome the addiction and apologize for the pain you caused them.*
- *Tell them of your sadness that you are no longer together and take responsibility for that.*
- *Ask them to remember you fondly and not as the addict you were in the end.*

- 2. Accountability Partner:** Make a list of those who you feel would make a good accountability partner. Reach out to those on your list explaining the concept and ask them if they would help you make better decisions. These brave heroes, the trusted friends and loved ones of our recovery, become the eyes and ears of the internal unseen helping us see self-sabotage and deception for the denial that it is. We must be willing to receive their constructive criticism and counsel.

- 3. Denial Styles:** Below are common expressions of denial. Confirmation bias can creep into our thinking without our knowledge. From the expressions below, choose terms or ways of thinking that you and those around you have used in the past. Add to the list by writing in your denial styles.

- **Basic denial:** I am all right! I don't have a problem!
- **Selective memory:** I don't remember that! That's not right! That's not the way it happened.
- **Minimizing:** At least I'm not as bad as

It's only on the weekends. I'm getting help, you know. I'm not hurting anyone but myself.

- **Blaming:** My dealer keeps calling me. My doctor over-prescribed my pain killers. The judge was unreasonable. The cops are corrupt.
- **Excusing:** My addiction enables me to function at work. Life is boring without drugs. I need it, so I am not depressed or anxious all the time. I need them to make it through the day or get to sleep at night.
- **Generalizing:** It's just the way my life is. Everyone is doing it these days.

- **Dodging:** Thanks for asking, but I am fine, how are you doing? (Usually comes in the form of answering a question with another question and quickly changing the topic.)
- **Attacking:** Who are you to talk to me like that? What about you? Who made you the drug police? I remember when you did

Why don't you worry about yourself? I thought you were supposed to be a friend.

- **Negotiating:** If I do not use today then I am not an addict and can use anytime. I will only use on the weekends. I will only use if my spouse does.

[illegible]

[illegible]

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Reawaken with Sadness

Recovery is a deep remorse and sadness over our broken past. It is finding genuine comfort and hope in the future.

Through sadness, we awaken to a clear understanding and an honest look at the brokenness of our past. Any veneer or glossing over of the damage we have done to ourselves and others disqualifies us from becoming **an addict who chooses not to use**. The pain of our past, its memories, and feelings are a part of who we are. Using displacement and our behavior, we discover our true location and begin plotting a course toward healthier choices. With sadness we courageously seek out the origins of our pain, giving ourselves the room and grace to forgive ourselves. In sadness, we learn to feel again, bringing to the surface and embracing our broken past that includes our pain. We transform these painful memories into the signposts that lead us toward a new future.

All genuine recovery requires honesty. A clear understanding and an honest look at the brokenness of our past clears the way forward toward a new future. Any glossing over or dismissing the damage we have done to ourselves and others disqualify us from becoming **an addict who chooses not to use**. The pain of our past, its memories, and related feelings are a part of who we are. A willingness to bring to the surface and embrace our broken past transforms these painful feelings and memories into the signposts leading toward a new future.

The Happiness of Sadness

It may seem like a contradiction, but to be truly happy, we must be sad. Sadness is the proper response to the brokenness and pain we have caused ourselves and others. Only sadness can speak to the truth of the consequences around us; and only that truth is strong enough to build

your future. There is hope in sadness, there is comfort in sadness, and there can be freedom in the relief of coming clean. No more lies, no more hiding, no more deceit. With sadness, we can celebrate a new beginning and minimize the power the past holds over you. Let all the chips fall where they may, and let the light of sadness cleanse you.

In sadness, we learn to feel. Throughout addiction, feelings of guilt, shame, and remorse are laid aside and begin building up like water behind a dam, waiting for release. With sadness, we learn to embrace these feelings again and recognize them as healthy expressions of the hurt and pain we have brought to ourselves and others.

Healthy sadness is the license to feel again, bringing our past out into the light of day.

There also is an unhealthy sadness that gives birth to self-pity, apathy, and self-loathing, which in turn becomes the fuel of addiction. Unhealthy sadness must be avoided and confronted as part of addiction's game plan. Healthy sadness is the license to feel again, bringing our past out into the light of day. We acknowledge it not as who we are, but as who we were. In sadness, we begin the journey toward our future by unlocking the hold our past has on us and begin the healing process of

reconciliation. In sadness, we reveal it and learn healthier expressions for difficult and painful emotions. Healthy sadness brings the tears that clean the windows of the soul.

Where Are You?

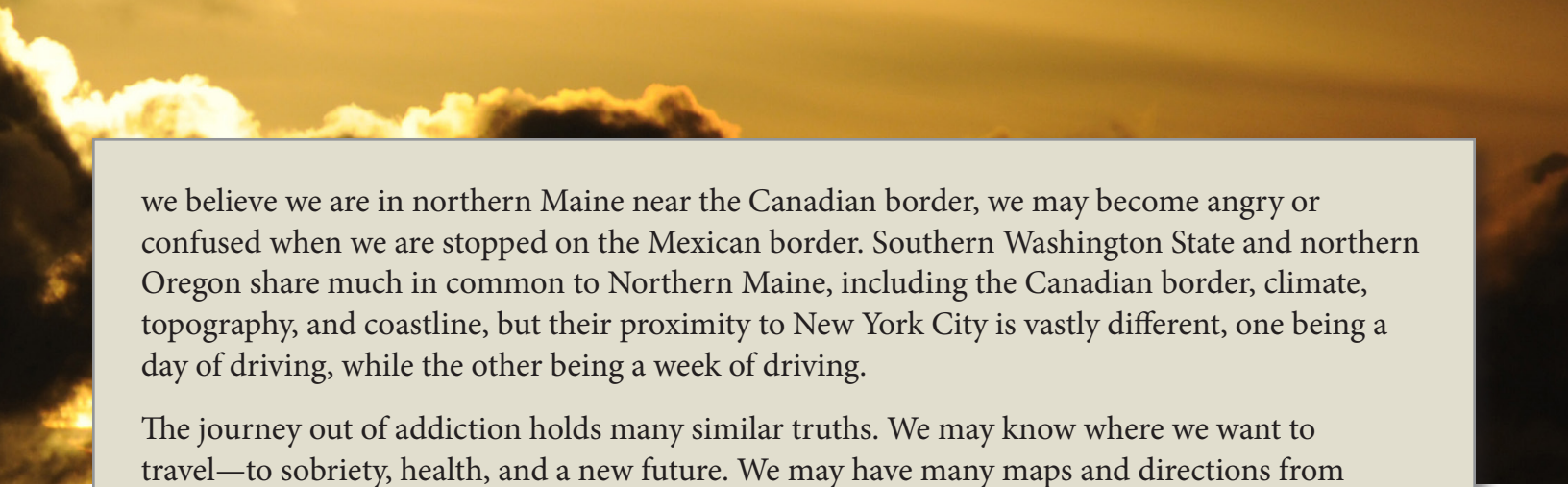
As I was walking into the mall the other day, standing before me was a huge map of the entire complex encased in glass. Segments and cross-sections of the mall were outlined, each floor and wing, each store and eatery. I quickly found the shop I wanted using the directory; however, something was missing, an essential part of my journey. There, lying horizontally on the bottom of the sign behind the glass, having fallen from its precise location, was a little red arrow stating, "You are here."

To be successful, every journey requires a minimum of three critical pieces of information. First, where do I want to go? Second, how do I get there? Lastly, where am I? Before we begin, we must understand where we are, our starting point.

If we want to go to New York City, we can begin to plan the route with maps and directions, but only after we have identified where we currently are. What good is a destination or map if we do not know where to begin? For this reason, the first job of every GPS map program is to locate its own position. Understanding where we are is the beginning of getting to where we want to be.

For example: If we begin heading for New York City by traveling south along the coast because

Understanding where we are is the beginning of getting to where we want to be.



we believe we are in northern Maine near the Canadian border, we may become angry or confused when we are stopped on the Mexican border. Southern Washington State and northern Oregon share much in common to Northern Maine, including the Canadian border, climate, topography, and coastline, but their proximity to New York City is vastly different, one being a day of driving, while the other being a week of driving.

The journey out of addiction holds many similar truths. We may know where we want to travel—to sobriety, health, and a new future. We may have many maps and directions from rehabs to programs such as this one, but all of our efforts are useless if we do not have a clear understanding of where we are. In sadness, we allow ourselves to discover a clear understanding of exactly where we are in order to begin the journey toward a new future.

I Am?

Where we are, in large part, is a function of where we have been. Our current situation is tainted by a past that has brought us to this point. If I grew up in an abusive home environment, I might learn to carry that abuse forward into other relationships. If that abuse was justified as being acceptable, I may mimic that same justification as an acceptable reason for the mistreatment of myself and others. We may carry with us the stow-away baggage of a broken and damaged childhood without realizing how it affects our behaviors. If I have learned that self-medicating is a remedy for difficult problems, then using makes sense.

Stow-Away Baggage

Unfortunately, the disappointments, trauma, and pain of our past can become our tutors, teaching us lessons that allow and encourage addiction and self-destruction without us realizing it. Like a stow away, without our knowledge or consent, these ways of thinking, these negative “lessons learned” leave their unwelcome baggage behind imprinting upon how we think and feel. The baggage of denial, fear, anger, anxiety, depression, self-loathing, abandonment, abuse, and violence hide in the closets of our minds, renting space in our heads, justifying our worst impulses.

A large part of defeating these falsehoods is identifying and acknowledging them, recognizing that our past may play a part in where we are today. Knowing where our past impacts and damages our present often requires the help of professionals. The falsehoods we have learned are held on to until we confront and evict these unwelcome guests by exposing and talking about them. Think about it for a moment. What falsehoods do you carry with you from your past?

Behavior Is a Window

Discovering and confronting our unwelcome emotional guests requires us to see what we often are unwilling to acknowledge about ourselves. Recovery requires an honest assessment and a

willingness to explore ourselves, discovering the hidden triggers that have brought us to this point. This vulnerability, this sadness can become the key to transformation giving us the needed insights to defuse our past. It can allow us to acknowledge what has been done to us and what we have or have not done to ourselves and those we love. It can open the doors leading away from regret and into new life.

Our behaviors oftentimes can act as a window into our past. To confess: “I am angry,” “I am resentful,” “I am weak,” “I am unforgiving,” or “I am judgmental and uncompromising begins our journey of self-discovery.” To recognize: “I have guilt,” or “I feel condemnation,” “I love being high,” “Life is dull and unsatisfying when I am not high,” “I am addicted,” “I cannot stop using,” “I do not want to stop using” speaks to those lessons learned within our past, acknowledging where we are and helping us identify the origins of addictive behaviors. Discovering the root of addictive behavior is often the key to overcoming it. Sadness requires that we examine our

Discovering the root of addictive behavior is often the key to overcoming it.

current behavior to find clues about what happened to us in the past. Often our behavior comes from a place older and deeper than the immediate circumstances that produced it.

Recovery includes the sadness needed to discover and accept what in the past led us to where we are. This gives us the chance to see beyond our behavior and confront the wrongs of our past that brought about our behaviors. Rather than sadness leading us back into addiction, sadness becomes the prescription for recovery. The answer to “Where am I?” can lead us in our journey of a new life.

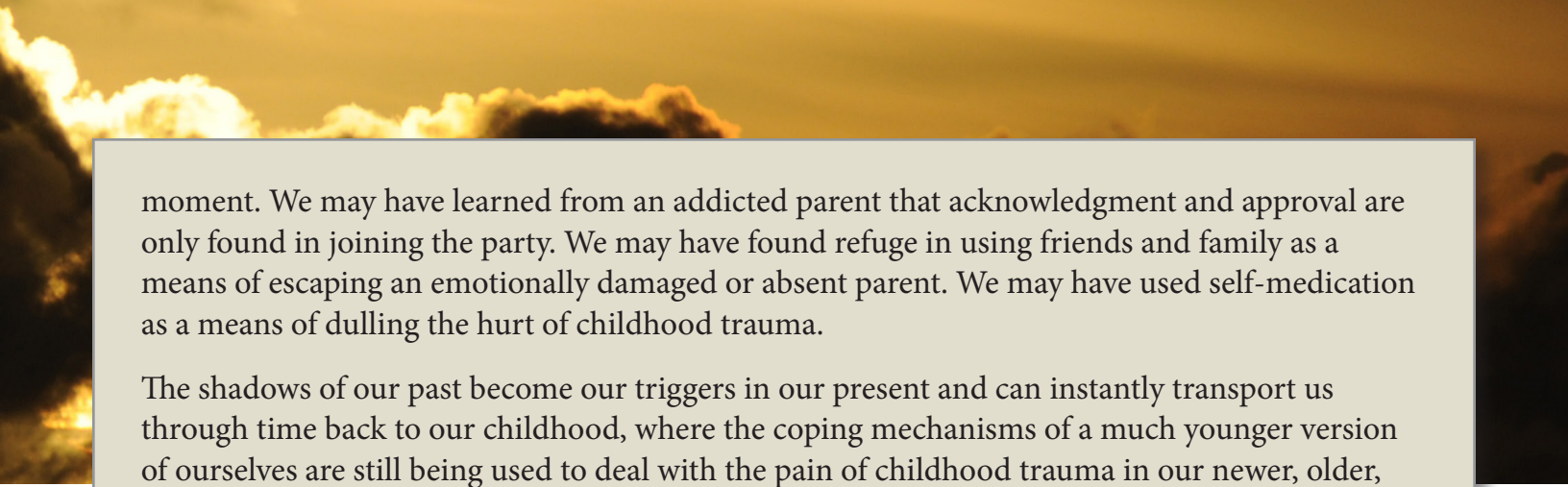
Origins

Looking toward our past often can reveal insights about our present, which can help move us toward a healthier future. In childhood, we learn many of the coping mechanisms and ways of dealing with life that are necessary to navigate our childhood. Our parents, siblings, caregivers, friends, and relatives all have had a profound effect on us both good and bad, intentional or unintentional. While our environments change with time, our ways of coping sometimes do not.

We may have felt the need to be overly aggressive to compete for the attention of a parent among other siblings, but as an adult this hypercompetition is viewed as inappropriate, materialistic, and rude. To avoid the trauma of an abusive parent or guardian, we may have

been hypervigilant, avoiding any interaction, sulking and hiding from view, but as an adult, it may cause isolation and an avoidance of the needed uncomfortable conversations required by intimate relationships. In a family environment where one parent was demanding, controlling every aspect of family life, we may become excessively controlling or feel the need to dominate others, or seek the opposite by pleasing others at our own expense as a way of pacifying the

While our environments change with time, our ways of coping sometimes do not.



moment. We may have learned from an addicted parent that acknowledgment and approval are only found in joining the party. We may have found refuge in using friends and family as a means of escaping an emotionally damaged or absent parent. We may have used self-medication as a means of dulling the hurt of childhood trauma.

The shadows of our past become our triggers in our present and can instantly transport us through time back to our childhood, where the coping mechanisms of a much younger version of ourselves are still being used to deal with the pain of childhood trauma in our newer, older, adult world. All our behaviors— shouting, anger, isolating, violence, lashing out, lying—were learned somewhere in our past. We escaped the moment through self-medication, however, all can be traced back to an origin. Discovering and confronting these childhood coping mechanisms as no longer needed in our adult world gives us power over them and room to build healthier more deliberate responses to life's challenges.

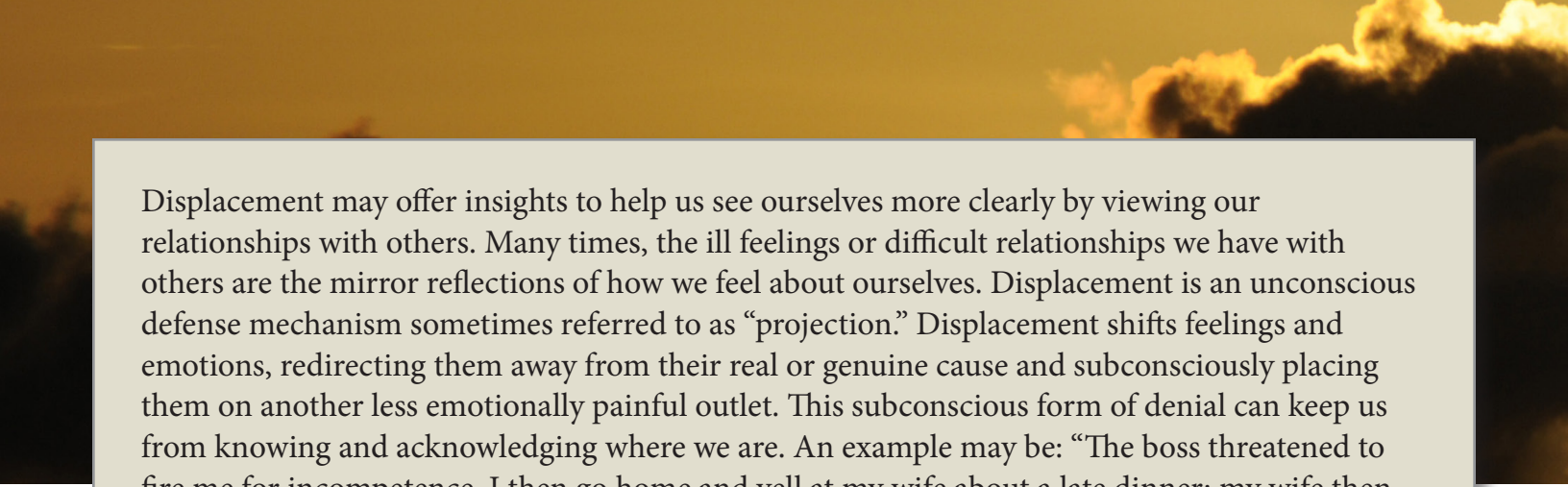
What I'm Afraid Of

What we fear can also offer us glimpses into our past, helping us understand where we are in order to begin our journey of recovery. Our internal fears can give us the needed prescription for dealing with older childhood trauma. What we fear as adults oftentimes becomes a signpost leading toward our past. What do you fear? Are you afraid of humiliation or appearing weak or stupid? Are you afraid of being called out as ugly or unattractive or being discarded because of your nonconformity to sexual or social norms? The fears of poverty and not having enough or the jealousy and resentment of others who seem to live trouble-free in abundance can drive us to make choices that bring harsh consequences. Are you afraid that others will be mean and nasty, mocking you and calling you an idiot? The fear of childhood rejection from adults and other children, the lack of loving emotional support and nurturing at home can leave the scars that influence who we become. The schoolyard, for example, can be a cruel tutor. It can teach us lessons that live beyond their usefulness and into our adulthood. There, when triggered, they bring a child's response into an adult world. The things we fear are feared for reasons deeper and older than they may appear. Like dinosaur bones they are the leftovers of a bygone era and should be acknowledged and treated as such, good for informational purposes but void of any power over us. Using our fears as a diagnostic tool helps us understand and acknowledge where we came from so that we can plot a new course with purpose and direction.

***The things we fear
are feared for reasons
deeper and older than
they may appear.***

Displacement

Most of us have trouble seeing ourselves as we actually are. We paint ourselves in the best light, giving ourselves the benefit of the doubt, and never really embracing the internal unseen.



Displacement may offer insights to help us see ourselves more clearly by viewing our relationships with others. Many times, the ill feelings or difficult relationships we have with others are the mirror reflections of how we feel about ourselves. Displacement is an unconscious defense mechanism sometimes referred to as “projection.” Displacement shifts feelings and emotions, redirecting them away from their real or genuine cause and subconsciously placing them on another less emotionally painful outlet. This subconscious form of denial can keep us from knowing and acknowledging where we are. An example may be: “The boss threatened to fire me for incompetence. I then go home and yell at my wife about a late dinner; my wife then yells at our son about homework, and our son kicks the dog.”

Many addicts are angry at God, the church, and religious people. Some find themselves in a constant struggle with law enforcement and society at large. Some are disappointed with family and friends, and still, many more are disenchanted with life altogether. Some addicts hold on to resentments and offenses, finding difficulty with forgiveness and reconciliation. This may not be the case with you, but do you feel guilty about your addictive behavior? Are you angry and disappointed with yourself? Are you resentful toward your addicted self for sidelining many of your hopes and dreams? If this could be so, how do you think that anger and resentment are expressed?

Self-Inflicted Wounds

Often, in addiction, the deepest and most damaging wounds are self-inflicted. Do you sabotage opportunities that may move you toward a healthier lifestyle? Do you drive away those who love you and are closest to you, those who want to help you change? Let’s assume for a moment that you do suffer from displacement, that your inability to forgive and work with others is a subconscious reflection of how you feel about yourself. Will you forgive yourself? Will you allow yourself a new start? It is the person in the mirror who needs the biggest break from self-judgment.

Empathy and compassion toward the person in the mirror is the beginning of empathy and compassion for others.

Sometimes we are willing to forgive strangers, and we can be hard on friends, reserving the harshest treatment for family, but we are never as hard on anyone as we are on us, whether we allow ourselves to admit it or not. Sadness regarding how you think about yourself can bring the self-forgiveness and peace and genuine comfort for a new beginning.

Empathy and compassion toward the person in

the mirror is the beginning of empathy and compassion for others. Forgive yourself and let the “happiness of sadness” begin your journey of recovery.

Reinvent Yourself

In June 1991, 11-year-old Jaycee Dugard was kidnapped off the street while walking home from the bus stop in the Lake Tahoe area of California. She was abducted by a couple who held her for 18 years. Living in a box in their backyard and giving birth to two daughters fathered by her abductor, she persevered, teaching her children with her fifth-grade education. At the age of 29, Jaycee and her daughters were discovered and began their lives over again. Today, in her late thirties, Jaycee is committed to her two children and is the founder and president of the JAYC Foundation, an organization dedicated to protecting children and families in transition. “Just ask yourself to care” is the foundation’s motto.

The uncontrollable sometimes interrupts our lives, but like Jaycee, you can begin life over again despite the horrific things you may have gone through. You can redefine who you are. This program is the permission to become someone new, permission to rediscover and redefine your life.

Sadness Recovery Questions

Where are you? _____

What is healthy sadness? _____

What is unhealthy sadness? _____

What burdens are the hardest for you to carry? _____

What or who are you most angry with? _____

Who are you having trouble forgiving or refuse to forgive? _____

What might your anger or unforgiveness tell you about yourself? _____

What do you see about yourself through the window of your behavior? _____

Finish this sentence: I am _____

Do you feel anger or unforgiveness toward yourself? _____



What childhood coping skills do you still use inappropriately as an adult? _____

What falsehoods from your past do you carry with you? _____

In what way are you working on self-forgiveness? _____

Do you have compassion and understanding toward your past? _____

Who or what is the object of your displaced resentment? _____

What wounds do you feel may be self-inflicted? _____

Can your sadness become something positive in your recovery? _____

What do you like about yourself? _____

Would you be a friend to someone like yourself? _____

Sadness Recovery Exercises

Review the following exercises and complete them the best you can.

- 1. Reading your eulogy:** Review the eulogy you created in the exercise for the Poverty Key. Locate someone mentioned by name in the eulogy. Explain to them the exercise and ask them if they would allow you to read it to them. Read them your eulogy without interruption, slowly and deliberately, leaving nothing out.

Who I read my eulogy to: _____

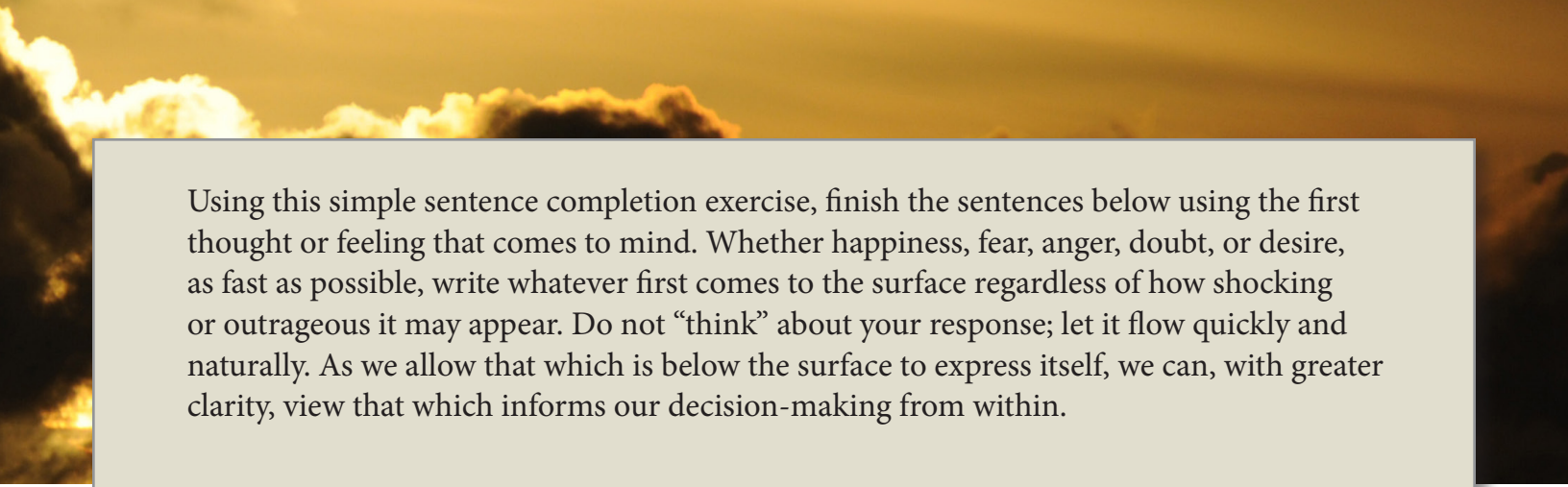
- 2. Paper time portal:** Let us pretend that through some miracle of science, a portal to the past opened that only paper could pass through. Identify the moment in your past when you feel your addiction began. Write a letter to your pre-addicted self to be delivered one hour before that event. Think carefully about what you might say and how you might say it so that your “pre-addicted self” will receive it. Be encouraging, positive, and forgiving in helping you understand the importance of that moment.

- 3. Getting to know myself:** Find a quiet place that has a mirror. Minimize any distractions.

Stare at the reflection of yourself, becoming acquainted with the reflection in the mirror for a minimum of one minute. Speak out loud to your reflection about forgiveness and love. Discuss with yourself any falsehoods that you may be carrying from the past. Dedicate to your reflection the desire to become **an addict who chooses not to use**.

Make a one-minute appointment with yourself and the mirror at least once every day.

- 4. Glimpses into My Internal Unseen:** In sadness, we learn to feel again. With sadness, we embrace that which is below the surface, recognizing these laid aside feelings and thoughts as healthy expressions of the hurt and pain we have brought to ourselves and others. Identify feelings within yourself and note what you think they may mean.



Using this simple sentence completion exercise, finish the sentences below using the first thought or feeling that comes to mind. Whether happiness, fear, anger, doubt, or desire, as fast as possible, write whatever first comes to the surface regardless of how shocking or outrageous it may appear. Do not “think” about your response; let it flow quickly and naturally. As we allow that which is below the surface to express itself, we can, with greater clarity, view that which informs our decision-making from within.

I am _____

If only _____

My mother _____

I want _____

Men are _____

Deep down _____

My father _____

Women are _____

The world _____

If I didn't worry about what others think _____

I adore _____

The real obstacle _____

Underneath everything _____

I should pay less attention _____

I don't want _____

If I weren't so scared _____

Now is the moment _____

5. Take a moment to reflect on your responses:

Which are surprising to you? _____

Which are what you might expect? _____

How might responses differ from a slower, more thought-out response? _____

Are there any patterns? _____

Do they seem more positive or negative? _____

How do you think these responses inform your decision-making? _____

6. Finding Your Stow-Away Baggage

Unwanted stow-away baggage from our past sometimes influences our present in unwelcome ways. Using the questions below as a way to help identify where your past still plays a part in your present, explore the answers to these questions allowing them to lead you to deeper issues and how they impact self-destructive adult behaviors.

My mother would think I am _____

My father would think I am _____

My caregiver would think I am _____

If I made a mistake, my father would _____

If I made a mistake, my mother would _____

If I made a mistake, my caregiver would _____

If I really needed my father, he would _____

If I really needed my mother, she would _____

If I really needed my caregiver, they would _____

If I disagreed with my father, he would _____

If I disagreed with my mother, she would _____

In the space below, evaluate your responses looking for patterns or themes that point the way to problematic relationships from the past that may affect the present.

Sadness Journal

This image shows a single page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

A large rectangular area filled with horizontal ruling lines, resembling a sheet of notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page.

Reinvent

Within the reinvent keys of **Humility** and **Hunger**, we lay a new, solid foundation, a structure with new hopes and priorities. We dig deep, putting in a firm foundation, framing our new home with the solid materials of a willingness to change and an openness to the help of others. We begin building a clear and positive vision of our future. We divert or redirect the river of our desires toward healthier choices. We embrace time as our most precious gift and begin asking ourselves, “What do I want?”



A large rectangular area with a light beige background and horizontal ruling lines, resembling a page of lined paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the area.



Reinvent with Humility

Recovery is a willingness and openness to receive help so that we can find contentment with the world around us.

Through humility, we break through the isolation, walking into the light of community and connectedness by embracing a meekness and willingness to accept the help of others. We learn about ourselves through our interactions with others. We learn of the battle between the present and future self and commit to advocating for our future using commitment devices. We hold dear a clear and positive vision of our future selves as our greatest commitment device.

Part of addiction's defense mechanism is to close us off from help of any kind. Humility opens up a world of insight and healing outside of ourself. If we could have overcome our addictions on our own, we would have done so long before now. That you are here, that you are reading this, is all the proof needed to recognize the need for help from outside of yourself. To become addicts, we had the help of the community of addicts around us. How could we think that getting out of addiction would be any different?

Creatures of Community

Humility is a meekness, a willingness, and an openness to receiving the help and counsel of others. The goal of the parasite of addiction is isolation. Community and being connected to others help us break down barriers of separation. This, in turn, brings us the needed healing that flows from healthy attachment to others.

Human beings are creatures of community. The more diverse the community, the broader the insights that can be realized from that community. These insights empower us to see things differently. We then are able to recognize that we have many options related to decision making.

We just have to open ourselves up to receiving them. These options help us break through the fog of denial. No one is an island. Recovery celebrates diversity by acknowledging the importance of the insight and judgment of others. When we allow these insights in, we are rewarded by seeing a whole new world, one that doesn't include using.

Everyone, without exception, has something they can teach us. We are all uniquely interesting, and therefore, we can learn from everyone we meet. Since we are all uniquely interesting, we just have to begin looking for the value of each individual. Often, our first reaction toward others is

Everyone, without exception, has something they can teach us.

one of judgment, comparing ourselves and measuring ourselves against one another as a way of feeling better about who we are. Putting aside the past and comparisons, accepting others “as is,” with all their faults and failings, for who and what they are now, is a great gift. It requires us to stretch outside our insecurities and into the self-

confidence that comes with knowing who you are and what you want from life. To put aside any criticism of status or racial background, to leave behind any condemnation and complaining about others, leaves room for the grace of humility to enter and transform how we think and feel about others.

Unrealistic Expectations

Most addictions stay with us throughout our lives. We hope in time they will dissipate, fade into the background; however, the same urgings call us from time to time for immediate gratification during the times we expect them least. In some ways, it is like a virus waiting in the background, anxious to reassert itself when the immune system is diminished. Just as we cannot un-ring a bell or undo our past, so it is that our desire for addiction will remain with us as memories and thoughts from our past, always ready to tempt us. Knowing this gives us power over them.

Pushing a Rock

Humility to our new reality is a cornerstone of long-term sobriety. It is unreasonable to expect that recovery will not include pain and mental anguish and boredom over not using. It is unreasonable to expect that we will not have to fight to maintain our sobriety. Like pushing a rock up a hill, we dare not let go or the rock will roll over us. We would then find ourselves, once again, at the bottom of the hill. Our choice each day is to choose to be **an addict who chooses not to use** and to focus on a new, redefined life. Knowing what is at the top of the hill gives meaning and purpose to “pushing the rock.” Having a clear vision of our future and the promise of tomorrow help us understand why we fight to maintain our sobriety daily. One of the greatest keys to winning any fight is the humility of acknowledging you are in one. Knowing is power.

Realistic Expectations

Humility requires that our expectations match the reality of our situation. The addict who chooses not to use will either be using or fighting not to use because the middle ground of a truce with addiction is gone. We will never be at peace with addiction, we will always be “pushing the rock.” We will never lose our past with its memories and desires, but we can learn to live above them, to recognize their presence, and commit to never satisfying the urges of drug use that call to us. We live above them by redefining and reinventing a new future filled with the promise and hope of tomorrow. Within our new life, we can redefine and reinvent ourselves so loudly that the calling of our addictive past fades as background noise.

***Humility
requires that our
expectations
match the reality
of our situation.***

Learning to live with the discomfort or what may feel like an imbalance of not using, even though we want to use, is how we become **an addict who chooses not to use**. This discomfort is made easier within a new life. We will “want” to use. It is not wrong to want to use, it is wrong to choose to use. Acknowledging this struggle and living within this imbalance of wanting but choosing not to is how we become **an addict who chooses not to use**.

No Lone Rangers

There are no “Lone Rangers” in recovery. Recovery requires a team mentality to have any chance of success. Addiction is threatened by the insight and help of others, especially when those recommendations challenge drug use. Think about this: Do you feel you are always right? How would your trusted friends answer that question? Having the humility to listen to another opposing point of view and developing a self-evaluating framework that welcomes constructive criticism begins the process of breaking through addiction’s defense mechanisms.

Let’s put it another way. When listening to another opposing point of view, are you listening to what is being said, or are you mentally busy, crafting your response and thinking of some counterpoint to present? When was the last time you asked someone their opinion, intending to get help and wanting to change, and taking the time to really listen? Can you remember it? Is it daily or as often as once a week or month or more? Humility empowers us to see ourselves clearly.

Seeing Myself Clearly

To help see ourselves more clearly, we can use our dealings with others as a mirror. Do you offer unsolicited advice? In conversation, do you sometimes make recommendations when no one has asked for them or for your opinion? Are you quick with your judgment or opinion? Do you judge others harshly according to their actions, but judge yourself according to your intentions?

(For example, “They did such and such,” which reflects judgment according to action, as opposed to “I meant well,” which reflects judgment according to intention.) In conversation, are you usually the one speaking or listening? When listening, do you process what is being said, or are you thinking of what you may say next?

The humble person asks for help because they know we all need each other. A meekness lives within a humble person that is stronger than addiction. It is the strength of confidence that they can fix any brokenness and overcome any addiction because they are not afraid of being wrong or asking for help. The humble person is secure within their skin, unafraid of the judgment of others, or the appearance of needing help.

What I Hate About You

Think about those with whom conflict comes easiest, those who really “rub you the wrong way,” whose company you find intolerable. These are the people whom you judge easiest, quickest, and harshest as being “less” or “other” or “wrong.” Think about those in your past who you simply cannot forgive or reconcile.

Whether family or friends, work associates, or acquaintances, these relationships hold powerful insights into that which we cannot see about ourselves. If we were to point to the things we despise in them and place a name to it, being as specific as possible, breaking it down to its

In part or in whole, our most problematic relationships can act as the mirror to our own souls, reflecting that which is in conflict within us.

essential ingredients, often it is that which we dislike about ourselves. In part or in whole, our most problematic relationships can act as the mirror to our own souls, reflecting that which is in conflict within us. Humility requires that we transform these annoying “pests” into our tutors, revealing our internal unseen, giving us empathy for those we judge, and providing the needed insight to address our own issues.

The Two “Yous”

When we consider recovery, it helps if we can imagine ourselves as two separate individuals with separate interests. There is the present you—the you who is here and now as you read or listen to *Starting Over*. This present self holds all the memories of the past and carries with it all the pain and heartbreak of addiction. The present self is your current state, infected with the parasite of addiction, crying out for immediate relief from pain as well as wanting the pleasure of using.

There is another you waiting farther down the road, hoping for attention and acknowledgment. It is the future you. The future you is filled with new possibility and hope. The future you is calling—even crying out—that you become **an addict who chooses not to use**.

Yield to the Future

Humility toward your future self is a prerequisite of recovery. The parasite of addiction has taught us to focus only on the now; recovery requires us to yield to our future interests. The present self wants immediate gratification; the future self is distant and unseen. The future self asks us to abstain from those things that destroy our future. The future self seeks a long-term outcome that is much harder to see. The parent who requires a child to “finish your veggies” before dessert recognizes that positive future outcomes require restraint in the present.

The Battle of “Yous”

Our present is tied to our future with cords that cannot be broken. There is a battle between the present and future you over your decision making in the here and now. It is a battle to put aside satisfying our addiction today to seek a distant future. It is the choice to set aside savings to someday enjoy an investment (like buying a house or car) or spend at the moment and pay off the credit cards down the road. Life is filled with the choices we make between a distant or more immediate result. Addiction requires us to focus only on the most immediate, that which we are feeling and thinking here and now. Recovery requires we yield our immediate appetites and desires toward the future interests of our future selves.

There is an unequal playing field in the battle of the “yous.” The present “you” debates the pros and cons of decisions; however, the future “you” is not here yet to have a say. The future “you” is unrepresented, and therefore the present “you” has the upper hand. When we were younger, our parents played a part by requiring us to save money or eat healthily; however, as we grow older, we become the only advocate for our future selves.

Commitment Devices

The key to winning the battle of the “yous” is to humble the present self and empower your future self. Commitment devices help us empower the future self by restraining the present with decisions and commitments that help us say “no” to ourselves. For example, a commitment device to save money may be shredding your credit cards. Commitment devices help level the playing field between the present and the future.

Commitment devices help level the playing field between the present and the future.

For the addicted, commitment devices help give the neglected future self a voice in decision making in the here and now. Entering a sober house or rehab, the decision to live in a 30-day or longer program is a form of a commitment device. Others may include destroying your old phone to cut off contact with your old using friends or taking a full-time job, which requires you to arrive early and stay late, effectively eliminating night-time activities, or even giving a trusted

friend a substantial amount of money with the understanding that if you use, the money is forfeited.

Commitment devices must be more than resolutions or wishful thinking. They require a physical element that will have negative consequences in the present. This negative consequence placed on the present by the future self is a reversal of our current situation. Currently, the present self places negative consequences on the future self by not having the forethought toward the long-term consequences of addiction. Commitment devices are one way we empower and give voice to the future self in the present.

The Perception of Proximity

One of the foremost reasons the present self, with its temptations, wins out over the future self is the perception of its proximity. The future self seems so distant, cloudy, and unseen. Many addicts have given up altogether on any future that does not include drug use. Without a clear vision of the future, the present wins out. The numbing effect of the parasite of addiction steals from us any picture of our personal future and replaces it with apathy, making further using the logical alternative. Some have called it a “failure of belief and imagination.”

As a farmer sows his field with seed, in his imagination he sees the grown plants, the fruit, and the harvest. When a teacher stands before a classroom of third graders, she sees them in high school, college, and beyond. The addict must remove the blinders and clouded lens of addiction to see the promise of tomorrow. This tomorrow is so bright that we would fear losing it to the immediate appetites of addiction. Humility toward a clear vision of your future self and yielding to that belief is the greatest commitment device.

The addict must remove the blinders and clouded lens of addiction to see the promise of tomorrow.

Reinvent Yourself

In the middle of a successful career as a Naval officer specializing in submarines in 1953, Jimmy Carter was summoned home to Plains, Georgia, at the death of his father, to rebuild his family's struggling farm. This abruptly ended his much sought-after military career. Despite numerous challenges, he restored the farm and began exploring politics. Beginning with the local board of education, Carter went on to the Georgia State Senate and won the Georgia Governorship in 1970.

Jimmy Carter became the 39th president of the United States and is a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. Many would consider the need to leave a long and prestigious military career for the expectations of family a crushing blow. For Jimmy Carter, it was the opportunity to reinvent himself.

Do you face difficult choices with friends and family? This program is the permission to become someone new, permission to rediscover and redefine your life.

Humility Recovery Questions

In what way are you currently self-medicating? _____

When was the last time you were addiction free, for how long, and how did you get there?

In what way do you judge others by their actions or intentions? _____

In what way do you judge yourself by your actions or intentions? _____

When was the last time you asked for recovery help? _____

When was the last time you received recovery help? _____

What does your future look like? _____

Can you imagine yourself addiction free? If so, what does it look like for you? _____

Do you think asking for help makes you appear weak and why? _____

Are you concerned about what others think of you and why? _____

Would you trade appearing weak or stupid for recovery and why? _____

Do you look for the value of others beyond their faults and failings? _____

Does your judgment of others keep you from reaching out to them? _____

Do you use "Commitment Devices," and if so, which ones and why? _____

Using conflict with others as a mirror, what can you learn about yourself in those relationships? _

Can you humble yourself to the desires of your future self? _____

Are you willing to yield to a vision of your future self today? _____

When you look into your future, what do you see? _____

Humility Recovery Exercises

Review the following exercises and complete them the best you can.

- 1. Conflict tutors:** Make a list of family, friends, and acquaintances with whom you find yourself in constant conflict. Whether work, family dinners, or friends you avoid, try to define and identify what bothers you the most about them, why you avoid them, or what about them you find distasteful or hurtful. Recall specific past incidents and try to arrive at a clear one- or two-word definition. Using the listing sheet below, explore the possibility that these items can also be found in your life in part or in whole. Explore the ways you have treated or resented others and discuss how this helps you to understand them and yourself.

Name: _____

What I dislike about them in general: _____

What I dislike about them specifically: _____

Give it a name using as few words as possible: _____

What do I understand about myself through this tutor? _____

What do I understand more completely about my tutor? _____

Name: _____

What I dislike about them in general: _____

What I dislike about them specifically: _____

Give it a name using as few words as possible: _____

What do I understand about myself through this tutor? _____

What do I understand more completely about my tutor? _____

Name: _____

What I dislike about them in general: _____

What I dislike about them specifically: _____

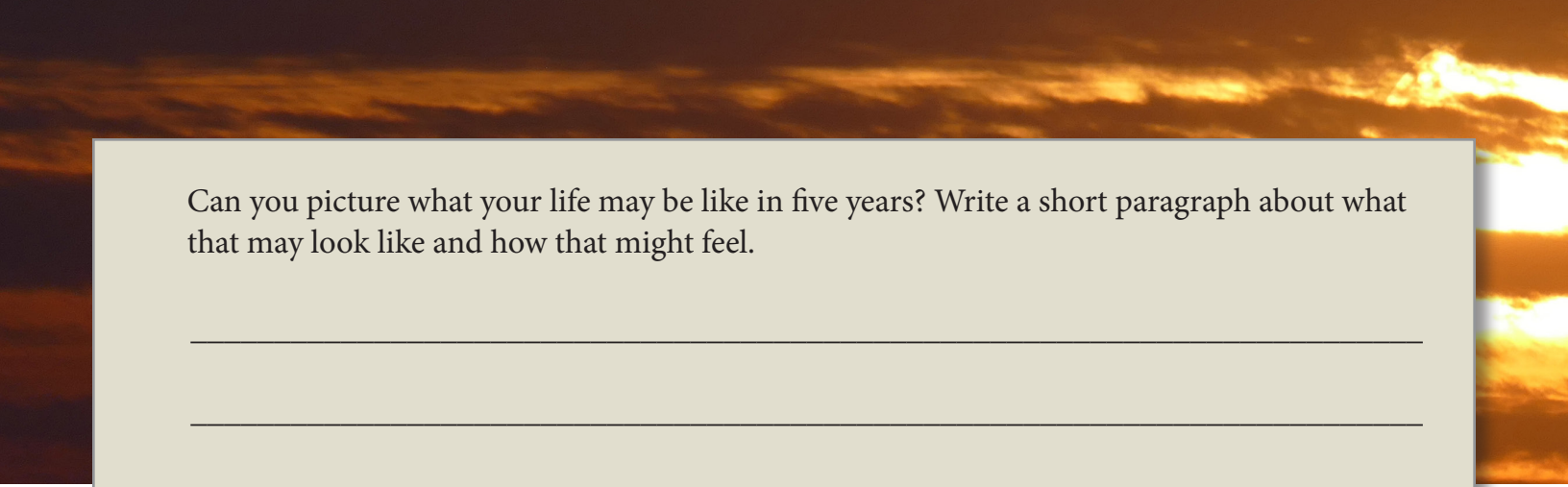
Give it a name using as few words as possible: _____

What do I understand about myself through this tutor? _____

What do I understand more completely about my tutor? _____

- 2. Visions of the future:** Can you see yourself in three months being drug-free? Write a short paragraph about what that may look like and how that might feel.

Can you picture what your life may be like in one year? Write a short paragraph about what that may look like and how that might feel.



Can you picture what your life may be like in five years? Write a short paragraph about what that may look like and how that might feel.

Can you picture what your life may be like in 10 years? Write a short paragraph about what that may look like and how that might feel.

Can you picture what your life may be like in 20 years? Write a short paragraph about what that may look like and how that might feel.

- 3. Commitment devices:** List all the commitment devices you have used or the ones you wish to put in place. Remember each should be specific and include a negative consequence or impact if broken.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Humility Journal

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines, text, or other markings on the page.

A large rectangular area with a light beige background and horizontal ruling lines, resembling a page of lined paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the area.



Reinvent with Hunger

Recovery is a hunger to change and a willingness to be changed, finding fulfilling new purpose and hope in life.

Through hunger, we divert or redirect the river of our desires, finding new and exciting directions toward healthier choices. In hunger, we embrace time as our most precious gift and begin asking, “What do I want?” We resolve to recover a new future rather than recovering the past. We begin the redefinition of our old building as we accept with humility the permission to become someone new. Without qualifications or requirements, we are released from the past. We are free to become whomever we choose.

Our desire or hunger, in large part, will be the measure of our success in remaining drug-free. What are you hungry for? Like a jealous lover, addiction demands we desire and satisfy it first and foremost. To remain drug-free, we must hunger for alternatives to addiction and its lifestyle. We are not recovering from addiction and the life that comes with it; we are recovering to, discovering a new future, a new person, the future self with different, healthier desires and appetites.

Redirect the River

The hunger of our desire often dictates our actions. Desire can be like water running downstream. You may have felt in the past like your willpower is like a rock in that river. You may try to resist the current, but the waters of desire flow around your willpower to stop them. Damming the river of desire leads to failure. The pressures of desire collect, eventually overflowing and then bursting beyond the measure of our willpower to hold them back.

Generally speaking, most people do what they want to do. There is an alternative, however—redirect or divert the river and its strong current toward new wants or desires.

Nature hates a vacuum. Unless we replace one appetite or desire for another, we will most certainly fail. In recovery, often we find ourselves focusing on not using, placing the emphasis of recovery on the struggle of our diminishing willpower. To focus on not using, without having new and greater desires, empowers the battle within us. Why is that? Because thinking about doing something and thinking about not doing something are both ways of still thinking about it. It is still to some degree investing in it, giving it space in your head. Focusing on not using then eventually leads to using. We must discover new, greater desires and appetites that call to us with the same or greater intensity to fill the vacuum.

Rather than pushing back against the current of desire, release it. Rather than trying over and over again not to use, discover something healthier that you love. Find a new hunger and jump in with both feet, letting the current carry you. Substitute one desire for another and go all in.

What do you want?

There is no more fundamental question in recovery than “What do you want?” It starts us on the journey of self-discovery that we abandoned for addiction. To renew the journey of desire, to

There is no more fundamental question in recovery than “What do you want?”

pursue life with passion and hunger can eventually lead us back to that which we love and desire, filling the vacuum left behind by addiction.

Often our desires are painted for us in colors that conform to our society, social media, family, and those around us at the expense of our own. What we want has been what others have wanted for us and not from a deeper

internal place. In a desperate attempt to impress others, to fit in and be acknowledged and loved, we comply to external pressure rather than searching out and nurturing our own desires. To discover what is truly important to you, to allow yourself the room and grace to grow beyond the prescriptions and mandates of others, is to find deep and lasting happiness.

How we see ourselves defines who we are. Within the *Starting Over* program, we define ourselves as **an addict who chooses not to use**; however, we are infinitely more complex than one definition. What you want then becomes one of the leading questions helping us return to a purpose-filled redefinition of yourself. If I am to “Start Over,” what will this new me look like?

The Most Precious Gift

We have all been given a precious gift—the gift of time. To be alive, to be reading this sentence, feeling the book in your hands, filling your lungs with breath, are all priceless treasures that cannot be purchased, only cherished. What will you do with this gift? How will you spend your

time on this Earth? What will you leave behind for others to follow? What might your tombstone say? What will your life mean to others? These questions help us acknowledge that purpose and passion give meaning to the gift of time. Purpose and passion are the remedy for the vacuum left behind by addiction. Asking yourself, “What am I passionate about?”; “What is my purpose on this Earth?”; “What could I mean to those I love?”; “What difference can my life make?” are the questions that lead us to purpose and passion in life, and that life can become the hunger that leaves behind the temptations of addiction.

Purpose and passion are the remedy for the vacuum left behind by addiction.

The Beginning of Change

The beginning of *Starting Over* and discovering what this new life might be, is to ask, “What do I want?” Have you considered what your life might look like two years, five years, 10 years down the road? Setting aside the desires of others around us, we begin the redefinition of ourselves by thinking about it. What do I like? What am I good at? What am I curious about? What makes me excited? What do I look forward to? Like a loving grandparent might ask a child, “What do you want to be when you grow up?”—acknowledge and embrace the question as the beginning of your journey.

The beginning of change is asking the question. Answering the question comes with time and patience. Often it is a moving target as our hunger for one thing over another matures as we grow and our circumstances change. But the beginning is always the same, to allow yourself the room and the grace to consider and pursue new directions, letting the current of your desires carry you to new hopes and dreams is the gift we give ourself.

Finding new passions and discovering a new hunger are exciting and fun adventures. Like a child discovering the world for the first time, we can explore the things we like, hoping to find that which we love. Many addicts who choose not to use go back to school, finishing high school or working on a college degree, and find a new vocation or hobby, realizing their unique gifts and talents along the way. The Humility Key plays a large role in this discovery. With meekness, we are open to the world and the people in it to realize avenues of life and living we never thought possible. Without drugs, millions upon millions of ordinary people love life, the world, and the people in it. You can be among them, loving life on life’s terms, if you find different appetites and desires that call to you louder than your addiction. The things we love, like the people we love, are hardwired in us from childhood; they are waiting to be discovered, to be found like hidden treasure.

Addiction Is a Miner

Addiction digs deep into our minds and takes precious material out. Like any mining operation, addiction leaves behind scarred landscape and waste as it penetrates deep below the surface. But

there's more than that. Below the surface are endless tunnels and shafts, a maze of empty and partial hopes and dreams. Below the surface of every addict is an addiction shaped hole. It is a cavern that is easily filled but only by its original occupant. Any other use for this space requires reconstruction and restoration.

Some Good News

The good news is the powerful, life-changing opportunity before you. What are you hungry for? Who and what will you become? Who will you be? This opportunity of renewal is a gift to the addict, one that allows for a complete reinvention of life and of self. You stand ready for remodeling, able to reach your highest potential.

Who will you allow your future self to be?

Who will you allow your future self to be? The picture you have of your future self is the beginning of defining the remodeling that is taking place. First and foremost, we define ourselves as **an addict who chooses not to use**. Beyond that, we must begin by identifying the new use of our old building. We begin by asking ourselves, "What do I want?" We begin by thinking about it. In so many ways, the *Starting Over* program cannot help you with that. Humility will tell you to seek out the help of a pastor, counselor, or trusted friend for direction on how to begin. One suggestion would be to find something you are curious about, something you think you may enjoy, whether hobby or profession, and try it. In many areas of life, the hardest part is beginning. So, start! If you find it is not all you had hoped, keep looking! Find something else, and then try that. Before long, you will look behind and see a string of accomplishments and experiences that anyone would be proud of.

Permission to Redefine

Sometimes what we want can become intertwined and confused with what we think or feel we deserve or feel we have earned. This false logic is a common device of addiction to keep us where we are and prevent us from accepting a new and transformed life. Thoughts of guilt and shame hold us where we are, demanding that we do not change. Grace calls to us asking that we forgive ourselves, allow ourselves to Start Over.

Perfect Imperfection

Perfection, they say, is in the Lord. One thing is certain: Perfection is not on this Earth. This grossly flawed planet gives birth to deeply flawed religions, governments, institutions, and people. Everything in this world is in some way broken, including you and me. What is equally true is that perfection can be found within the broken, flawed, and damaged. Within us is the desire to want: to want freedom from addiction and purpose and passion in life, to want healing and health, to want peace around and within us, to want to help and be helped, to want to love

and be loved, to want a new start, to unlock some of the perfection within. These are some of the desires waiting to be released.

It is common to be broken. It is acceptable to have a painful past and present. You are not the exception; you are the norm. You may not feel that way, but it is true. Those around us become experts at hiding from view the pain and brokenness they feel, just as we have, but everyone lives with pain, regret, and remorse. Your pain and brokenness may be the fruit of addiction, but it is no less common. You are not alone in your brokenness, nor are you alone in your desire for more, for better, to want to become **an addict who chooses not to use.**

It is acceptable to have a painful past and present. You are not the exception; you are the norm.

This program is the permission to become someone new, permission to rediscover and redefine your life. There are no qualifications or requirements needed, other than wanting to become **an addict who chooses not to use**. Now, here, as you are reading this, you can begin again. Within your new life, you can redefine and reinvent yourself so loudly that the calling of your addictive past fades as background noise.

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

Reinvent Yourself

Maewyn Succat was a not particularly religious 16-year-old boy. He was born to upper-middle-class parents, who raised him in a loving home where he enjoyed the finer things of life. One day while at a villa near the coast of Wales, he was kidnapped and brought to Ireland to be ransomed or sold into slavery. For six long years, Maewyn lived in the snowy, rocky hill country of Ireland as a slave. Tending his master's sheep, he said of those years, "His constant companions were cold and hunger." It was during those long, lonely years that Maewyn found a spiritual awakening.

"I used to stay out in the forests and on the mountain, and I would wake up before daylight to pray in the snow, in icy coldness, in rain, and I used to feel neither ill nor any slothfulness, as I now see, the Spirit was burning in me."

After six years as a slave, Maewyn fled. Now a fugitive on the run in a foreign country, he made his way to a port and begged passage on a ship to Britain. Once home with family and friends, Maewyn felt a passion to help those who had enslaved him. Rather than finding employment in the family business, he went to a monastery, and studied to become a priest. After 12 years, Maewyn's name was changed to Patrick, and he returned to the shores of Ireland where he was still a runaway slave.

Today we celebrate Saint Patrick's Day because of the powerful, positive impact this hero of the faith made. Many would have embraced bitterness and resentment from unthinkable abuse, kidnapping, and slavery. Saint Patrick did not. Many would have gone back to a life of ease and comfort, feeling like they were "owed." Saint Patrick did not. Many would have considered circumstances insurmountable. Saint Patrick did not.

Do you feel the wounds dealt you by others are more than you can bear? Do you feel like a slave to drugs and alcohol with no way out? Maewyn Succat would disagree and encourage you to redefine and reinvent who you are. We all have a "Saint Patrick" within us, waiting to be released. This program is the permission you need to become someone new, permission to rediscover and redefine your life.

Hunger Recovery Questions

What do you want? _____

What would your life look like without addiction? _____

Do you remember having a dream as a child? What was it? _____

What is your addiction-free purpose in life? _____

Other than addiction, what things interest you? _____

What are you curious about, passionate about? _____

Have you pursued the wants and desires of others at the expense of your own? _____

What do you look forward to? _____

Does trying not to use make you want to use more or less? _____

In the past, what have you tried to replace addiction with? _____

Can you live within the imbalance of not using? _____

Who will you decide to be? _____

Do you feel the need to earn or deserve a new start before you begin? _____

If you divert or redirect the river of your desires, what will they be channeled toward?

Will you give yourself the grace and forgiveness to redefine yourself? _____

Can you see yourself two, five, and 10 years down the road? _____

Do you feel you cannot begin unless your direction is mapped out perfectly? _____

Is that a good thing? _____

Hunger Recovery Exercises

Review the following exercises and complete them the best you can.

1. **My obituary:** Sometimes, looking at the end can help us define the beginning and allow us to reconsider who we want to be. What if you could read the obituary of your future redefined and reinvented sober, successful life in the local paper? What might you want it to say? In this exercise, we will write our own obituary of our future redefined life as **an addict who chooses not to use**.

Pick up any local newspaper containing obituaries. Read them for content and begin to form your outline as **an addict who chooses not to use**. Your obituary is for the new you in a future—what you dream of that future looking like for you—as you begin to create each day of sobriety.

Develop this obituary as the person who you want to become.

Develop this obituary as the person who you want to become. Include everything you want to be proud of someday. Recovery programs, those whose lives you have touched, church life, and community service all should be mentioned. Be

sure and include family, friends, children, and spouses who you will want at your bedside in the end (even if they do not exist yet). Especially include those in your current life whom you may not be reconciled to yet because of addiction.

Your obituary should represent the conclusion of a very happy and fulfilling life as **an addict who chooses not to use**. It is the picture of who and what you see in your mind's eye when you look back at a happy, successful life. The following is an outline or recommendation for beginning your obituary. By starting here, you can develop clarity of what you hope the future may hold.

As you develop the second exercise in this key, come back to your obituary and incorporate your “perfect world project” as one of your major life accomplishments.

As you develop the second exercise in this key, come back to your obituary and incorporate your “perfect world project” as one of your major life accomplishments.

Obituary

(Mr./Mrs./Ms.) _____ of
(your residence and address here): _____
died on (date here): _____ peacefully in (his/her) sleep while
surrounded by _____

(Your name): _____ was born in
(place and date of birth here): _____ to
(parents' names here): _____ and
attended (list schools and degrees): _____

(He/she) was married to (spouse's name): _____
on (date of wedding optional, may also be future date): _____
(Your name): _____ worked for
(employment history, title): _____
_____ and was a valued member of (list
churches, organizations, and social/governmental activities): _____

(Your name): _____ was survived by
(children, grandchildren, etc.): _____

Funeral arrangements will be held (time, date, and place): _____

In lieu of flowers, (your name): _____ has
asked that all donations be made to: _____

2. The perfect world project: Let us pretend for a moment that we live in a perfect world, one in which you could realize all you have ever hoped and dreamed. Without money being a factor, what would your job or passion be? What would your profession or calling be? Where would you find the greatest satisfaction and fulfillment during the hours of the day? The goal of the exercise is not success or employment. The goal of the exercise is to begin something new. It is an exploration of new and exciting directions in your life. If the project you picked does not seem to be working, begin developing projects #2 and #3 without losing any momentum.

Make a list of at least three “perfect world projects.”

Within the next seven days, talk to a minimum of two people associated with each project. Learn as much as you can from them about the steps needed to begin exploring them. Write down their comments.

After each discussion, choose a minimum of two steps to begin the exploration of these possibilities.

Within two days, commit to one of these perfect world projects. Take two steps that seem most practical, given your current situation, and begin. If the project you chose seems impractical or no longer holds your interest, move on to the next. Do not allow yourself to stop moving forward with one of your “perfect world projects.”

Example: Nature and the Environment

Step one: I love the outdoors. I will explore natural resources management.

Step two: I will go online and find contacts at the local college for work in wildlife. I will call the State Department of Fish and Wildlife to express my interest to my local warden and join him on a ride along.

Step three: I will take one class at the local college one night per week. I will volunteer for the State Department of Fish and Wildlife for activities related to search and rescue. I will try to take my local warden out to coffee once per month.

Example: Video and Audio

Step one: I love movies and videos.

Step two: Using my cell phone, I will begin creating small film projects, both drama and comedy. I will reach out to the local college film department to discover others with similar interests in film content and research potential classes.

Step three: With friends and family, I will shoot my first film project or commercial and submit it to a contest or advertiser.

Example: Music and Arts

Step one: I play the (musical instrument) and enjoy singing.

Step two: I will begin writing lyrics for original songs that express how I feel or develop original tunes and play them for my friends and family.

Step three: I will create demo tapes of my songs or tunes and give them to local bands and send them to known artists.

Example: Cooking and Culinary arts

Step one: I love cooking and creating recipes for others.

Step two: I will host a meal for friends and family once per month experimenting with new and exciting recipes.

Step three: I will start a blog or podcast sharing my recipes and inviting others to share their thoughts on food.

Example: Politics

Step one: I have very strong views on politics and government policy both local and state.

Step two: I will contact the political party representing the majority of my views and sign up for their literature and mailings, scheduling a time to visit their offices.

Step three: I will call my local political leaders and learn how I might get involved in an upcoming campaign or initiative. I will look for policies that I feel passionate about and direct my efforts to advocate for those issues.

Step one: _____

Step two: _____

Step three: _____

Step one: _____

Step two: _____

Step three: _____

The image features a background of a forested hill under a purple and pink sky. Overlaid on this is a white rectangular area. At the top of this area, the text "Hunger Journal" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the title, the area is filled with horizontal lines, resembling a piece of lined paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the white area.

[illegible]

A large rectangular area with a light beige background and horizontal ruling lines, resembling a page of lined paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the area.

Reinvest

By reinvesting with the keys of **Kindness**, **Sincerity**, and **Goodwill**, we repopulate this new future with ideas and passions that become our new selves. Becoming someone new requires time and patience. These investments are small deposits every day in the savings account of life. We beatify this new future with acts of kindness toward ourselves and others, we learn to live in the moment, transparent about what we think and feel, we embrace a spiritual awakening by helping others in community.



A large rectangular area with a light beige background and horizontal ruling lines, resembling a page of lined paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the area.



Reinvest with Kindness

Recovery is a genuine compassion and empathy for others, discovering a desire to help and restore.

Kindness Key

The first and most powerful expression of kindness is found in how we think about ourselves. To be kind to the person in the mirror, to be gracious and forgiving to yourself is the foundation we stand on in extending kindness toward others. Just as hatred toward ourselves becomes the anger and hostility we use to treat others, so the compassion and forgiveness we extend toward ourselves becomes the kindness we give to others. Through kindness, we understand that there is healing in helping others, teaching us to reach outside of ourselves as a way of resolving our issues. We invite virtuous cycles by becoming deliberate about acts of appreciation and generosity. We learn that the issues of our lives are fruit. This fruit is the offspring of what we have planted, and we must take responsibility for it. With kindness, we become farmers of hope through deliberate acts of generosity.

Opposites Are Not the Only Things That Attract

You may have heard that opposites attract. Although that may have merit, the opposite is also true. The things in life we give out come back to us. Kindness given attracts kindness in return. What we give out in life will be the measure of what we receive. Anger breeds anger, just as violence gives birth to new violence. Like a snowball rolling downhill, it picks up speed and momentum, becoming harder and harder to stop. Similarly, trust empowers trust, and a single kind, generous act will find its way back to you.

Karma Is a Bitch

Karma, or the understanding that “the things in life we give out, come back to us” tells us our current addicted and broken lives are due to our own decisions, words, and actions. Recognizing that the things in my life are fruit, the offspring of what I have sown, is to say I alone am responsible for who and where I am now and is a vital step in recovery. Denial will insist that others, circumstances, the government, law enforcement, authority figures, and an endless array of other people, places, and things are responsible for your current situation.

Yes, drugs are addictive, and we are at war with an unseen enemy. It is treacherous and difficult; however, you alone are responsible for the outcome of the battle. Success or failure each day is the addict’s choice, a choice to claim the future, becoming **an addict who chooses not to use**.

This responsibility, this personal accountability, is a pillar of sobriety and the cornerstone of redefining our new lives.

The addictive nature of drugs and alcohol or the ineffectiveness of programs and medication can become an excuse for the pain we have caused. This “not my fault” thinking is part of the defense mechanism of addiction. Drugs point the finger at anything and anyone other than itself, distracting us from the root of what must change. To take responsibility for our own lives, for our past, our present, and our future through the choices we make begins the transformation toward **an addict who chooses not to use**. This responsibility, this personal accountability, is a pillar of sobriety and the cornerstone of redefining our new lives.

Karma Is a Blessing

To say: “The things in life we give out come back to us” is to give us the steering wheel of our own lives. What do you want? Give it! Change will not come until you plant it. You now hold the game controller; you stand at the helm of your ship, deciding what tomorrow will look like. If you want happiness, you must plant kindness, mercy, generosity, and forgiveness. Stop planting anger, resentment, and excuses, and begin planting the kindness and love that others have longed to receive from you.

When we plant one tomato plant, we begin with one seed. That one seed then produces a plant giving birth to multiple tomatoes, each of which carries hundreds of new seeds to be planted. Your field today is filled with yesterday’s seed. All of it, both good and bad, belong only to you. Only you plant in the field of your mind. Yes, it may be that the deck of addiction has been stacked against you; however, today you can make choices and begin planting a new future with a new definition of yourself.

With one act of kindness or generosity, we become farmers of hope that feed others.

We are all sowing seed. What type of seed will you plant? With one act of kindness or generosity, we become farmers of hope that feed others.

Vicious Cycles

Maybe you have heard of “vicious cycles,” where one bad thing follows another and then another until everything comes crashing down. Everyone in life experiences these; something goes wrong at work, which brings out the worst in us, so we get angry at those who were not initially involved, spreading an angry seed. We then go home and yell at our spouse about something insignificant, who then changes the locks, which gives us a reason to go to the bar, which in turn makes us late for work in the morning, which costs us our job. It is certain that addicts place themselves directly in the center of negative momentum, and often things go downhill quickly. Whether we think of it like a snowball gathering more snow, weight, and momentum until it crashes at the bottom of the mountain, or if we think of it as seeds that multiply until all around us is trouble and heartache, it seems that the addict’s life goes from one problem to the next.

Virtuous Cycles

Have you ever heard of “virtuous cycles?” Yes, it is true. There is an opposite phenomenon to vicious cycles harnessing greater power and momentum. These virtuous cycles work in much the same way that vicious cycles do. One good thing is followed by a better thing, which gives birth to great things until kindness and generosity become the norm and not the exception.

Everyone in life can have these experiences as well: Something goes right at work, which brings out the best in you, you say something kind to someone not initially involved, spreading a kind seed, you then go to the flower shop to buy flowers for your spouse and arrive home to find the family warmly welcoming you. Does this sound too good to be true? Well, maybe, but some people do live and love this way. Sure, not everything is perfect in their lives, but happiness can be the norm and pain the exception, rather than pain the norm and happiness the rarity. What you plant in the field of your mind today will bear fruit that you can enjoy tomorrow.

How to Begin

One difference you may find between vicious cycles and virtuous cycles is that virtuous cycles seem to be more deliberate. Where viciousness seems to come out of the blue, imposing its bad will and building up momentum without effort, virtuous cycles require deliberate decisions. These decisions are often just one small act of kindness, a compassionate word or gesture, even a smile, forgiveness, or an apology planted each day. One merciful thought can be transformed into a merciful word or action once we decide to begin spreading its seed. As momentum builds, we wonder why we waited so long.

Forgiveness does not forget the past and the pain that was caused. Rather, it is the opportunity to lighten our load by not carrying the pain and hurt of others any longer. In forgiveness, we allow ourselves to reevaluate boundaries and rethink any future reconciliation with that person, freeing ourselves to redefine relationships. We can release those who have hurt us of the consequences of past pain while acknowledging and holding them responsible for it.

Kindness In Your Smile

Often a warm smile is the easiest kindness to pass along. A warm smile says, “I accept you, as is, here today,” “I am okay with you,” “I am glad you are part of my life.” A smile is also an invitation. It is an openness that communicates the willingness of relationship and the possibility of a new friend, or a forgiveness and reunion with an old one.

A smile can be given whether your day is going well or if it is going badly. It is during the bad days, the challenging moments, that we need to give kindness the most. By doing so, we plant the seeds that blossom into our own healing. Today, here and now, you are one small thought that becomes an action, one small decision away from beginning the redefinition of who you will be. Like throwing a stone into calm water, our one small kind action puts in motion ripples in the water, spreading out, stirring the entire pond.

Plant kindness through your smile and watch it come back to you in ways you may not have expected.

Kindness of Your Ear

To listen to others who may feel marginalized or left out is a great kindness. This gift requires no advanced degrees. This is not therapy or analyzing; it is just listening quietly. People may feel that they have no one to talk to, no one who cares or understands, no one who has been through what they have been through.

Some have referred to listening as “the lost art.” In our busy lives, the mind often travels more quickly than others can speak. Our thoughts come to us so fast that, often, we are thinking about what could or should be said rather than listening to what is being said. The voice of our

***Often when others
are allowed to share,
answers to issues
become apparent
without a word spoken
on your part.***

thoughts becomes so loud that we cannot hear beyond our ears. To listen and not just hear, takes discipline and patience, concentrating on what is said. To stop and quiet your thoughts, listening intently to what someone is saying, is a gift of your time that speaks volumes to those who “bend your ear.” It is the gift of significance; it is telling them they matter; it is saying, “I value you.” Often when others are allowed to share, answers to issues become apparent without a word spoken on your part.

It is not a time to offer your insight; it is a time to listen and acknowledge. There is a trust between speaker and listener that must be respected, never to speak of the things said, or relay what was communicated to anyone else. The exception to this rule is when the threat of bodily harm to themselves or others is shared.

Reflection or active listening is a term used by those who wish to express kindness by improving their listening skills beyond merely hearing. After someone is done speaking, reflect back to them what was said using different words, asking them if you got it right and inviting them to elaborate. One simple way to exercise reflection is by remembering and using a person's name. It is said, "A person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language." In the language of kindness, remembering and using someone's name is the gift that says, "You matter to me, you are important."

Plant kindness through reflecting back what others have told you and watch it come back to you in ways you may not have expected.

I Appreciate You

Honest and sincere appreciation is the kindness everyone yearns to hear. To be noticed and acknowledged makes everyone's day brighter. Kindness is appreciation by noticing and acknowledging the contribution of others, both friends, family, and in the work space, becoming genuinely interested in other people.

Just as everyone has something to teach us, so everyone has something we can appreciate and sincerely compliment as being noteworthy and valuable. Showing appreciation and interest in that which makes someone unique is an outward expression of kindness. Without exception, we all long to be acknowledged, appreciated, and accepted. Since we are all uniquely interesting on some level, we just have to begin looking for that value in each individual.

Often our first reaction toward others is one of judgment, comparing ourselves and measuring ourselves against one another as a way of feeling better about who we are. Putting aside comparisons and accepting others "as is," with all their faults and failings, for who and what they are now, is a great gift. It requires us to stretch outside our insecurities and into the self-confidence that comes with knowing what we want from life. To put aside any criticism of status or racial background, to leave behind any condemnation and complaining about others leaves room for the grace of kindness to enter and transform how we think and feel about them.

Kindness looks for and acknowledges the value of every individual. Developing the habits of finding that value despite someone's lesser qualities requires practice, patience, and forgiveness. To see through the faults and failings of others into the value of who they are as a complex person living in a broken world can be the

Kindness looks for and acknowledges the value of every individual.

gift we all long to receive. Empathy is the acknowledgement that someone else's thoughts and feelings are just as real to them as yours are to you. Developing a "There go I but for the grace of God" viewpoint, a "walk a mile in their shoes" way of thinking, is the beginning of the empathy that results in a sincere compliment.

Fear of rejection learned in childhood can become a reason for withholding our kindness. To overcome this childhood trauma and defeat our fears, recognizing that we all deal with a fear of each other on some level, can become one of the greatest gifts we give ourselves. Becoming comfortable reaching out to others, complimenting them, brushing off immature responses and judgement requires us to confront our childhood fears. This confrontation can bring us the greatest of freedoms including grace and empathy toward ourselves and forgiveness toward those who have harmed us.

Because we have to work at it, we may think it less genuine, when in fact our motives are born of a sincere kindness. Whether practiced or clumsy, received with graciousness or annoyance, all kindness will ultimately create within us a newer kinder future and impact our world in positive ways that cannot be seen or measured.

Kind ways of thinking are developed as habits the more we practice them.

Kind ways of thinking are developed as habits the more we practice them. Searching out the value of others and complimenting them on it, is a habit we build with each acquaintance. Giving honest and sincere appreciation to others is a great kindness. Plant kindness through compliments and watch it come back to you.

Reinvent Yourself

Murray Robinson was born in 1978 to an average middle-class family in upstate New York. His parents worked long hours, leaving Murray to fend for himself. Without parental direction and buoyed by friends, Murray began drinking, stealing cars, and causing mischief. Out of control by the age of 15, Murray would use acid and mescaline along with taking pills, drinking alcohol, and smoking pot. He received his first DUI at age 18 and shortly after was arrested for criminal mischief and destroying property. The felony charge was pleaded down to a misdemeanor, and he entered his first rehab.

Murray worked hard in rehab and set his sights on the police academy and a law enforcement job. His experience with the darker world of addiction made him attractive to a local upstate municipality, and he was offered a patrolman's job after graduating from the academy. Now, on the other side of the law, he still suffered from the same temptations of his old lifestyle. Drinking and drugs once again overcame him, and he entered rehab again in his mid-thirties. Stronger and ready to start over, Murray walked out of rehab back into law enforcement. Ten days later, he was exposed to heroin on the job and began using all over again.

Murray's wife was fed up. With two small children, she arranged an intervention with his parents. Confronted with hard choices, Murray finally began to change. "I emptied myself into AA," he said, making a decision to turn his life and will over to God and began the long slow process of recovery.

Today, Murray is sober and an active member of the law enforcement community. He credits his transformation to Jesus and his wife and children. Do you feel like you are caught in an endless cycle of using, unable to see yourself clean and sober? Murray Robinson would tell you there are new passions and purpose for the future. This program is the permission to become someone new, permission to rediscover and redefine your life.

Kindness Recovery Questions

How does helping others make you feel? What does that tell you? _____

Have you ever focused on the problems of others with the intention of helping? _____

Are you willing to begin kindness through deliberate small acts? _____

Do you feel only you are responsible for where you are? _____

Do you feel that only bad things happen to you? _____

What do you think you give off in life, good vibes or bad ones? _____

What does it mean to “really listen” to others? _____

Can you quiet your own thoughts to focus on what others are saying? _____

How often do you compliment others? _____

Do you consider yourself generous, somewhat generous, or not a generous person? _____

Are you afraid of how others might perceive your kindness and, in turn, judge you harshly? _____

Are you willing to be kind to those you do not know? _____

Do you offer your smile as an invitation to others? _____

Do you plant kindness to receive it in the future? _____

Can you recognize the unique gifts of other people and then compliment them on those gifts? _____

Are you willing to start conversations, discovering new friendships? _____

Have you tried reflection or active listening? What was the result? _____

Is it easy for you to appreciate others, or do you have to work at it? _____

Kindness Recovery Exercises

Review the following exercises and complete them the best you can.

- 1. Getting what I want/Giving what I want:** Knowing that “the things in life we give out, come back to us” gives us the steering wheel of our own lives. What do you want? That is what you must give away freely without the expectation of any reward. What do you want from others? That is what you must give.

Below, make a list of how you want others to treat you or act toward you. In the space provided below that, write a plan on how you can freely give it away to others. Look for opportunities during the week to enact your plans and express what you want from others.

Example:

What I want: I want others to respect me!

How will I give it? I will verbally respect and appreciate someone twice a day.

Example:

What I want: I never know what is going on, I feel deliberately left out!

How will I give it? I will communicate to others freely.

What I want: _____

How will I give it? _____

What I want: _____

How will I give it? _____

What I want: _____

How will I give it? _____

- 2. Creating a habit of appreciation:** Every day for a week, express an appreciation or compliment to a minimum of three separate people. Search out any unique gifts and qualities and offer your compliment and appreciation freely, honestly, and sincerely. Remember that just because a compliment is anticipated does not mean its sincerity is diminished. The goal is to develop a habit of seeing the unique qualities and the intrinsic value of others and learning how to express it. At first it may seem forced and less comfortable, but in time it becomes second nature.

When I spoke to:

Compliment:

How it was received:

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

- 3. Reflection:** Begin a conversation with a friend or associate with the intention of practicing “reflection.” In an effort to not allow your mind to race ahead, listen closely and with deliberation to what is being said. When it is your turn to speak, reflect back using open-ended questions that summarize what was said using your own words or expressions. The following terms may apply: “So, what you are saying is...” or “You mean to say that...”

Notes and Reflections:

4. Conversations: Begin conversations with at least two others you are less acquainted with, using kindness and empathy as a way of learning about different people, hoping to discover new friendships. To see through the faults and failings of others into the value of who they are as a complex person living in a broken world can be the gift we all long to receive from others. Developing a “There go I but for the grace of God” viewpoint, a “walk a mile in their shoes” way of thinking is the beginning of the empathy that brings forth the fruit of a sincere compliment.

[illegible]

[illegible]

A large rectangular area with a light beige background and horizontal ruling lines, resembling a page of lined paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the area.



Reinvest with Sincerity

Recovery is living transparently, unafraid of consequences, and discovering a new way of living life on life's terms.

Through sincerity, we learn to live transparently. No longer afraid of what others may think, we become willing to expose our weaknesses and live in the moment, transparent about what we think and feel. We learn to reconcile the conspiracy within us by revealing it, bringing it out into the open, and allowing others to help us. We begin a habit of journaling and dialoging with others as a way to realize our healing.

Recovery requires that we come out of the shadows of addiction where we, along with our secrets, have been hiding for so long. Some say, “We are only as sick as our secrets.” It is through our willingness to expose our secrets that others are invited in and allowed to help us. This transparent lifestyle is essential in recovery. Knowing we cannot bend life around our will, we learn how to live life on life’s terms, being content with an “as is” lifestyle. We accept the broken about ourselves and others as well as the unbroken, living life as it presents itself one day at a time.

Conspiracy

The greatest conspiracy is a conspiracy of silence that lives within each of us. This conspiracy of silence covers over and holds in the unspoken, the darkness, the brokenness, and the damage. This conflict is between who we know we are on the inside and who we often pretend to be on the outside.

The battleground for this conflict is the “internal you,” where you live with yourself within your mind. All of us have an internal dialog below the surface that only we have access to. This

“internal you” is the place of our thoughts and prayers, our deepest hopes and longings, and our brokenness and heartache. It is where the spiritual meets with us, speaks with us. Greater than any denomination or cathedral, it is the church between the ears, the chapel of the mind. It is a private place, allowing access to only one church member, you.

Who Am I?

Shame and guilt are part of the pain within us. This pain is the emotional alarm that something is broken and must be repaired. The addict quickly learns how to disguise the brokenness that lives within by masking the turbulent storms raging inside. This hypocrisy quickly becomes an issue of identity: Who am I? Am I the raging storm within or the cool, strong, collected, confident person

Addiction has a vested interest in maintaining the illusion that all is well and hiding the raging storm within.

those around me see? Addiction has a vested interest in maintaining the illusion that all is well and hiding the raging storm within. Its defenses kick in to high gear to keep the illusion intact. This self-imposed conspiracy of silence grows like cancer, isolating us from the vital connections needed for healing. Within the “internal you,” you may think, “No one knows how bad it is” or “If they knew, they would never forgive me.” These types of thoughts keep us in the dark.

Divide and Conquer

Addiction uses the age-old battle strategy “divide and conquer.” Addiction makes the two worlds of the addict (outside and inside) impossible to reconcile. This conflict produces shame and guilt that become the triggers of continued use. Shame and guilt can be a double-edged sword. It can be the fuel of addiction. But shame and guilt can also become the formula of recovery, calling us out of the shadows and leading us to our commitment to become **an addict who chooses not to use**. There is some truly good news in shame. Guilt is evidence of recovery, and remorse demonstrates the sadness needed in **an addict who chooses not to use**. Remorse shouts, “I want out;” “I want a new beginning;” “I can get out;” “There is still time;” “It is not too late.” Shame calls to you now, asking if you will become someone new, **an addict who chooses not to use**.

Sincerity requires us to speak out loud the darkness in our lives so that we might receive the help we so desperately need. What are you afraid of others finding out? That is what you must speak. Fear, resentment, anxiety, and depression all need the light of day. Exorcisms require exercise. If you want to get rid of it, you have to deal with it, bringing it out into the open. Only when we talk about it does it begin to lose its power over us.

The “Hidden” Is a Trigger

Why are we so afraid of what others think when we know that brokenness is a shared human reality? It is human nature to want others to think the best of us and our situation, but at what

cost? These hidden things, the ones we hide, like the illusion of sobriety, strength, and wellness when we are, in fact, self-medicating, become our triggers. These triggers drive us in ways unseen, below the surface, and toward deeper isolation. Happiness is being free from the hidden and ready to listen and accept help. Let the light of living transparently clean the closets of your life by speaking your brokenness to a trusted friend.

Happiness is being free from the hidden and ready to listen and accept help.

When we allow the light in, revealing our brokenness, exposing our secrets, and living in the light of sincerity, our darkness begins to lighten, and a new day dawns. Revealing our brokenness is one way we can express compassion and empathy toward ourselves beginning the process of self-forgiveness. One small light can dispel all the darkness in any room. The darkest dark imaginable cannot extinguish the light of the smallest candle. Your light, as small as you may think it to be, will always overcome the darkness within and usher in the freedom of reconciliation.

An Internal Imbalance

Addiction could be viewed as an internal imbalance. Like notes out of tune within us, we try to calm the storms within through our addiction. This dissonance or imbalance, however, will not rest until it is resolved. Learning to live within the dissonance, the imbalance of not using, even though you want to use, is how we become **an addict who chooses not to use**.

Navigating this dissonance becomes easier within a new life. A long-term solution, though, offers a more permanent calm to our storms. Until we discover and confront the conflicts within us that created the imbalance, our urge to calm the internal storms with drugs and alcohol will continue. To realize harmony around us, we must first seek harmony within us. Internal harmony begins by discovering those chords within us that fell out of tune in childhood, creating the dissonance. By addressing these imbalances of the past, we begin the process of bringing balance to our present.

Asking the Hard Questions

Sincerity requires we live transparently even to ourselves. Many of the hard questions of life have gone unanswered due to the immediate appetites of addiction. In sincerity, we allow these questions to come back to the surface, so we use them as a guide into a fuller freer future.

Everyone yearns for the feeling of importance, of significance. We may ask ourselves, “What am I here for? What is my destiny? Why do I matter?” We go about addressing these questions in different ways, such as how we dress and look or how we act. We may answer it with our obsession over wealth and celebrity and with the need for control or competition or attention and approval. How we feel important can be hidden from our own view but clearly seen in how we treat others. The old saying “Things are to be used, and people are to be loved” can

become reversed when our priorities have been formed by addiction and our most fundamental questions go unanswered.

Asking ourselves the hard questions can be the beginning of answers that free us. We begin in childhood seeking a purpose with such questions as, “What do I want to be when I grow up?” In adulthood, the questions may advance to, “What is my purpose, my destiny?” or “What am I here for, what is my calling?” There may not be a definitive answer to many of these questions, but looking behind such questions, into their unresolved roots helps us begin the journey away from addiction and into a more purpose-filled and passionate life.

Exorcisms Require Exercise

We bring our brokenness to light by expressing it and exercising it. Like a trail of breadcrumbs, talking about our pain and brokenness can guide us toward resolving it. If we were to view addiction as an adversary or demon to be cast out, only by working on it, exercising it, can we be free of its influence. Allow yourself to consider where you are and what led to this point. Talk about it to a trusted friend, and write and journal about it. As we express our thoughts, we begin the process of self-diagnosis. By naming it, we bring it out of the shadows of our mind and into the clarity of conscious thought.

Writing out our thoughts can lead to an understanding about ourselves and our past.

Journaling can play a large role in the work required to overcome addiction. Writing out our thoughts can lead to an understanding about ourselves and our past. Do not allow embarrassment over poor spelling, grammar, or lack of education to rob you of the essential tool of journaling. Write in whatever language is most comfortable, and express yourself, remembering that only you will be

reading it. Journaling is a skill that we develop with time and patience. Begin slowly, trying to write something every day. When you do write, try to write as quickly as possible, allowing your thoughts to flow freely to the page, not stopping for spelling or grammar. Start with a sentence or two, then a paragraph or two, then a page or two.

Whether journaling or talking to someone, it is important to reveal your thoughts to the right person. Some who want to help may not be the right choice, considering how difficult it is to understand addiction. Professionals or those trusted family and friends you consider an accountability partner may be a good choice.

Whomever you speak with, you must be willing to allow them to hold you accountable. This accountability in the community of recovery is essential to strength. Accountability overcomes isolation. Begin by speaking with someone to start the process of balancing both what is within you, as well as the world outside of you, the world where you live.

Come out of isolation, talk to someone, and begin your journey of journaling.

The Control Illusion

Fish do not eat hooks, so we put their favorite food—worms—on them. The purpose is to hide the hook so that they will focus only on the worm. With the hook hidden, there are no concerns on the fish's part as no future negative consequences can be seen. Like the fish, we begin the journey of addiction, feeling like we are in control. We feel like there are no consequences or that consequences can be controlled, contained, or managed. What we do not understand is that we are not in control; rather, we are being controlled. Because we have made the choice, we believe that we have control; the truth is just the opposite. Our choice to use demonstrates our lack of control. Sincerity asks us to acknowledge our limitations and live one day at a time. Day by day, we slowly learn to accept life on life's terms, and be content with an "as is" lifestyle without the need for control. This lifestyle releases us to reinvent and redefine a new future.

Embracing Failure

Acknowledging our limitations requires us to take an honest look at what we consider success. Success is built on the shoulders of years of trial and error. Embracing the journey of trying is how we enjoy the moments of accomplishment. It is said that "Failure is success in process." Sincerity is the license to fail, and failure is how we grow and change. Becoming someone new requires the grace to get it wrong over and over again as a life journey. Our journey into an unknown future built only upon our hopes and dreams requires us to think differently about what success is. True success is the license to fail, it is the continual trying of life's journey.

Sincerity is the license to fail, and failure is how we grow and change.

A baby learns to walk by falling. Failures are the stones we use to build a new life, the license to get it wrong in order to build something lasting and valuable. Failure, humiliation, and suffering are our biggest teachers leading us to the long-lasting answers to our biggest questions. We embrace these "tests" for the value they hold, which is helping us journey toward long-lasting recovery. Rather than thinking "pass or fail," we must look at the outcome of trials as a doctor might, using them to chart a new course toward better outcomes. Each test then becomes the beginning of our success. Our failures must be welcomed as the building blocks of a new redefined and reinvented future.

In sincerity, we embrace failure as a lifestyle, unconcerned about how others may measure us. We give ourselves permission to try by moving forward unafraid of failure or judgment into a new and redefined life as **an addict who chooses not to use.**

Reinvent Yourself

Philip Spagnuolo Jr. grew up in Wakefield, Massachusetts, playing hockey until moving to Laconia, New Hampshire where he played hockey in the local high school. Upon graduating, he won a scholarship to attend Southern New Hampshire University where he began getting into trouble with substance abuse. Losing his scholarship and getting kicked out of school, he traveled south to Miami where he worked in a restaurant and over the years became heavily addicted. In December of 2015, he hit rock bottom saying, "I woke up, went to work, and started thinking about how I would get what I needed to get through the day." Addicted to heroin, he was arrested and was sentenced and incarcerated after a probation violation where he began his journey toward a sober new life.

Moving back to Laconia, he felt a deeper passion and became involved with Navigating Recovery, a fledgling recovery center. As an early team member, he became instrumental in organizing the non-profit into one of the most successful recovery centers in the United States. Phil went on to become a recovery coach, opening several sober living homes for men, and was a business development specialist for sobriety houses in New Hampshire.

On February 27, 2018, Phil became a member of the New Hampshire House of Representatives and went on to run for the New Hampshire State Senate in November of 2020. Phil's journey went from incarceration to the legislature. The impact of his kind and loving manner still echoes in those whose lives he touched. Do you feel like the chains of your past will never allow you to move forward? Phil would encourage you to re-imagine yourself. This program is the permission to become someone new, permission to rediscover and redefine your life. This redefinition is as an addict who choose not to use. Within our new lives, we can redefine and reinvent ourselves so loudly that the calling of our old addictive past fades as background noise.

Sincerity Recovery Questions

What are you hiding in the shadows of your heart? _____

In what way are you unwilling to practice transparency? _____

What are you afraid of others finding out? _____

Do you have deep personal conversations with others? _____

What does “living life on life’s terms” mean to you? _____

Do you use poor English skills as an excuse to avoid journaling? _____

Are you willing to work at the habit of journaling? _____

Are you willing to tell someone about your most painful regrets and memories? _____

Do others judge you harshly? _____

Do you feel like a hypocrite? _____

Do you hold in violent thoughts, harsh judgments, or anger? _____

Do you feel a need to control? _____

Are you afraid of failure? _____

Do you try to live up to the expectations of others? Who? Why? _____

Who are your trusted friends you feel you could confide in? _____

How do you define success? _____

Sincerity Recovery Exercise

Review the following exercise and complete it the best you can.

- 1. What am I afraid of?** Write down what you are afraid of others discovering about you. In the space provided, ask yourself what it is about this fear that makes it worth keeping hidden. Take some time to consider who you could talk to about it and reveal it.

What I am afraid of?

Example: Humiliation

Why am I afraid of it?

Rejected by my father

Who could I talk to?

Close friend

<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>

- 2. The hard questions:** Below are a list of “hard” questions. Read each one individually, taking the time to consider what it might mean to you. Reflect on what the sincere answer may be. Search into your past and use these questions to help guide your future. In the blank lines below, create your own “hard” questions that may represent larger issues. Remember, you are the only person who will read this, so be as honest as you can.

What are you here for? _____

What are you most proud of? _____

What do you believe is your destiny? _____

What do you most regret? _____

What do you want to be most known for? _____

If I was your good friend, what would be the most important thing you would want me to know about you? _____

If you had a crystal ball to tell you your future, what is it you would ask to know? _____

When was the last time you cried in front of someone else? _____

What do you not have time for? _____

What was the best lesson you learned from your father? _____

What was the worst lesson you learned from your father? _____

What was the best lesson you learned from your mother? _____

What was the worst lesson you learned from your mother? _____

What was the best lesson you learned from your caregiver? _____

What was the worst lesson you learned from your caregiver? _____

If you could speak to anyone in your past, who would you speak to and what would you say?

What matters the most to you? _____

What makes you feel important? _____

What is your method for feeling in control? _____

What do you hope will be printed on your tombstone? _____

What legacy will you leave for others? _____

After writing the answers to these questions, read them quietly to yourself, considering what they may mean. There are no definitive answers to questions such as these. Their purpose is to guide us and help us think about where our lives are going. Asking the questions is how we begin with deliberate direction to chart a course toward a new self-directed redefined future.

Sincerity Journal

This image shows a full page of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page, leaving small margins at the top and bottom. There are no vertical margin lines, text, or other markings on the page.

A large rectangular area with a light beige background and horizontal ruling lines, resembling a page of lined paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the area.



Reinvest with Goodwill

Recovery is consideration and cooperation through compromise. It is finding a spiritual awakening allowing us to discover our role and place in a new life.

Through goodwill, we learn to help others in community, finding new purpose and contentment. We embrace a spiritual awakening as a means of continual growth. In goodwill, we discover that compromise can be a good thing. In goodwill, we join with others who are helping. We learn that goodwill begins with ourselves, never placing our sobriety at risk through self-sabotage. We learn to start with one small thing to begin stepping toward the largest healing.

Recovery is not about salvaging the pieces of our past; rather, it is about recovering the future before us. Remaining free of addiction requires finding new purpose and fulfillment. By taking the focus off of ourselves and placing it on the calling of helping others with others, we embrace a spiritual awakening and where we might fit into a larger picture with others and the purpose it brings.

What Is a “Spiritual Awakening?”

Goodwill celebrates a “spiritual awakening,” but what is a “spiritual awakening?” Let’s think of this figurative language in the simplest of terms. It is to awaken or become conscious of a new day, of seeing the world through a new and different lens. Figuratively, we think of it like waking up in the morning in a different place than when we fell asleep. We awaken to a new day and new way of seeing and thinking about our world and the people in it. Many consider it a religious experience in which we might “see the light,” however, the majority of us merely see it as a figurative expression for an “aha” moment. It is an enlightenment brought on by new

information or circumstances that change how we see things. When we remove the mystical from this expression, we are left with the revelation that comes when the puzzle pieces of our understanding finally fit into place.

This spiritual awakening brings us from a lower level of consciousness to a higher one, calling us into a more comprehensive and universal world view. Like walking a path and seeing only what

This spiritual awakening brings us from a lower level of consciousness to a higher one, calling us into a more comprehensive and universal world view.

is ahead up to the first bend in the road, versus looking down from a mountain vista to see the entirety of the journey from the beginning of the road to where you are now and where it will eventually lead. Yes, when we speak of a “spiritual awakening,” we are speaking figuratively about leaving behind a mindset of self-centeredness and graduating into the higher consciousness of “us.”

It is to set aside our ego and see the world from another point of view. It is getting out of our own heads and the small addictive world we have built, to see a more universal perspective. It is seeing both sides of a problem, feeling compassion, and holding opposing views with gentle empathy simultaneously, without feeling the need to choose one over the other. It is seeing others in a more imaginative and complex way beyond the training of our society and childhood programming. It is to begin to think, free from conformity and expectations. It is to awaken from dualistic thinking (this or that) into the world of non-dualistic thinking (both, and, not or). It is a graduation into a more inclusive way of seeing humanity and human problems. Not just your group, race, or social economic class, it gives us a broader lens to understand the vast middle ground that comprises the majority of who we are and the issues that face us.

It embraces the good and the bad, knowing that we are all made up of both, and helps us hold our broken world in a gentler, nonjudgmental embrace. It is to forsake the simple and familiar math of “Us vs. Them,” creating room to see within the complex contradiction of the human condition. It is a place where our response is universal sympathy over judgment and blaming, compassion over punishment and retribution, and being willing to hold the paradox of conflicting views with gentleness. It is the empathy that acknowledges that someone else’s world is just as real to them as our world is to us.

In a world where everything is painted in black and white, a spiritual awakening gives us eyes to see the colors and shades between. When we think of goodwill and the purpose and passion that becomes our new life, it is imperative that we break free of the egocentric, self-driven world and lifestyle of addiction, into a new way of seeing.

Searching for a Kindred Spirit

Who will you be, this new person you are defining? It is certain, the more we focus within ourselves, the closer we draw toward using. When we live in goodwill, we focus on a community that improves the condition of those around us, finding our new purpose and contentment. Through goodwill, we discover those “kindred spirits,” those like-minded people who hold many of the same passions and purpose that we do. We discover a group or community that feels and thinks as we do.

When we live in goodwill, we focus on a community that improves the condition of those around us, finding our new purpose and contentment.

A large part of recovery focuses on compassion for others. It may seem odd, but it is true; our greatest contentment lives within the community of those trying to help. Our addictions demand self-focus; this lifestyle and thinking can be hard to change. Goodwill is working with others toward a common good, a common goal. Showing up to work on time and following through, listening and wanting to please others in the work environment are all good and admirable traits. Our pride cries out and says: “I know better,” “I know more,” “You know nothing,” “I do not need you.” This is the language of addiction and isolation.

How you choose to exercise goodwill is as unique as you are but acknowledging family and those who have loved you through your broken past could be on the list. Getting involved with the programs they are involved with may be a good place to start. Ask them, “Where can I pitch in and help?” Consider whether you also could be a part of that programming. Your unique personality and gifts will guide you to an expression of helping others. Consider what you have to offer, and search out the best fit. Goodwill could be as simple as setting up the chairs at the AA meeting or as large as helping in a community-wide fundraiser.

Compromise

Goodwill and working with others for a common goal requires compromise or yielding on our views and opinions to accomplish something greater. Compromise can be the hallmark of greatness. It may seem counter-intuitive but letting go of your opinions and perspective for a greater, larger goal is the beginning of creating something bigger than yourself. Many of us have learned that “compromise” is a bad thing. That may be true in some contexts. For example, to compromise your sobriety would be devastating. However, to stop and genuinely listen to what someone is saying, even though it may be painful or distasteful, could make the difference in not using. Compromise in its proper context is a powerful tool of

Compromise can be the hallmark of greatness.

accomplishment with others. Many of our greatest leaders and institutions relied on compromise to balance the interests of unique people to accomplish something greater than themselves.

Beware of the “I”

Whenever you start a sentence that begins with “I,” stop and consider whether it should be a “we.” The language of goodwill and community begins with “we.” Bite your tongue and wait for someone else to point out your gifts and abilities, rather than feeling the need to promote yourselves. Community thinks function (“How can I contribute?” “How can I help?”) over position (“I am in charge,” or “Everyone listen to me.”). It is not about being in charge; it is about your contribution. Like an upside-down pyramid, those at the pinnacle are to carry the biggest load by supporting everyone else. Let others notice you rather than insisting that you and your efforts are praised.

Warning

There is a caution with goodwill. One certain way to lose a fight is to underestimate your opponent. That opponent is your addiction. Goodwill is only good if it helps you and others. If it leads you back down the road of addiction, it is not goodwill—it is instead self-sabotage. We

We must demonstrate goodwill to ourselves before we can help others, especially in the beginning. Any goodwill must begin with you.

must demonstrate goodwill to ourselves before we can help others, especially in the beginning. Any goodwill must begin with you. It may seem selfish at times, but you must never put yourself in a compromising situation, even if you feel you can “handle it.” Although your motives may be sincere, you may never, even after years of sobriety, be able to work with or around

using addicts or become their sponsor. Some addicts who choose not to use can flourish in this environment; others must not. Goodwill toward your future self is the beginning of goodwill toward others.

Self-Sabotage

Often, in addiction, the deepest and most damaging wounds are self-inflicted. Do you sabotage opportunities that may move you toward a healthier lifestyle? Do you drive away those who love you and are closest to you, those who want to help you change? It is easy to underestimate our predisposition to self-sabotage. To remember that denial is subconscious and below the surface of the mind’s eye, gives us the advantage of knowing where to look for it. We look for it by asking those around us if they can see in us that which we cannot see about ourselves. The beginning of overcoming denial is the willingness to ask the hard question, “Am I in denial?” Becoming

comfortable with confrontation and self-critical thinking is essential to seeing the internal unseen and overcoming your own self-sabotage.

For some, anyone and everyone still using is a danger and must be avoided. There are others to carry that load, phone calls that can be made, meetings that could be attended that do not require your involvement. Do not use “goodwill” as a means of talking yourself into using. There can be no compromise when it comes to self-medication. Setting up roadblocks to using, along with maintenance programs

and accountability partners, are all requirements for long-term sobriety. Remember, you will be either fighting to stay sober or using. There is no “truce” with addiction; there is no goodwill in using.

For some, anyone and everyone still using is a danger and must be avoided.

Where to Find Community Purpose and Passion

We exercise goodwill within a community of those who are helping others with purpose and passion. We search for these communities by asking ourselves, “What do I love?” “Where are my gifts, and what is my personality?” The healing arts? Music? Cooking? What do you like? Find a way to do it with and for others. What are you curious about? What are your interests or hobbies? These interests can be explored in the hopes of finding a way to help others. Education is a way to explore the world around you. Finish high school or attend night classes at a local community college with the express purpose of exploring your passions. Try to focus on classes that spark your interest. As you begin, the next thing will find its way to you.

Work

Goodwill can be found at work. Having a full- or part-time job is important. It is less about the money you may earn and more about the service you can provide. It helps us learn how to work closely and cooperate with others toward a common goal. It gives us a place where we are expected and helps give structure to our time. If you are at home most of the day trying not to use, you may likely end up using. Thinking about not using is a form of thinking about using; eventually, you will give in to it. Instead, busy yourself. Volunteer work is good (such as at a hospital or homeless shelter), as long as it carries a specific commitment on your part (e.g., I will be there from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday). The more specific it is, the more you can use it as a weapon against addiction.

The Enemy of the Good

When we look around us at our world and our lives, we can become overwhelmed seeing all the brokenness. The pain of life and living consumes our thoughts; sometimes, we may be tempted to think the only remedy is to correct everything that has ever gone wrong. Our unrealistic

expectations want to fix everything in one moment with one decision. In frustration, we give up because the job of fixing what is broken is overwhelming. This “all or nothing,” “silver bullet,” or “magic wand” thinking ignores the realities of addiction. It took thousands of bad decisions to create your current situation. Thinking that one or two better decisions will fix what is broken is an unrealistic expectation. Because we cannot do everything, we sometimes end up doing nothing. Our broken relationships with family and friends, poverty, anger, and addiction all call to us, each demanding immediate reconciliation. How easy it is to allow the complete solution to all our issues to distract us from beginning, from taking one small seemingly less significant step. We allow the best, but unachievable solution to become the enemy of the one easily accessible good thing we could do.

We may not be able to fix everything, but it is certain we can do something to fix one thing. What can you do to change your world? “Close enough” can be good enough in a world where flawlessness and faultlessness are unattainable.

One Small Thing

Often we begin goodwill with one small thing. There is always one small, good thing that could and should be done. What is your “small, good thing”? It may be choosing to be a part of this program and Start Over. It may be volunteering at a recovery meeting or rehab. Think about it; I assure you the answer is there.

What can you do today to make your world or someone else’s world a better place? Usually, our healing comes in the smallest of increments. Like drops in a bucket, one small, good decision leads to a small, better action and outcome. To focus on that small, doable thing is to begin a step toward the largest healing.

What can you do today to make your world or someone else’s world a better place?

Average Is Above Average

Goodwill can also be found in the everyday. The best way to achieve above-average outcomes is through the average, everyday things we do. More often than not, above-average outcomes are the fruit of many average decisions and actions that take place during the course of an average day of an average week, inside of an average year. Some of the greatest courage and strength can be found in the discipline of little things each day.

Going to work on time every day is how we build a career to be proud of. Helping your child with their homework after school is essential to good parenting. Eating healthy and exercising every day are how we prepare for climbing a mountain or running a marathon. Memorable mountaintop experiences are all made possible by the average, the everyday. Greatness lies on the other side of practice and patience. Some of our greatest heroes are those who were there for

us, providing a stable environment in both the sunshine and rain. Each day, faithfully, they were there for us. It is through the average that we achieve the above average.

Reinvent Yourself

Travis Roy dreamed of hockey from his early childhood in Maine. Happiest on the ice with a stick in hand, Travis excelled at the sport and worked hard toward a chance to play hockey at the Division 1 level. With multiple scholarship options, he chose Boston University. In a program where first-year students rarely play, Travis was chosen to play in the first game of the season of his freshman year. The gate opened, Travis skated out onto the ice making a block and hitting his head against the wall of the ice rink. He experienced 11 seconds of his lifelong hockey dream and was now a quadriplegic for the rest of his life. Hitting rock bottom and completely dependent on others for everything, he returned home in 1996, recognizing his need to find new meaning and identity to his life. Going back to Boston University, he earned his degree and began to acquire a new vision for himself. In 1997, The Travis Roy Foundation was established with the motto: "Hope through helping others," with a mission of helping others with spinal cord injuries. Travis enjoyed only 11 seconds of his dream before he was forced to create a new one, reinventing his life.

Are you willing to start over again, reinventing who you might be? This program is the permission to become someone new, permission to rediscover and redefine your life.

Goodwill Recovery Questions

When you reinvest in goodwill, who might you be? _____

Do you consider compromise a good or bad thing and why? _____

Where would you find others to work with in helping others? _____

Are you willing to use “We” in conversation over “I?” _____

What is the best thing you have experienced with the help of others? _____

Do you have a group that you would consider “kindred spirits” to yours? _____

Have you thought about going back to school or investing in a new beginning? _____

Do you embrace feedback to avoid denial and self-sabotage? _____

What is the caution of goodwill? _____

Is it weak to give in or yield on your point of view? _____

What is the largest project you have done in a group? _____

What does “the enemy of the good” mean to you? _____

Do you feel satisfaction in work? _____

What experience in your past best describes a spiritual awakening? _____

What is a spiritual awakening? _____

What average things do you do regularly that are above average? _____

If you were to use words other than “spiritual” or “awakening” to describe it, what would they be? _____

What is your “one small thing,” and when might you begin it? _____

Goodwill Recovery Exercises

Review the following exercises and complete them the best you can.

- 1. Help wanted:** Begin working on a resume for yourself designed to attract a job or service that suits your personality and desire for helping others. The job you seek must be about improving the condition of those around you.

Use a standard resume format, such as the following:

Summary: A brief description of yourself, your personality, and your passion for helping others in the field of _____.

Personal: A brief description of your interests, likes, hobbies, and desires.

Accomplishments: A brief description of relevant awards or certificates, such as, "I completed a program on recovery called, *Starting Over*."

Skills: List any relevant skills.

Experience: List any work or personal experience within your field.

Education: List your educational experience. Also, list classes and programs that you desire to take that may be relevant to your field.

- 2. Average things:** List some of the average, everyday things you consistently do each day, week, and month that are building toward something above average.

For example:

Every day I show up to work on time. I am hoping to get another raise.

Every week I become more involved with my church. I am hoping to become a deacon.

Every month I am putting aside money. I hope to move my family into our own home.

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-
- 3. Interview:** Develop questions and interview the least likely person you might befriend that you have reasonable access to. Be sure and pick someone with whom you have little in common. Ask:

Where did you grow up, and what other places have you lived?

Do you have a significant other? Spouse? Children?

Do you have other family and friends?

Where did you go to school?

Do you have other hobbies and interests?

What might you do different in life if you had the choice?

What do you feel are the big changes that you went through?

Given your past, do you feel like you could start over?

What would it take to help you make lasting changes?

- 4. Confronting my dualism:** Dualism is a limited way of thinking that sees answers that are in black and white. To see in shades of gray takes effort when all our lives we have experienced the binary of “yes or no” or “us and them.” Seeing the world from outside this box awakens us to an abundance of possibilities.

In the spaces below, list a seemingly irreconcilable issue with one opposing position on the left and the other on the right. Discuss both sides without feeling the need to reconcile, resolve, or defend either position. In the middle section, discuss and embrace both views without feeling any need to resolve them. The exercise is not to solve problems, it is to see both sides in a broader way.

War is always bad.

Physically preventing
aggression must always be a
last resort.

Some bullies need to be
stopped.

Tom is lazy and never
helpful.

Tom has bad days and good
ones, too.

Tom helped me clean without
being asked.

- 5. Broadening my perspective with word replacement:** Non-dual thinking leads us to a humbler perspective that includes and acknowledges the rights and views of others with whom we may currently disagree. Below, state your current firm position on any issue.

Remove all unneeded inflammatory judgmental words.

Follow all firm definitive words like “yes” and “no” with an “and” or an “or” or “but.”

Replace all certainty words such as “always,” or “never” with softer, less definitive words like “sometimes” or “may” or “often.”

End your sentence with “but,” and continue the sentence by considering the opposing view.

In what way was your passion statement changed? Is it less “firm” and more inclusive? Does a broader perspective help you understand the issue in a broader way?

The purpose of these exercises is not to change our thinking about a particular viewpoint but rather to break out of a single frame perspective and into a broader non-dualistic way of thinking.

Consider these examples:

War is always bad.

War is bad and sometimes unavoidable, but I will work for peace as much as possible.

Tom is lazy and never helpful.

Tom sometimes forgets to help but I am thankful when he does pitch in.

6. **Joining the debate club:** We overcome non-dual thinking by allowing ourselves to consider the opposing view with sincerity and empathy. Debate clubs and organizations across the country have competed for years to develop the skills needed to see and advocate for all sides of an issue. Contestants and debaters are always assigned their topics, topics are never chosen. Debaters oftentimes are assigned topics that they may find morally disgusting. As a debater, though, they are required to argue and persuade the judges on those issues that they personally disagree with in order to win the debate. Let’s pretend we are in a debate competition in which we must defend a topic that we are personally opposed to.

Below, list a topic or position that you hold and might defend under normal circumstances.

As if you were assigned the opposing view, in the space below write a paragraph debating the merits and reasoning for the opposing position. Argue the passion with the same zeal and energy as you would in a view you hold. Present your points with true sincerity and empathy for those on the other side, always trying to see things from their viewpoint.

Conclude your arguments for the opposing view on the empathic conclusion line.

Examples:

My firmly held position: War is always bad

My arguments for the merits of its opposing view: Sometimes bullies need to be stopped

Empathetic conclusion: I must respect other's freedoms while working towards peace

My firmly held position: Tom is always lazy

My arguments for the merits of its opposing view: Tom sometimes forgets stuff

Empathetic conclusion: I will forgive Tom's forgetfulness and remind him when I can

My firmly held position: _____

My arguments for the merits of its opposing view: _____

Empathetic conclusion: _____

My firmly held position: _____

My arguments for the merits of its opposing view: _____

Empathetic conclusion: _____

My firmly held position: _____

My arguments for the merits of its opposing view: _____

Empathetic conclusion: _____

My firmly held position: _____

My arguments for the merits of its opposing view: _____

Empathetic conclusion: _____

[illegible]

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A large rectangular area filled with horizontal ruling lines, resembling a blank sheet of notebook paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page.

Revival

In the revival keys of **Disconnect** and **Resolve**, we plan the care of our new future by putting in place strategies for success. We protect this future by connecting to others. We learn to leave behind the relationships of using friends and family. We examine our triggers and invest in new people, places, and things. We embrace sobriety as a tool of self-discovery. We form a battle plan for the path forward including meetings, programs, and sponsorship, and begin addressing our craving thoughts.



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Revival with Disconnect

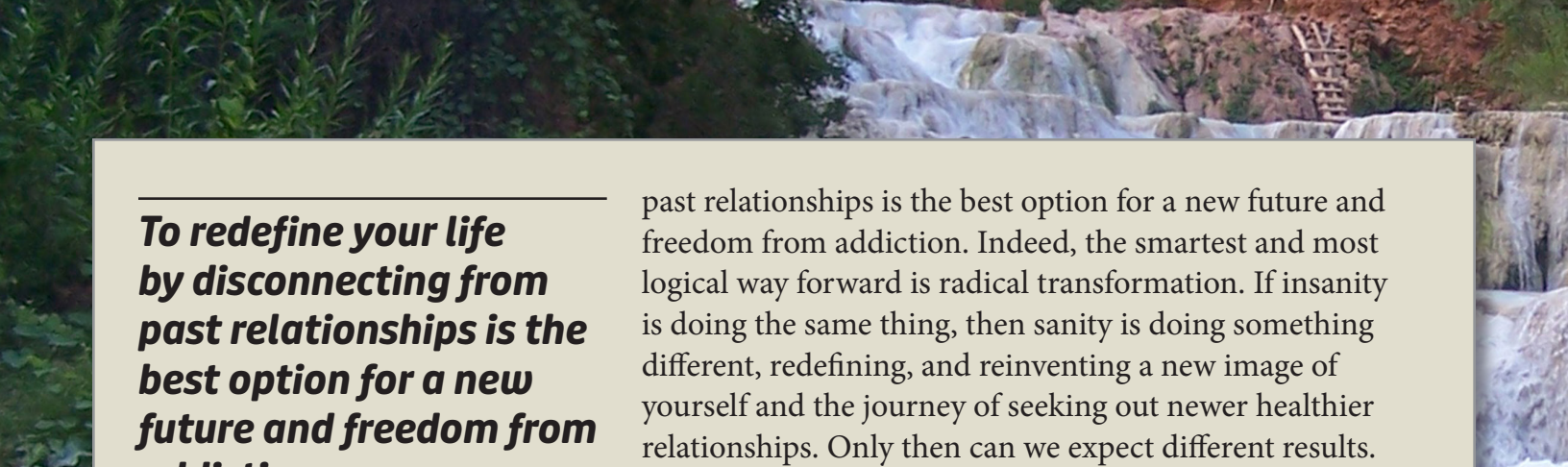
Recovery is saying goodbye to our old lifestyle and relationships, discovering new meaning in family, friends, and a healthy, hopeful future.

Through disconnect, we learn that severing relationships with using friends and family is an essential part of recovery. Addiction, like a ladder, is a process that uses each rung to tempt us. We learn about triggers—the people, places, and things of our past used against us. We invest in discovering healthier people, places, and things who celebrate who we are becoming, **an addict who chooses not to use**. We recognize the pull of social media to tempt us. We confront our triggers in both the short term and in the long term.

Identifying triggers and severing relationships can be among the most difficult tasks required by **an addict who chooses not to use**, but also one of the most essential. Recovery requires cutting the cords that bind us to using. These cords and the disconnect process can be one of the hardest. Our friendships run deep into our past. For many, they are the family, neighbors, friends, or classmates we grew up with. With others, we may share a common addictive process. Our past is intertwined with them; it can be hard to envision our lives without them, but to be certain, many of our recovery failures can be directly tied to the relationships of our past and the fear of the loneliness in a life without them.

Sanity's Definition

It is commonly said within recovery circles that the definition of insanity is “doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.” If there is merit to this saying, then its opposite must be equally true. The definition of sanity must lie in the unique, the different, a radical change, or disconnection from the status quo. To redefine your life by disconnecting from



To redefine your life by disconnecting from past relationships is the best option for a new future and freedom from addiction.

past relationships is the best option for a new future and freedom from addiction. Indeed, the smartest and most logical way forward is radical transformation. If insanity is doing the same thing, then sanity is doing something different, redefining, and reinventing a new image of yourself and the journey of seeking out newer healthier relationships. Only then can we expect different results.

The Ladder of Addiction

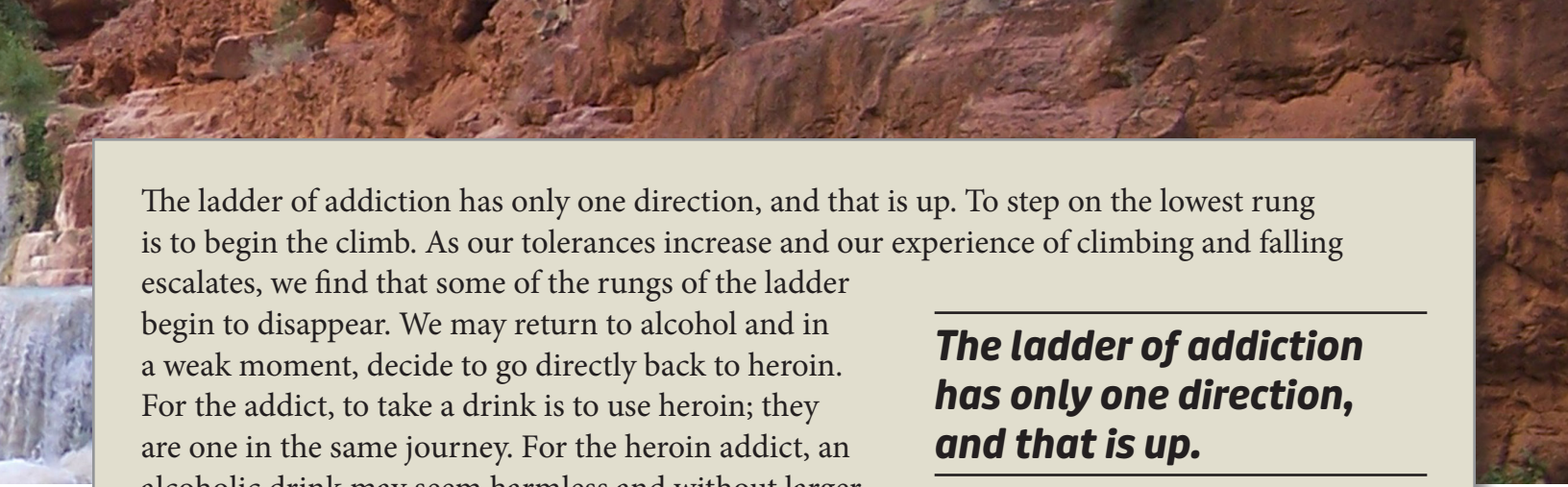
Often, when we think of our addiction, we focus in on the worst of the drugs we have used. For example, one might say, “I am addicted to heroin.” Another might say, “I am addicted to crack,” and another to alcohol. All of these contain only part of the truth. The whole truth is that we are addicted to every part of the process that leads us to the worst of the drugs we have used. Addiction, like any journey, includes all the “points of interest” we have stopped at along the way. Recovery requires us to think in broader terms, viewing addiction not as the specific substance or way of thinking we abused but as a journey or lifestyle that needs to be replaced with another healthier lifestyle and acknowledging the need to disconnect from each aspect of addiction’s journey.

For example, let’s say I began using alcohol in high school and then graduated to smoking pot in the school parking lot. After years of alcohol and pot, I may have used Adderall to help pass some difficult exams. Then maybe last year’s football injury acted up. I may have started with prescription pain relief and then pain killers wherever I could get them after the prescription ran out. Finally, they didn’t seem to affect my pain, so after I tried pills, I moved to heroin.

What am I addicted to? The answer is simple, every rung on the ladder, every step along the way, every point that helped bring about your current addicted state. I am addicted to heroin; I am addicted to pills; I am addicted to pot; and lastly, I am an alcoholic because each rung will lead me back through the same journey to the top of the ladder. It is the life of an addict I am addicted to. In part or in whole, I am addicted to the escalating journey of self-medication and all its drugs, alcohol, money, cars, friends, and lovers I allow myself to have while using. I am addicted to the lifestyle of satisfying self-destructive urges.

Triggers

Anything and everything that was part of my self-medication can become a trigger to start the entire addictive process over again. If I stop using and feel I can handle a beer at the ball game, I have started addiction’s launch sequence. It is only a matter of time before I am once again at the top of the ladder.



The ladder of addiction has only one direction, and that is up. To step on the lowest rung is to begin the climb. As our tolerances increase and our experience of climbing and falling escalates, we find that some of the rungs of the ladder begin to disappear. We may return to alcohol and in a weak moment, decide to go directly back to heroin. For the addict, to take a drink is to use heroin; they are one in the same journey. For the heroin addict, an alcoholic drink may seem harmless and without larger implications, but it is not. Its painful future consequences are hidden within the bottle. To decide to take a drink is a decision to escalate my self-medication in the future.

The ladder of addiction has only one direction, and that is up.

Achilles Heel

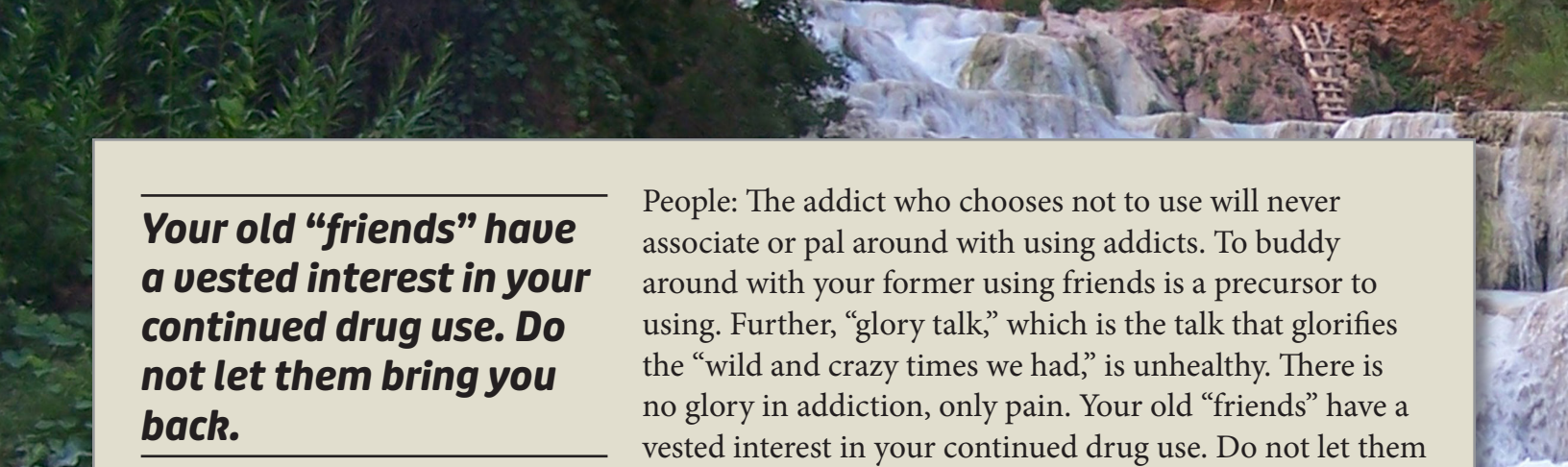
It is certain that the impact of our old relationships, our using family and friends, must be recognized as an area of greatest weakness or an “Achilles Heel.” For many, it is the most fragile part of our sobriety. Leaving behind the past we share with our using friends and family is part of the price we pay to recover our future. All of our past cannot compare to the potential that lies ahead of us. As we have had a reputation for using and addiction, now we must be known for our uncompromising stand against using. Any friend who is using is an enemy to your recovery. Recovery requires the disconnect needed to redefine the future.

Social Media

It is important to recognize the impact of social media on the addict and the need to disconnect from our online relationships and apps. Social media can become the highway through which our past addicted life can reach into our present and undo a fragile sobriety. Instantly, with the use of a smartphone, we can reach out to all of our old using friends simply by updating our Facebook status. Keeping your old contacts list is saying, “I have not died to addiction and have not declared bankruptcy to begin a new life.” Texting, old web sites, Craigslist, and Instagram are like ringing a bell, one that informs everyone that we are back on the street and back into our old life. Anything that continues an ongoing relationship or conversation with anyone using is to be avoided. It is not enough to simply “unfriend.” Begin a new account in which all contacts are non-users. Do not leave links from your old accounts to your new one. Your future self, the self who wishes to be **an addict who chooses not to use**, requires its own social media accounts that are clean of all past relationships.

People, Places, and Things

Many different programs use the phrase “people, places, and things” because these are the weapons addiction uses to call us back. Disconnect requires us to consider each carefully in the battle of addiction.



Your old “friends” have a vested interest in your continued drug use. Do not let them bring you back.

People: The addict who chooses not to use will never associate or pal around with using addicts. To buddy around with your former using friends is a precursor to using. Further, “glory talk,” which is the talk that glorifies the “wild and crazy times we had,” is unhealthy. There is no glory in addiction, only pain. Your old “friends” have a vested interest in your continued drug use. Do not let them bring you back.

Places: Dealing with life sober can be among the hardest things for the addict. To go back to the places you enjoyed while using is to relive everything that ultimately brought pain and heartache. Find new places to enjoy your new non-using friends. To spend time in your old hangouts is to invite a relapse.

Things: The hobbies, sports, and activities of your addiction can be particularly difficult to set aside. If they are not triggers in and of themselves, discovering new ways to enjoy them in a completely different environment ensures they do not become the triggers that start the cycle over again.

As we have had a reputation for using and addiction, now we must be known for our uncompromising stand against using. Any friend who is using is an enemy to your recovery.

Other People, Places, and Things

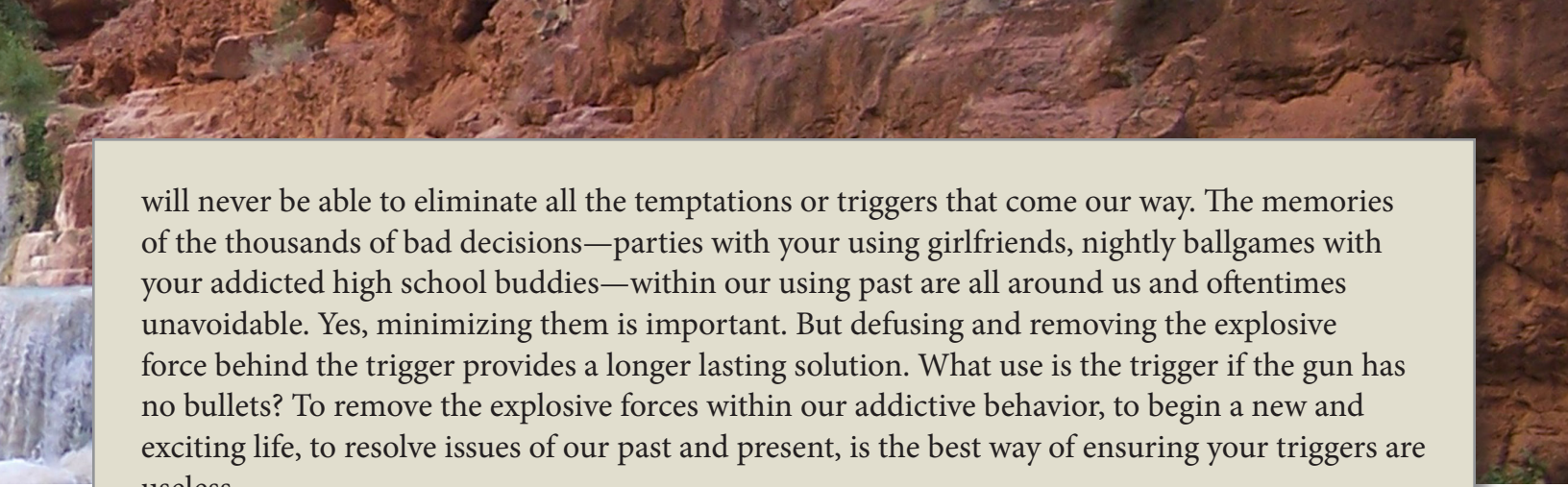
Any discussion regarding what not to do must acknowledge the need to replace those behaviors with healthier ones. All disconnect must be matched with connection. Nature hates a vacuum. The absence of any “person, place, or thing” must be balanced by another, healthier “person, place, or thing.” Unless we replace one appetite or desire for another, we will most certainly fail. To focus on not using is a form of focusing on using, which will eventually lead to using. To focus on not hanging out with our old using friends, but not finding new friends, is a fool’s errand. To focus on not going back to the places you enjoyed while using without finding new places to celebrate your sobriety is to invite a relapse.

Without finding new ways and environments to explore hobbies, sports, and activities, you will be led back to the old ones. You must discover new and greater appetites to fill the vacuum.

You must discover new and greater appetites to fill the vacuum.

Defusing your Bomb

When we consider “triggers,” it is best to address them in both the short term and the long term. In the short term, we confront the using people, places, and things of our past replacing them with other healthier non-using people, places, and things. However, it is certain that we



will never be able to eliminate all the temptations or triggers that come our way. The memories of the thousands of bad decisions—parties with your using girlfriends, nightly ballgames with your addicted high school buddies—within our using past are all around us and oftentimes unavoidable. Yes, minimizing them is important. But defusing and removing the explosive force behind the trigger provides a longer lasting solution. What use is the trigger if the gun has no bullets? To remove the explosive forces within our addictive behavior, to begin a new and exciting life, to resolve issues of our past and present, is the best way of ensuring your triggers are useless.

Long-Term and Short-Term Thinking

In recovery we learn to address our triggers in both the short term and long term. We aggressively minimize the people, places, and things that hold the memories of our temptations, while we actively seek out new relationships and activities to fill the void of disconnection. Equally as important is the determination and courage to confront the past and its hold over us in the present.

With short-term triggers, we avoid the bars and hangouts of our past. We refuse parties where we know or suspect using may be involved. But in the long term, we ask ourselves, “Why do I need this? What is lacking in my life that I feel the need to fill with alternatives? If I am self-medicating, what sickness do I suffer from that need’s medication? What is the source of the yearning within me that drives me to using?” The answers to these questions are often found in our past and can be clouded by the trauma and the disappointments of childhood. Exploring these issues oftentimes requires the help of professionals and can lead us to a happier, healthier future.

Discovering and confronting our unwelcome emotional guests requires us to see what we often are unwilling to acknowledge about ourselves and our past. The childhood ways of dealing with past trauma and anxiety can become the stumbling blocks of our adulthood. Recovery requires an honest assessment and a willingness to explore the past, discovering the hidden explosive that continues to drive us toward self-medication. This vulnerability can become the key to transformation giving us the needed insights to defuse the explosive within us, making any trigger powerless over us.

Recovery requires an honest assessment and a willingness to explore the past, discovering the hidden explosive that continues to drive us toward self-medication.



Sobriety Is the Tool, Newness of Life Is the Goal

It is important to recognize that not using is one of the steps or tools we use to find a more meaningful and fulfilling life, a new and happier life in which we discover and realize our hopes and dreams. “Steps” are always in a context, never isolated or standing alone. The context of steps is a home where we travel to a higher floor of living. Sobriety is not an end in itself, rather, it is a means to a greater end, discovering a greater, higher, and more meaningful way of living. This new life is how we overcome the constant pressures of addiction and enjoy long lasting sobriety.

Reinvent Yourself

Mark Wahlberg grew up south of Boston with a chip on his shoulder and a family history of drugs and crime. Addiction and violence were a part of his everyday life as early as age 13. At age 16, Wahlberg was charged with attempted murder; he pleaded guilty to assault and was sentenced to two years. After prison, Wahlberg recognized that a life of drugs and violence might have been a part of his life with his family in the past, but that was not what he wanted for his future. He began the transformation into someone new. Focusing on his music and acting career, Wahlberg reinvented himself, working hard to become the married father of four and the film star we all know today.

You may feel your history is inescapable, trapped in a cycle of drugs and alcohol, but Mark Wahlberg would disagree. It is never too late to redefine and reinvent who you can be. This program is the permission to become someone new, permission to rediscover and redefine your life.

Disconnect Recovery Questions

What are you addicted to? _____

What is “sanity’s” definition? _____

What part does social media play in your addiction? _____

Do you see addiction in the broad terms of an escalating journey? _____

What reputation do you have with your friends? _____

Do you miss your old using friends? _____

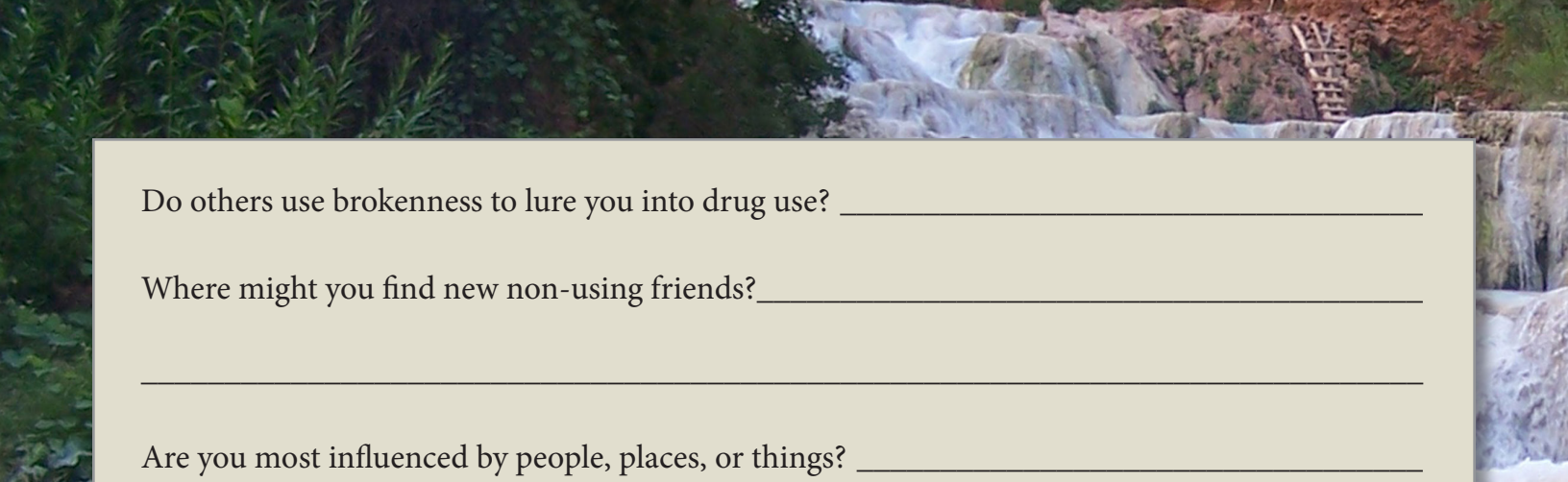
Are you willing to “come out” against using drugs? _____

Are you willing to delete old media accounts and start new ones? _____

What is a short-term solution to “triggers?” _____

What is the long-term solution to “triggers?” _____

Are you willing to find new, drug-free friends? _____



Do others use brokenness to lure you into drug use? _____

Where might you find new non-using friends? _____

Are you most influenced by people, places, or things? _____

What childhood defense mechanisms do you use as an adult? _____

What are your triggers? _____

What are your bullets or explosives? _____

What is the purpose of your sobriety? _____

Disconnect Recovery Exercises

Review the following exercises and complete them the best you can.

- 1. Failures Playbook:** Failures Playbook is designed to help us spot weaknesses in our recovery by evaluating trends and patterns within previous failures. Rather than thinking “pass” or “fail,” we must look at the outcome of trials as a doctor might, using them to chart a new course toward better outcomes. Each test then becomes the beginning of the success which must eventually follow. Our failures must be welcomed as the building blocks of a new, redefined and reinvented future in building of a new life.

Look back at specific times of failure, times when you went from being strong (just out of rehab, for example) to using. Take each instance separately and list the major decisions, attitudes, relationships, and experiences that were part of the progression from sober to using. List each instance in a step-by-step report format, trying to note the time intervals between each item.

For example:

Out of rehab

Updated my status on Facebook

Heard from old boyfriend, Billy, via phone

Had a beer while watching the ball game with my dad

Saw Billy after receiving a text message

Smoked pot, had sex with the Billy following night

Bought pot from Billy

Stole oxy from medicine cabinet for weakness and depression

Taking oxy daily to maintain. Needed to buy it on the street

Got into a fight with Billy over my old boyfriend

Needed pain killers for bruising, etc.

Was kicked out of the house

Did heroin with Billy and his old girlfriend

The more items per incident, the better (a minimum of 10). The more separate incidence reports you have, the more you will be able to note patterns. What common elements do you note? What can you learn from the reports? What areas need to be changed or removed? Using a step format, write out your “failures playbook,” a report on patterns that attack your recovery.

- 2. My new friends:** Make a list of all non-using friends and family. Make a separate list of new friends and recent acquaintances. Choose one person from each list and reach out to them this week. Each week, choose another person from each list and try to schedule time together. Stay connected with each friend during the week (phone calls, texting, etc.). As the weeks pass, your list of non-using friends and family should grow larger. Be sure to add to your lists those new acquaintances you meet along the way (friend of a friend) and those who transition to the friends and family list.

- 3. Lists of what to watch out for:** Start a series of lists and update them regularly:

List of old friends and people I will not see again because they are using.

List of old places I will not go again because they are triggers to use.

List of old things I will not do, celebrate, or entertain again because they are triggers to use.

List of old things that I will do in a radically different way, transforming them into commitments not to use.

4. My triggers—both short and long term:

We confront our triggers on two fronts:

First, we consider the short term by removing the triggers of people, places, and things that tempt us. We then replace them with healthier people, places, and things.

Second, we carefully look into the past to uncover and remove anything that created our explosive imbalance. Once we know the triggers, we are more likely to be able to eliminate them.

Below, we will consider our triggers both short term and long term. On the left, make a list of your short-term triggers. On the right, make a list of your long-term triggers as you understand them. Compare the lists to see if you can find any similarities. Draw a line between those that seem related and place a one-word response naming that correlation.

Triggers in my present:

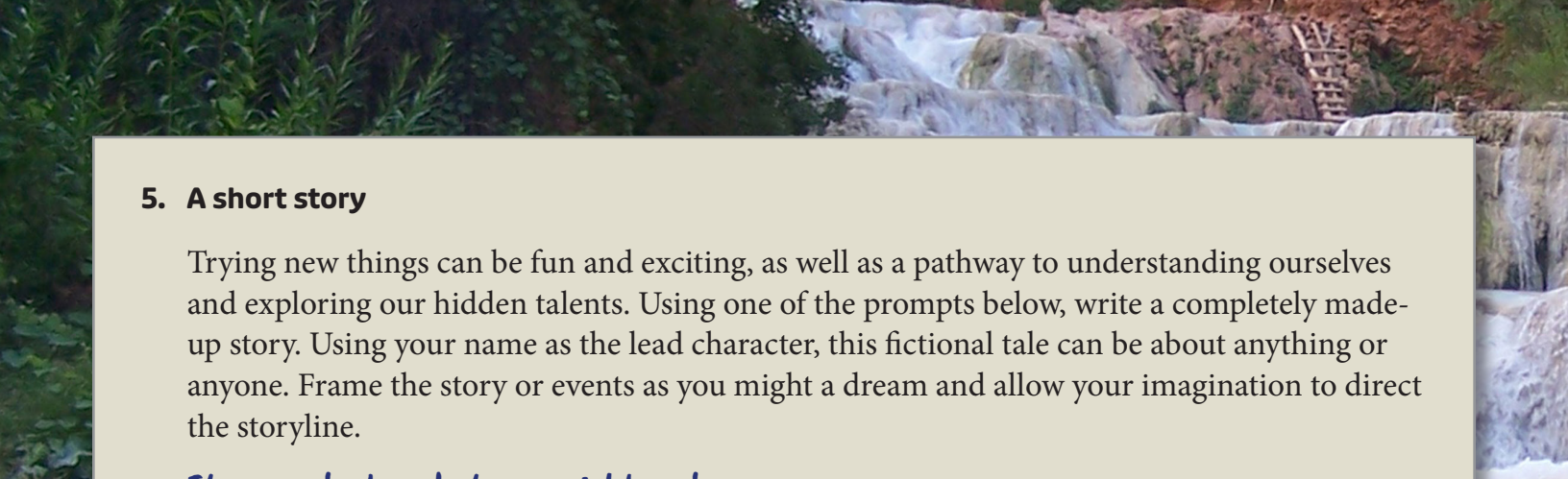
Example: Going to a bar

Conflict in relationships makes me
want to use

Triggers in my past:

Example: My father was an alcoholic

My mother was emotionally detached



5. A short story

Trying new things can be fun and exciting, as well as a pathway to understanding ourselves and exploring our hidden talents. Using one of the prompts below, write a completely made-up story. Using your name as the lead character, this fictional tale can be about anything or anyone. Frame the story or events as you might a dream and allow your imagination to direct the storyline.

It all started with a...

The space ship slowed as we approached the distant planet and...

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Disconnect Journal

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A large rectangular area with a light beige background and horizontal ruling lines, resembling a page of lined paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page.



Revival with Resolve

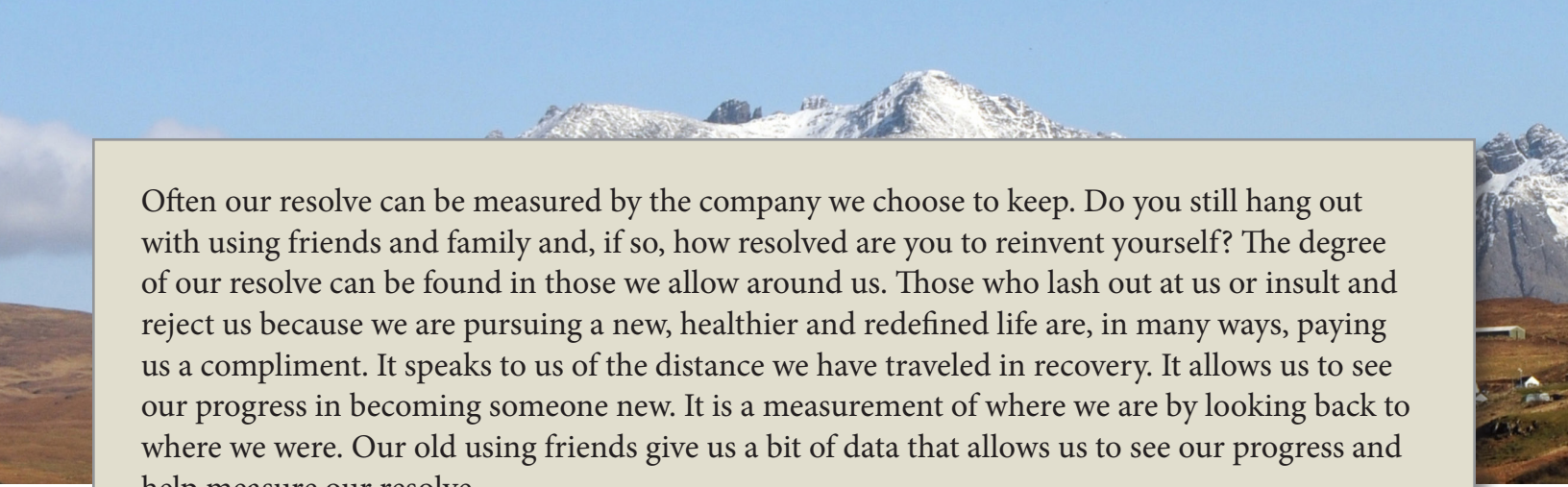
Recovery is not taking criticism from addicts personally but using it to see the brokenness of others and as a sign of our own recovery accomplishment.

Through resolve, we commit to sobriety and learn never to underestimate the power addiction has to call us back to using. We learn not to take the criticism of addicts personally, but rather in empathy, we see it as an indication of our recovery accomplishment. We acknowledge that friction with using friends and family is a compliment. In fact, we should be concerned if there is no friction. We now can begin developing a battle plan for success in the war to maintain sobriety. We acknowledge that no filter is fine enough to remove our addictive past. We recognize the craving inner voice and commit to compassionate confrontation to the speaker within.

We can expect that some of those who we used with in the past may invite us to use with them again. Recognize that these people may use condemnation, disapproval, shame, and guilt to tempt us back. To **an addict who chooses not to use**, this can be a compliment. It can assure us we are on the right road and in better company.

A Great Compliment

Are you resolved? If you are here for any other reason than becoming drug-free permanently, you are wasting your time. We become resolved by becoming someone new, by redefining, and by reinventing who we will become.



Often our resolve can be measured by the company we choose to keep. Do you still hang out with using friends and family and, if so, how resolved are you to reinvent yourself? The degree of our resolve can be found in those we allow around us. Those who lash out at us or insult and reject us because we are pursuing a new, healthier and redefined life are, in many ways, paying us a compliment. It speaks to us of the distance we have traveled in recovery. It allows us to see our progress in becoming someone new. It is a measurement of where we are by looking back to where we were. Our old using friends give us a bit of data that allows us to see our progress and help measure our resolve.

Coffee-Filter Thinking

Leaving behind using friends and family is not an easy task. Often, the fear of loneliness can drive us back to familiar relationships. Like a coffee filter, we think we can have the future we want and include parts of our past—parts we believe we cannot live without. We think we can filter out or separate the addiction, bringing forward only the coffee, leaving the grounds behind. In a perfect world or in a Disney movie, this may be the case. In the real world, though, the memories and feelings of addiction cannot be separated or filtered out. Addiction seeps deep into all our experiences and relationships in ways that no filter—no matter how fine—could ever remove. If you chose to carry a using relationship forward, it will bring with it the shadows of the past.

Our past addicted lives call to us from yesterday to continue the self-destructive path we were on. Remember, though, there is a future you, a clean and sober you, calling from tomorrow,

Recovery requires a clean break, a fresh start, a new beginning.

asking you to leave the past behind and becoming **an addict who chooses not to use**. Recovery requires a clean break, a fresh start, a new beginning. By relinquishing our past and any victory over our addiction, we free ourselves to Start Over and salvage our future.

A Great Concern

One of recovery's red flags is the lack of friction or the absence of disappointment and disapproval from those using around us. If there is no friction between your old using life and your new, redefined life, how new and redefined can it be? Are you dancing on the edge of denial and self-sabotage? This lack of tension should be a great concern and speaks loudly to the addict who chooses not to use, saying, "Be careful that addiction is not walking alongside you, holding your hand, leading the way."



Misery and Company

How do you deal with the friction of those using around you? Hurting people hurt others, and misery loves company. The resolved are confident, at home in their skin, transparent, and at peace with the world around them. Unhealthy people are afraid that the worst is true and lash out. Every addict's pain belongs only to them, just as your recovery belongs to you. When others lash out, it is a demonstration of their brokenness, not yours. The lashing out of addicts toward recovery should produce compassion and empathy within us. We may be tempted to take it personally or to take responsibility, especially when our past is brought up. Remember, they are speaking of a person who has declared bankruptcy and no longer owes any debt, a person who left the addict behind in search of a new future. The past does not belong to the addict who chooses not to use. Do not allow the past to occupy any of your present by "renting space in your head."

Do not allow the past to occupy any of your present by "renting space in your head."

Comments such as:

"You will never change."

"You are such a loser."

"You will always be using."


"You are just like your dad, mom, brother, or sister."

Resolve not to allow anyone to rent space in your thoughts by trying to get your past to stick to you. Remember, they are speaking of someone else, someone you left behind long ago to become someone new and redefined.

Don't Underestimate Your Opponent

One certain way to lose a fight is to underestimate the opponent. Underestimating the strength of addiction to call you back will eventually end in you using. Addiction is in some ways like a virus, waiting, looking for the opportunity to reassert itself. A cold, the flu, or another non-threatening ailment can lower the immune system enough for a virus to come crashing back to the surface. To lose a job, deal with hardships in a relationship, or something as simple as a car breakdown at the worst of times, can be enough for the virus of addiction to come knocking at your door. This may not be something you are ready for during times that otherwise seem so normal. Recognizing these smaller, more subtle temptations gives us power over them.

Addiction is in some ways like a virus, waiting, looking for the opportunity to reassert itself.



Recognizing the battle for what it is makes us more prepared to succeed in overcoming and choosing not to use.

You Need a Plan

A professional football player will spend 10 times as much effort in preparing for a game than actually playing in that game. An average game is three hours, but any professional team will spend a minimum of 35 hours watching videos of the opposition, preparing for plays, and in strategy sessions to deal with weak areas of play for that one game. On top of this rigorous schedule are strength training, constant workouts, and health and diet regimens needed to compete. During the season, this schedule is maintained and improved every week of every month. No player gets a pass.

Your recovery is not a “game.” You are not “playing” at recovery.

If we were for a moment to consider the end of the process, where your addiction is going, where it will eventually take you, it is not unreasonable to assume that overdose and death may be in your future. When we consider this, you must acknowledge how high the stakes are. The stakes are life and death—your life and your death. The seriousness of your recovery makes the football analogy pale and insignificant to what is truly at stake. Most addicts, though, come out of prison or rehab or programs without a working plan or strategy for how they might succeed.

As we have discussed, if insanity is doing the same thing, then sanity is doing something different. Overcoming the constant pressures of addiction require a strategy, a plan, a discovery

To be truly in recovery is to be deliberate and purposeful in creating a strategy or battle plan that helps you win over addiction.

of weak areas, and a workout regimen that turns our weaknesses into our long suits. It requires having weapons at the ready, cleaning and practicing and maintaining those weapons, being proficient with their use, being loaded and ready for the mental battle to come. Your plan requires constant development and redefining. No addict gets a pass. To be truly in recovery is to be deliberate and purposeful in creating a strategy or battle plan that helps you win over addiction.

Planning Ahead

Recovery resolve requires a strategic battle plan for the road ahead. It is said, “Those who aim at nothing are sure to hit it.” Setting up roadblocks, maintenance programs, accountability partners, sponsors, and sponsorship are all part of the kindness, sincerity, and goodwill that are required for long-term recovery. Addiction is a long-term war with many short-term battles still to come. Warfare requires a strategic battle plan to succeed for both the long and short term. As the saying goes, “Those who fail to plan, plan to fail.”



Roadblocks

Like commitment devices, roadblocks are promises to our future selves to do or never to do. They are our internal roadblocks and stop signs. To be effective, you have to share these roadblocks with the person who is holding you accountable.

Maintenance Programs

Maintenance programs are a collection of regularly scheduled events and meetings. Establishing a routine of recovery is important; AA, NA, or Key meetings are small doses of recovery. We seek out new and different meetings and groups as an exploration of what works best in our recovery, asking for recommendations from those we meet. Every week, as addiction is discussed, our active participation helps keep us on the path of the addict who chooses not to use.

Accountability Partners

An accountability partner knows us well and holds us accountable for daily decisions and recovery progress. Having trusted friends and sponsors around you to see what you cannot about yourself and are willing to ask the hard and direct questions is essential to recovery. It is also crucial that you have the willingness to respect that confrontation and receive it as an act of loving concern, to put pride and self-confidence aside, and listen with self-critical thinking. If anger, hostility, or any prideful self-empowerment is your immediate response, recognize it as an addictive defense mechanism. Becoming comfortable and accustomed to confrontation and self-critical thinking is essential to long-term recovery.

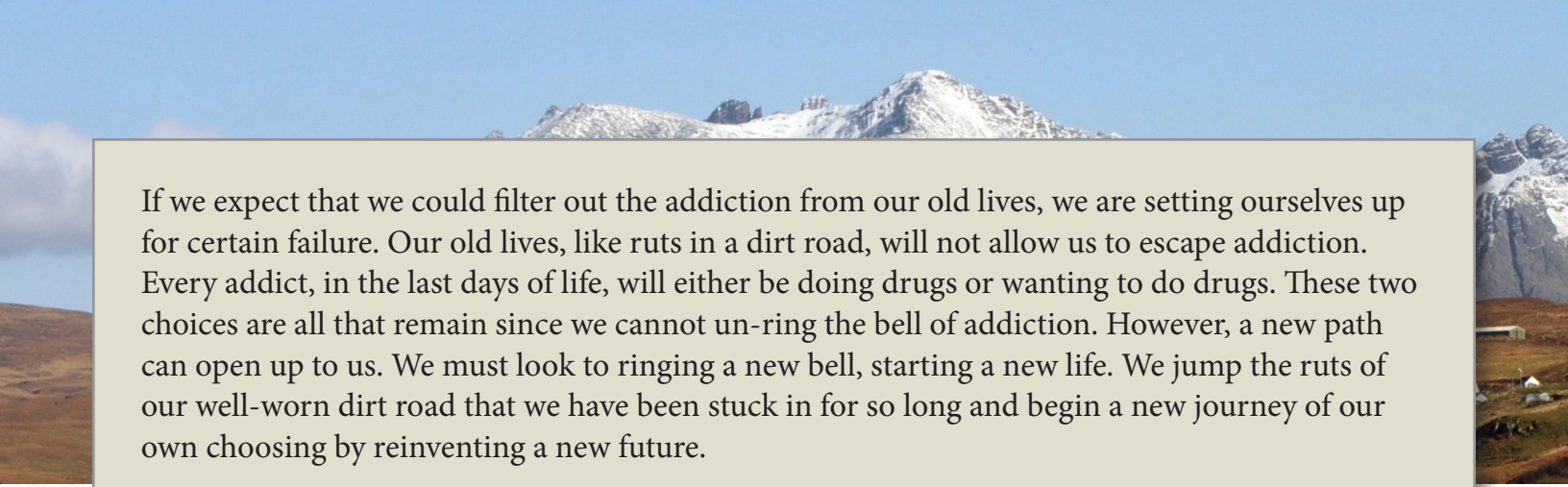
Becoming comfortable and accustomed to confrontation and self-critical thinking is essential to long-term recovery.

Sponsors

Sponsors may be less aware of our intimate details but are always quick with a hello and a phone call. They can be counted on during times of weakness to call and care. No one has enough sponsors. Sponsors should provide a constant flow of positive recovery communication during the week.

Sponsorship

Recognizing that our healing often lies in helping others, reaching out to be a sponsor to others, mentoring them with your recovery accomplishment, all become part of our defense against using.



If we expect that we could filter out the addiction from our old lives, we are setting ourselves up for certain failure. Our old lives, like ruts in a dirt road, will not allow us to escape addiction. Every addict, in the last days of life, will either be doing drugs or wanting to do drugs. These two choices are all that remain since we cannot un-ring the bell of addiction. However, a new path can open up to us. We must look to ringing a new bell, starting a new life. We jump the ruts of our well-worn dirt road that we have been stuck in for so long and begin a new journey of our own choosing by reinventing a new future.

The Pushback

How do you react when confronted with using friends and family or temptations, big and small, subtle and obvious? The answer to that question speaks loudly to your resolve and preparedness in dealing with the pressures of addiction and the continuous choosing of **an addict who chooses not to use**. Do you succumb, giving in to using, or do you push back and fight for sobriety? If you push back, what do you push back with?

In the war of addiction, we must come to the battle with weapons that subdue our adversary and push back the desire of using by empowering our own choices. The weapons you use to push back against the desires of using will be the measure of your success. To have these weapons at the ready gives you the upper hand when confronted, helping you to push back against the temptation. What are your weapons? Do you have them at the ready?

One way we push back in the war of addiction is with specific mental images we have prepared in advance. If, for example, one of my weapons is my family and what my sobriety means to my children, then I will carry that mental image with me. A photo in my pocket also may help to remind me of what I am fighting for. If one of my weapons is the fear of losing a job or profession, I will remind myself with specific mental images of what that job means to me. If one of my weapons is a spouse or significant other, I will keep my cell phone ready for a quick call to

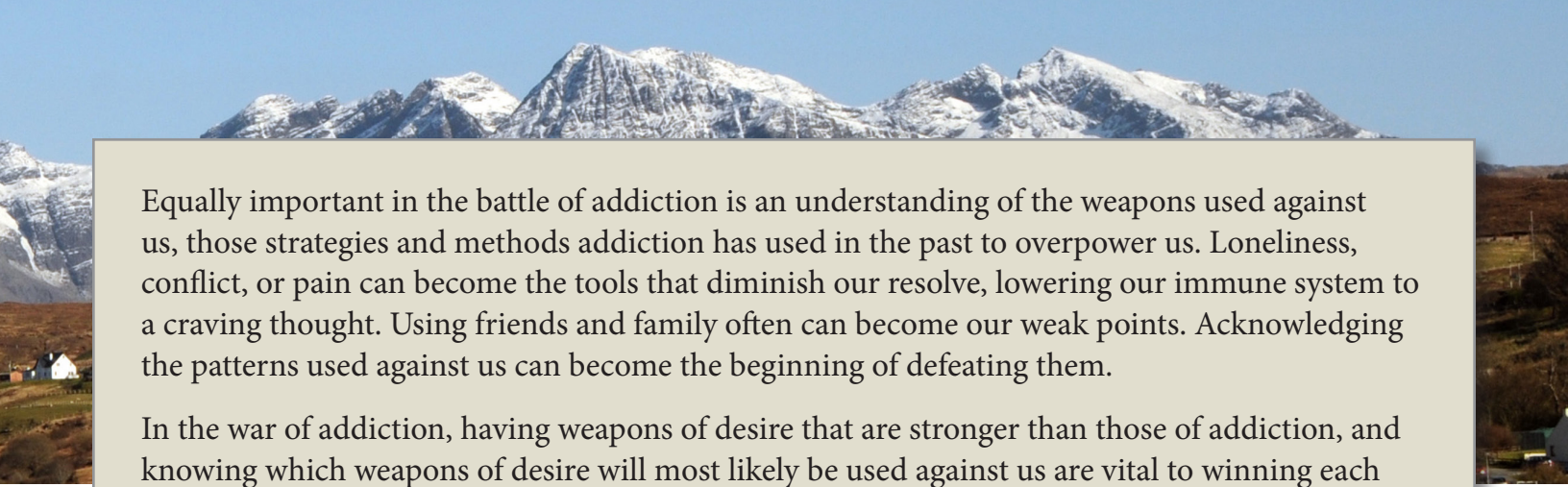
remind me of what that relationship means to me, the sound of their voice bringing me back to choosing not to use.

One of the strongest weapons in the push back of desire is a clear vision of your future self.

One of the strongest weapons in the push back of desire is a clear vision of your future self; without it, the present temptations may win out. Picturing yourself drug-free, envisioning your new identity, and the redefinition of

yourself in the future are some of the strongest of pushbacks.

In the war of addiction, having weapons of desire that are stronger than those of addiction are vital to winning each battle. A clear vision of your future is one of our greatest pushbacks in recovery.



Equally important in the battle of addiction is an understanding of the weapons used against us, those strategies and methods addiction has used in the past to overpower us. Loneliness, conflict, or pain can become the tools that diminish our resolve, lowering our immune system to a craving thought. Using friends and family often can become our weak points. Acknowledging the patterns used against us can become the beginning of defeating them.

In the war of addiction, having weapons of desire that are stronger than those of addiction, and knowing which weapons of desire will most likely be used against us are vital to winning each battle.

Conquering the Craving Thought

Any “Resolve” must include the battle of our cravings that originate from within us. Often, our cravings come in the form of repetitive thoughts that seem to grow larger and louder. They begin as a whisper, impulse, or passing fancy and quickly grow into an unyielding fixation. These obsessive thoughts will not leave us alone, demanding we obey them.

The mind speaks to us with many voices. Some are welcome and reliable, and others can be damaging and untrustworthy. Like a pleasant dream and nightmares, these voices are often reflections of our subconscious, bringing to the surface both random and automatic thoughts that may or may not be positive. Like any muscle, our minds are always working, exercising, and expressing; however, there is a deeper you, the you hearing those thoughts. Yes, our thoughts are not the only part of who we are. They are merely a reflection of the mental gymnastics we call “thinking.”

The mind speaks to us with many voices. Some are welcome and reliable, and others can be damaging and untrustworthy.

In any conversation, there is a speaker and a hearer. In overcoming cravings, consider yourself the hearer tasked with monitoring, evaluating, and scrutinizing the speaker and the content of those thoughts and suggestions. By separating ourselves from the speaker through curious observation, we empower a deeper part of who we are (the hearer of those thoughts) to evaluate and correct our thinking.

The parasite of addiction, like a puppeteer, automates many of these “craving thoughts.” These thoughts paint the addict in the worst light to ensure continued drug use. Thoughts of self-hatred and self-loathing are common, as are thoughts of suicide and hurting oneself and resigning to the hopelessness of any recovery. Addiction uses these thoughts to keep the addict using. They fuel our isolation and prevent us from seeking outside help, dampening any future hopes and dreams.



Compassionate Problem Solving

All our thoughts are a part of who we are, and should be treated with the kindness and compassion we might extend to a hurting friend or confused child in pain. Yes, we must turn

All our thoughts are a part of who we are, and should be treated with the kindness and compassion we might extend to a hurting friend or confused child in pain.

toward the speaker of our thoughts with compassion and confrontation as we might toward our hurting inner child, to heal and help in the spirit of kindness.

Consider how we might act with a wounded friend or loved one. Our compassion would lead us to ask them out for coffee or a walk in the park. We might look for an opportunity to listen and think about possible solutions and

the pain's root cause. We might ask questions that help solve issues like, "How did that make you feel?" Or, "What do you need to overcome this situation long term?" Or, "Why do you feel the need to continue this abusive relationship?" Our compassion often turns to problem-solving to relieve the pain and heartache of those we love.

Curious Observation

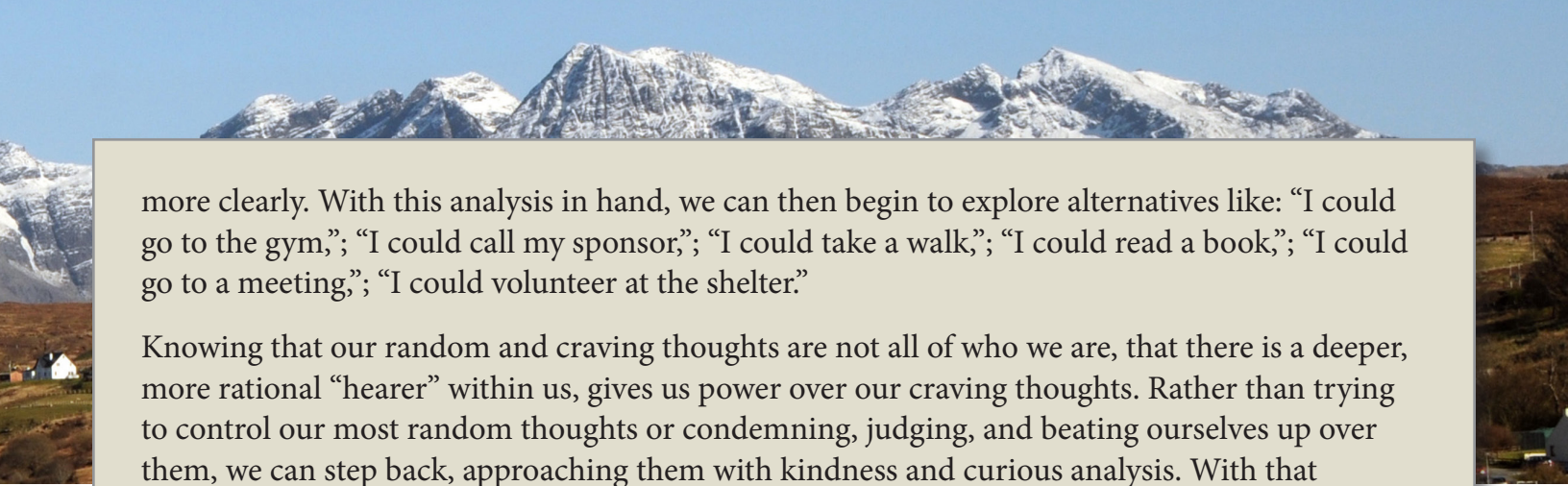
The self-discipline of trying to control our thoughts often leads to increasing the craving. Rather, accept your thoughts as they present themselves, and approach them like a kind detective might. Observing our thoughts and cravings through the lens of curiosity allows us to explore and analyze them. Through simple curious observation, we break the chains that bind us to act out our craving.

We might ask ourselves, "What happened before the craving?" A confrontation, social media or gaming, a phone call, work? Am I feeling bored, angry, sleepy, tired, frustrated, depressed, or anxious? Look for and pick apart the events and the emotions and feelings that led to the craving thoughts.

Through simple curious observation, we break the chains that bind us to act out our craving.

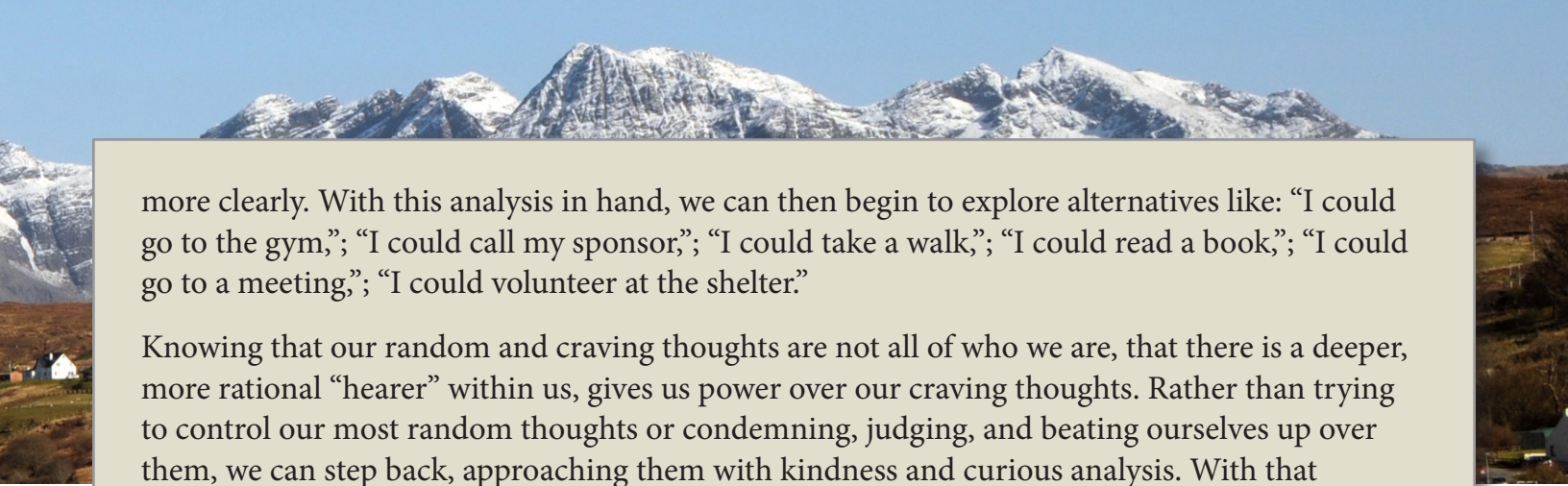
Let the detective in you discover, "If I give in to this craving, where will it lead?"; "How does it make me feel about myself?"; "How will I feel physically?"; "Will I be further in debt or might I lose my job?"; "Will things be better, the same, or worse?"; "What friendships or relationships might I lose or damage?" "Do I still enjoy this or has it lost its pleasure?"; "Am I just maintaining to avoid withdrawals?"

Simple observation and kind curiosity help us take a step back from identifying with using thoughts and feelings and begin to analyze them, think about them, and see their consequences



more clearly. With this analysis in hand, we can then begin to explore alternatives like: “I could go to the gym,”; “I could call my sponsor,”; “I could take a walk,”; “I could read a book,”; “I could go to a meeting,”; “I could volunteer at the shelter.”

Knowing that our random and craving thoughts are not all of who we are, that there is a deeper, more rational “hearer” within us, gives us power over our craving thoughts. Rather than trying to control our most random thoughts or condemning, judging, and beating ourselves up over them, we can step back, approaching them with kindness and curious analysis. With that



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Reinvent Yourself

Roberto De Jesus was born in 1965 on the island of Puerto Rico, where he was raised. Selling drugs and addiction were a part of his life at 13 years old. His network of drug traffickers propositioned him at age 25 to head north to New England and distribute for a local gang. He jumped at the opportunity and arrived in the Massachusetts and New Hampshire area. Addicted to heroin, he was arrested and charged with distribution several times, the last of which landed him in jail for a 10-year sentence, eligible for parole in five years.

In prison, he recognized the need to change and began developing a deeper spirituality, attending and speaking at prison church meetings and Bible studies. Becoming a model prisoner, he entered and completed a demanding drug and alcohol program that removed two years from his sentence. Out of prison and on parole, he chose to redefine himself, leaving his drug world behind. He became involved at a local Spanish speaking church, serving in any way he could, despite a demanding work schedule, ultimately becoming a deacon.

In 2011, Roberto was ordained to be the head pastor of Iglesia Vision Misionera of Manchester, New Hampshire. Today his church continues to grow as he and his wife, Monica, celebrate the Lord together, enjoying Roberto's children and grandchildren. You may be faced with the need to make huge changes also. Are you ready to find new passion and purpose for your future? This program is the permission to become someone new, permission to rediscover and redefine your life.



Resolve Recovery Questions

Do you have non-using friends? _____

Do you try to filter your past, bringing it into your future? _____

How have you disconnected from your using friends? _____

Do using friends and family speak well of you or lash out? _____

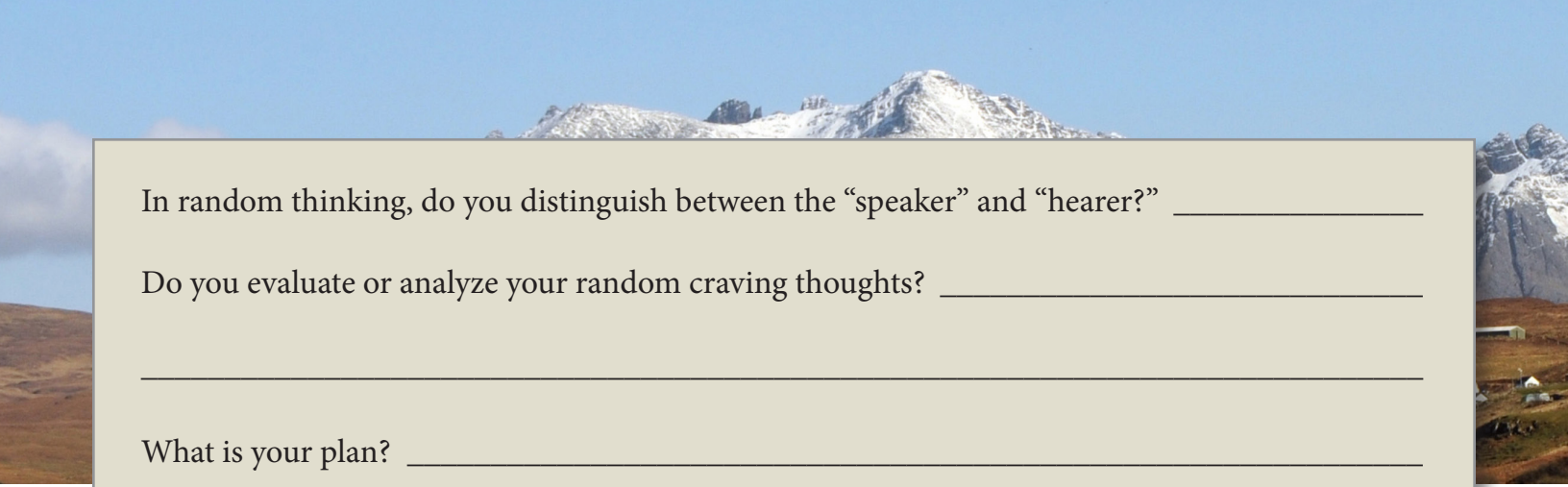
How does it concern you when those using consider you a close friend? _____

How do you underestimated the power of addiction to call you back to using? _____

What repetitive craving thoughts do you have? _____

How do you speak to your inner child—with understanding and compassion or harshly? _____

How do you confront and correct with compassion your random using thoughts? _____



In random thinking, do you distinguish between the “speaker” and “hearer?” _____

Do you evaluate or analyze your random craving thoughts? _____

What is your plan? _____

What are your pushback weapons? _____

What is your strategy for long-term recovery? _____

Who do you sponsor, and who is your sponsor? _____

What roadblocks have you put into place? _____

What is your maintenance program? _____

Who are your accountability partners? _____

Resolve Recovery Exercises

Review the following exercises and complete them the best you can.

1. My journal

Purchase a writing book or journal and transfer some of your journal notes from *Starting Over* into your new book.

Begin by writing your thoughts about this program, about the death of your addicted self, and your rebirth as **an addict who chooses not to use**. Discuss some of the *Starting Over* topics and how they made you feel.

Commit to the best of your ability to write in your journal once a day for a minimum of 10 minutes.

2. Strategies

One of the greatest keys to winning a fight is knowing you are in one. Knowing is power. No longer blindsided by the unanticipated, you are at war against your addiction and must plan strategies for long-term success.

Create strategies for those times noted below:

Strategies for times when sudden urges tempt you _____

Strategies for when your old using friends come by _____

Strategies for times of disappointment _____

Strategies for times of fear and anxiety _____

Strategies for boredom _____

Strategies for times of pain _____

3. Lists

Make a list of the following:

Roadblocks: _____

Meetings and Maintenance Programs: _____

Accountability Partners: _____

Sponsors: _____

Those I Sponsor: _____

4. Pushback weapons

Make a list of your pushback weapons and those weapons used against you. This list could include both physical objects (photo, phone, etc.) and mental images, both of the present and those of the future.

5. Thinking About Thinking

Take a quiet moment, allowing your thoughts to wander. As your mind drifts from one idea to the next, try to catch them and write down what you remember. Write the most random and obscure things that come to mind in the “Speaker” sections below, being as honest as you can.

Give each thought a number value on a scale of 1–10. Rate the “most generous or compassionate” as a 1 and the “harsh and least generous or compassionate” up to a 10.

Write a response to all your thoughts with compassion and encouragement. As we learn to instruct the “speaker” of our thoughts with kindness and compassion, the more balanced and informed “hearer” can guide our thinking in more positive directions. Try to view honesty as a positive when expressing painful and negative feelings.

Examples:

Speaker Thought: “You are such a loser for having to write down your thoughts and take this stupid program, besides you suck at it!”

Number Rating: 8

Hearer Response: “We may have screwed up in the past, but we are working on getting it right, and honestly, I do not care what you think about my writing skills.”

Speaker Thought: “This program seems to be helping.”

Number Rating: 2

Hearer Response: “I think I will tell a friend about it.”

Speaker Thought: “I am not very good at this kind of reflection thing.”

Number Rating: 4

Hearer Response: “Hang in there and do the best you can. We’ll get the hang of it.”

Speaker Thought: _____

Number Rating: _____

Hearer Response: _____

Speaker Thought: _____

Number Rating: _____

Hearer Response: _____

6. The Detective Within

Think back to your last craving. Try to recreate some of the thoughts and feelings that randomly played in your head repeatedly and write them below. _____

Like an inquisitive detective, search for what may have led to the cravings. What happened before the craving began? A confrontation, excessive social media, a phone call, work? Am I feeling bored, angry, sleepy, tired, frustrated, depressed, lonely, or anxious? _____

On a scale of 1–10, give each craving indicator a number value. Rate “least likely to have contributed to the craving” as a 1 and “most likely to have contributed to the cravings” as a 10. Write a response to all your “most likely suspects” or contributing factors.

Example:

Contributing Factor: Worked late and was exhausted afterward.

Number Rating: 6

Response: Avoid working late. When I work late, I recognize that being tired can make me want to use.

Contributing Factor: My old girlfriend/boyfriend, who is still using, called and wanted me to go out.

Number Rating: 9

Response: Recognize that loneliness is one of my triggers and reach out to a non-using friend.

Contributing Factor: _____

Number Rating: _____

Response: _____

Contributing Factor: _____

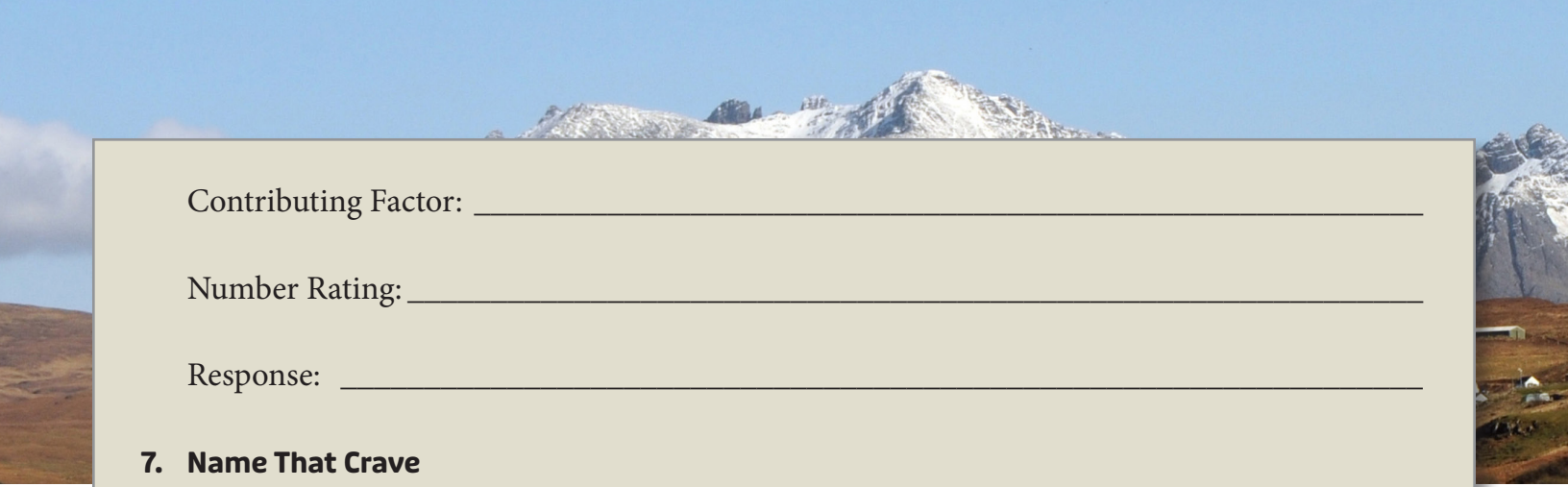
Number Rating: _____

Response: _____

Contributing Factor: _____

Number Rating: _____

Response: _____



Contributing Factor: _____

Number Rating: _____

Response: _____

7. Name That Crave

Try to pinpoint your craving by naming it. Give it a one or two-word identifier (loneliness, exhaustion, etc.). Like a detective trying to get to the root of the matter, speak to your craving with understanding and compassion as you might a child in pain or a friend in need. As the detective, analyze these cravings.

If I do what you ask, will I feel better or worse about myself? _____

How will I feel physically if I do what you ask? _____

If I do what you ask, will I be further in debt or lose my job? _____

Will things be better, the same, or worse for me if I give in to this craving? _____

Do I still enjoy this, or am I just maintaining? _____

Will I be glad or sad afterward? _____

8. Analysis and Conclusions

With curiosity, analyze these thoughts and responses as a detective might, and recognize their inevitable consequences. Draw conclusions from your analysis by seeing the consequences clearly. With that clarity, begin to explore alternatives.

Craving thought: Tired and lonely, feeling the need to use

Inevitable consequences: If I use I may not be able to stop, I could lose my job or worse

Alternative choices: I will go to a meeting or to the gym to work out

Craving thought: _____

Inevitable consequences: _____

Alternative choices: _____

Craving thought: _____

Inevitable consequences: _____

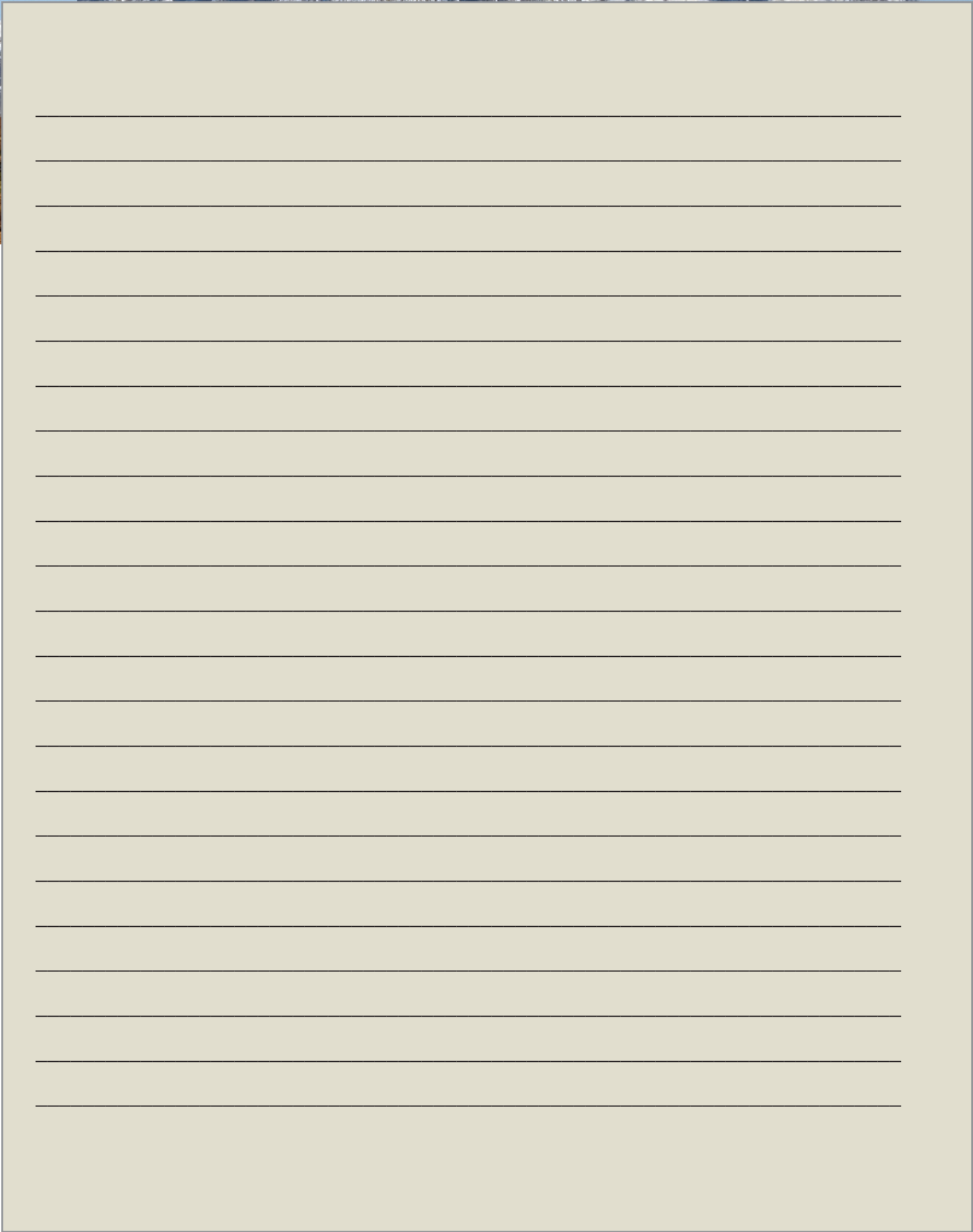
Alternative choices: _____

Craving thought: _____

Inevitable consequences: _____

Alternative choices: _____

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A large rectangular area with a light beige background and horizontal ruling lines, resembling a page of lined paper. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the area.



Conclusion

The country star Brad Paisley sings a song, “Letter to Me,” that is a favorite. He sings with passion about all the things his current older self would say if he could write a letter to his younger self who is still in high school. It is a lesson for those wilder days and a confirmation of what is truly important and valuable in life. If you could write a letter to your earlier self, to your pre-addicted self, what would you say? Would you warn yourself about certain “friends” who turned out not to be friends at all? Would you beg yourself to listen to those who you thought, “just don’t get it?” What would you say to yourself as you gradually climbed the ladder of addiction? Would you speak with compassion or with directness?

Too bad you can’t actually do that, right? You could have used that advice; it may have made the difference. You could be a very different, healthier you. Imagine it, a loving husband or wife, a family, children, a job that others would envy, and a church and community life that you are proud of. Maybe you could enjoy girls’ weekends or sporting events with sober friends and family. Do these scenarios sound familiar? Is this not in part or whole what you hope and dream for, the future that you asked God to help you recover in your prayers?

But this is just wishful thinking, science fiction that makes for a great song or story, right? It must be because the water is already “under the bridge.” I am already an addict; the damage is done. Do these negative thoughts regularly enter your mind? And are those thoughts true?

What if I told you that you did write yourself a letter. Actually, a future you, one 10 years ahead of us, wrote you a letter. It is addressed to your younger addicted, currently using self, where you are right here, right now as you are reading these lines. Reaching back through time, you hoped, and you prayed, that you would listen.

It just so happens that I have a copy of that letter.

Dear Me,

I know this future letter thing is hard to wrap your head around, but you have to because so much is at stake for me, for you. I am married now, have children who love and need me, a spouse who loves and needs me, and I need them. You (I) have a good life. I beg you now; please stop! I need you to stop because if you do not, I am not, they are not, and everything that can be will not be because you would not.

I know you feel like a failure. You are not. I know you think no one will trust you again. I trust you with my future. I know you think no one will forgive you for what you have done. I know all that you have done, and I forgive you. I give you permission to forgive yourself. I know you think no one loves you, but you are wrong. Those who love you are all around you.

Here is the thing: You can. You can beat this! You can overcome addiction. You can stop using. You can stop self-medicating. You can enjoy life again, even though you are not high. The proof that you can overcome addiction is this letter. I am calling to you from your drug-free future. You must believe me. I know you, and you can. You are not the problem; you are the problem's solution. Yes, it will be painful and heartbreaking, maybe the hardest thing you will ever do, but that is how you will know it is real. With every sorrow, you draw closer to becoming me.

All that I am or will ever be, you are deciding now. My spouse, my children, my job, my life. All are being born in every decision you are making. For our sakes, I beg you to stop. I know you better than anyone has ever known you, and I know you can do this.

Sincerely,

Me

P.S. I forgive you, I forgive you for it all.



You Are Not the Problem

You may feel like you are the problem, blaming your lack of willpower or self-discipline, a lack of education, moral character, or proper upbringing. This broken thinking is common among addicts. The problem is that drugs and alcohol are addictive. You are the problem's solution.

The truth is, your future self is calling to you now, saying, "Your new life begins here, today, at this moment." If you are high right now, commit to coming down and staying down. If you are sober, commit to today. Remember, you are not the problem; you are the solution.

With each sober sunrise, we plant the seeds of our own hope

Conclusion Recovery Questions

Introduction

Do you think *Starting Over* can offer a different approach, one that will help you become **an addict who chooses not to use**? _____

Are you recovering "from," or are you recovering "to," and what does that mean? _____

What is the first casualty in the war of addiction? _____

Where does sobriety find its purpose or meaning? _____

Poverty

Are you at the "end of your rope," ready to fight for a new future? _____

What diagnosis does your pain reveal? _____

Are you in denial? _____

Sadness

Where are you? _____

What is healthy sadness? _____

Finish this sentence: "I am _____"

What do you like about yourself? _____

Humility

Can you imagine yourself addiction free? What does that look like? _____

Would you trade appearing weak or stupid for recovery? _____

Are you humble to the desires of your future self? _____

When you look into your future, what do you see? _____

Hunger

What do you want? _____

What would your life look like without addiction? _____

Have you pursued the wants and desires of others at the expense of your own? _____

Can you live within the imbalance of not using? _____

Kindness

Do you feel only you are responsible for where you are? _____

Can you quiet your own thoughts to focus on what others are saying? _____

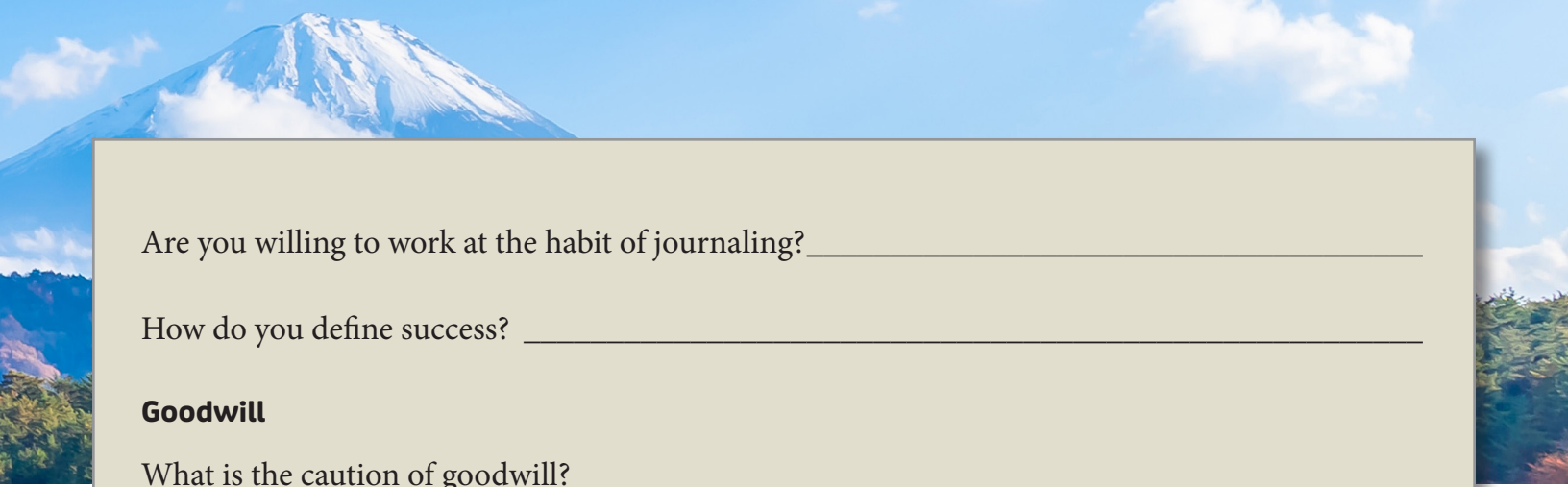
Are you afraid of how others might perceive your kindness and judge you harshly? _____

Do you plant kindness to receive it in the future? _____

Sincerity

What are you hiding in the shadows of your heart? _____

What does "living life on life's terms" mean to you? _____



Are you willing to work at the habit of journaling? _____

How do you define success? _____

Goodwill

What is the caution of goodwill? _____

What is a spiritual awakening? _____

What is your “one small thing” and when might you begin it? _____

Disconnect

What are you addicted to? _____

Are you willing to find new drug-free friends? _____

What are your bullets or explosives? _____

What is the purpose of your sobriety? _____

Resolve

Do you try to filter your past, bringing it into your future? _____

Have you underestimated the power of addiction to call you back to using? _____

Do you confront and correct with compassion your random using thoughts? _____

What is your plan? _____

Conclusion Recovery Exercise

Review the following exercise and complete it the best you can.

Our final exercise is to complete the Reinvent Yourself below using yourself as the subject. Use the examples in each key to help form your own story of reinvention. All reinvention is a process, so be sure to include hopes and dreams that may not have been realized yet.

Reinvent Yourself

Background

Starting Over is a recovery program based on the beatitudes. *Starting Over* grew out of an addiction recovery meeting called, “Hunger 4 Healing,” a 12-step drug and alcohol meeting that ran from 1998 to 2013 at the storefront church in downtown Manchester, New Hampshire called Main Street Mission.

Starting Over Meetings:

Starting Over Recovery meetings require participation from each person. All attendees talk, all attendees listen, there are no spectators.

Starting Over Recovery meetings require complete confidentiality and anonymity. What is spoken within the group stays within the group (the exception is the threat of bodily harm).

Starting Over Recovery meetings are an anonymous meeting without any requirement or condition other than wanting to become **an addict who chooses not to use**. There are no qualifications for participation or need to prove authenticity other than a willingness to contribute.

Starting Over Recovery meetings start on time, running for a specified period (generally each meeting is an hour and a half).

Starting Over Recovery meetings are in a circle; front row seating is a must for all.

Starting Over Recovery meetings share and communicate in the first person. There is no preaching or lecturing to others. Everything is kept in the “I” mode.

Starting Over Recovery meetings share on the Recovery material, reading and commenting in the round-robin style, keeping it short and to the point. Commenting on the comments of others is discouraged, and we are encouraged to stay on topic.

Starting Over Recovery meetings can be opened with a prayer or a saying, but always followed with the question answered by everyone, “Who are you, and why are you here?”

Starting Over

***Book Lease Agreement with Hope Academy, Publisher
100 Hackett Hill Rd.
Hooksett, NH 03106
603-210-2286***

BY THIS AGREEMENT made and entered into on _____ between The publisher: Hope Academy herein referred to as Lessor, and _____, herein referred to as Lessee. The Lessor, agrees to lease the book *Starting Over* and grants participation in the recovery program *Starting Over*. The Lessee commits to acting in good faith by participation in all sessions, homework, and requirements to successful completion.

Lessee acknowledges:

The lessor agrees to allow use of the book *Starting Over* until successful completion as outlined below at which time the book will become the property of the lessee.

Lessee agrees and promises to complete a minimum one chapter per week, including but not limited to, recovery questions, exercises, and journaling in the space provided along with writing in the book and completing all requirements.

Lessee agrees to share at the weekly meetings on each chapter and its impact.

Lessee agrees to facilitate in part or in whole, a minimum of two to three meetings, noting them in the attached Book Lease Agreement Schedule.

Lessee agrees to maintain the attached Book Lease Agreement Schedule, making entries of progress on a weekly basis and obtain signatures from meeting facilitator demonstrating progress until the schedule is completed.

Both lessor and lessee agree that after all chapters are completed and signed by the meeting facilitator in the Book Lease Agreement Schedule, the book, *Starting Over* becomes the personal property of the lessee.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF,

Lessor

Lessee

Starting Over

Book Lease Agreement Schedule

Date and Signature Required

- 1: Introduction: Pages 1-20 _____
Including Exercise
- 2: Poverty Key: Pages 23-40 _____
Including Questions and Exercises
- 3: Sadness Key: Pages 41-56 _____
Including Questions and Exercises
- 4: Humility Key: Pages 59-74 _____
Including Questions and Exercises
- 5: Hunger Key: Pages 75-90 _____
Including Questions and Exercises
- 6: Kindness Key: Pages 93-106 _____
Including Questions and Exercises
- 7: Sincerity Key: Pages 107-120 _____
Including Questions and Exercises
- 8: Goodwill Key: Pages 121-138 _____
Including Questions and Exercises
- 9: Disconnect Key: Pages 141-154 _____
Including Questions and Exercises
- 10: Resolve Key: Pages 155-176 _____
Including Questions and Exercises
- 11: Conclusion: Pages 177-182 _____
Including Questions and Exercises
- Facilitated Meeting On _____
- Facilitated Meeting On _____
- Facilitated Meeting On _____

Starting Over Student Evaluation

Please respond to the following questions by circling one number (1 lowest or poorest to 10 highest or best) for each question. There is a separate sheet for narrative comment which should be used to explain a lowest score and/or highest score if you have any criticism or suggestions for improvement.

Your views and feedback are very important to help improve the program.

1. Overall, my satisfaction with *Starting Over* was...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. The benefit to me personally is...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. The relevance of *Starting Over* to my current situation is...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. The level of difficulty of *Starting Over* was...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. The usefulness of the book and materials was...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. The usefulness of content and space to write was...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. Overall, the quality of discussions and dialogue was...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. Participation and interactions (have questions answered, share, and experience) were...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. The time devoted to the exercises and homework was...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. The time devoted to each session or class was...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11. Overall, my satisfaction with the administration was...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. Overall, my satisfaction with each session was...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

13. The amount of time during the week to do the homework was...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14. The usefulness of *Starting Over* was...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

15. Compared to other programs, *Starting Over* was...

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please make any comments/suggestions in the spaces below. Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary. Please explain any “1” and “10” responses.

Comments on the 9 *Keys of Starting Over*. Feel free to use your book and material.

My favorite key was _____

My least relevant key was _____

My most relevant key was _____

My easiest key was _____

My hardest key was _____

Write down what you remember and what stood out to you about the program.

The introduction _____

The Poverty Key _____

The Sadness Key _____

The Humility Key _____

The Hunger Key _____

The Kindness Key _____

The Sincerity Key _____

The Goodwill Key _____

The Disconnect Key _____

The Resolve Key _____

The Conclusion _____

Is there something you wish *Starting Over* would have covered or covered more completely? If so, what is that?

What did you dislike about *Starting Over*? _____

Would you tell a friend or inmate about *Starting Over*? _____

What did you most enjoy about *Starting Over*? _____

Would you take *Starting Over* again? _____

What would you like to see more of in the next *Starting Over* program? _____

What would you like to see less of in the next *Starting Over* program? _____

What was the hardest part of your *Starting Over* program? _____

How do you feel about the homework? _____

Are you interested in facilitating *Starting Over* meetings in the future? _____

How did *Starting Over* meet or exceed your expectations? _____

How would you improve the *Starting Over* program? _____

How was *Starting Over* different than other programs you have attended? _____

How do you feel more prepared to meet the challenges of a sober life? _____

How do you feel different than when you started? _____

In what way do you feel as if you could “Start Over?” _____

Please use the space below to address your facilitator directly with any thoughts, comments, or impressions you feel appropriate.
