

Service Outreach and Recovery  
(SOAR)

Education and Skills for Recovery  
(ESR)  
A 36-Session Curriculum

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# Education and Skills for Recovery Group Curriculum

## (A 36-Session Curriculum)

### Curriculum Summary

This is a 36 session curriculum delivered over 12 weeks at 3x/week. The titles of the sessions are listed below.

1. Introduction (Overview, introduction, group rules) and Learning to Listen
2. Structure
3. Addictive behavior
4. Introduction to triggers
5. Identifying triggers
6. Thought-craving-use
7. Illness
8. HIV/AIDS Prevention; Part I (Immune system, How HIV is transmitted)
9. HIV/AIDS Prevention; Part II (CDC AIDS definition, Condom use, AIDS quiz)
10. Frostbite
11. Forgiving Yourself
12. Dealing with feelings
13. D.H.A.L.T.
14. Managing Anger
15. Dealing with Depression
16. Emotions and Change: A Different Strategy

17. Guilt and Shame
18. Alcohol- The Legal Drug
19. Homelessness
20. Making New Friends
21. Making Non-Drug Using Friends
22. When Other Family Members Use
23. Recognizing Stress
24. Self –Esteem
25. Taking Care of Yourself
26. Helping Others, Helping Ourselves
27. Exercise
28. Nutrition
29. Roadblocks to Getting Help: Isolation and Honesty
30. Boredom
31. Trust
32. Truthfulness
33. Managing Money
34. Acceptance and Courage
35. Holidays and Recovery (best used before Holidays)
36. Saying Goodbye ... The tough part

## Introduction to the Education and Skills for Recovery Group

### 1. Orientation

#### 1a. Getting Started

#### **Welcome to the Education for Skills and Recovery Group.**

**This is a 36-session, 3-times-a-week group for people interested in learning ways that they can control or stop their drug or alcohol use. During the next 12 weeks you will learn ways to help you with problems related to drug use. You will learn skills on how to deal with the, "People, Places and Things" that make it hard to stop using or that draw you back to using. Each group session deals with a specific topic. For example one session will teach you ways to control cravings for drugs, other sessions will address relationships, money management and emotions. Many drug users who have participated in groups like these have told us that the groups have helped in them in their recovery. These groups should prove valuable and enjoyable to you.**

## Ground Rules

These rules are intended to: (1) ensure a safe place, (2) show mutual respect for other group members, and (3) cut down on distractions. These are the same rules that you learned in the Service Outreach and Recovery groups.

1. I agree to arrive on time for each session, as group will begin promptly.
2. I agree that all matters discussed during sessions and the identity of all group members are absolutely confidential and not to be shared with non-members.
3. I will announce all unavoidable absences to the group one day prior to the absence.
4. I will phone the group project office to leave a message if I have an unplanned "last minute" absence or if I will arrive late to the group.
5. I understand that graphic stories of drug or alcohol use will not be allowed.
6. I agree not to become involved romantically or sexually with other group members while the groups are going on.
7. I understand that it is not advisable to be involved in any business transactions with other group members.
8. I will not use drugs on the site premises.
9. I understand that no weapons can be brought to the site.
10. I understand that no threats or fights are allowed in the site.
11. I understand that no commercial transactions with other group members are allowed on/off the site.
12. I will not attend the group if I am intoxicated or high.
13. I agree to talk one at a time.
14. I understand that sleeping or appearing asleep is not allowed.

You will receive an incentive for participating.

(Instruction for counselor: Explain the incentive structure for group participation)

Any questions?

Member introductions/Icebreaker. (INSERT)

## 1b. Learning to Listen

**When people come to this group, it is often the first time they have participated in a group therapy situation. While there is a lot to gain by being in a group, it takes some time getting used to. One big difference between individual counseling sessions and group sessions is that in groups, clients have to share their talking time with others.**

**In group you hear about other people's thoughts and feelings, the way they cope with the hardship of addiction, and their progress. It is a new valuable experience to share thoughts and feelings with others in a group, hear their reactions and listen to their experiences. The group gives you the opportunity to listen to others, and to learn from their struggles.**

**One of the things to learn about group, though, is that listening to others is a skill to be learned, like learning to ride a bike. Don't expect yourself to know exactly how to listen at first...it takes time, patience and help from others who have been in the group longer. Once you get the hang of it however, you will find that you can say what you want to say and not miss out on what others are saying in the group. Give yourself time to learn... it's a new skill.**

**Here are some of the reasons people find it hard to listen when they are in a group setting:**

- 1. They feel a strong need to say something and worry that they will forget what they have to say.**
- 2. Another member of the group is talking about an experience that reminds them of their own pain, leading them to "tune out".**
- 3. Someone else is upset or expresses anger.**
- 4. People who are still using drugs or are in the early stages of recovery are often agitated, tired, or have difficulty concentrating and paying attention. This too can have an impact on their ability to listen.**

**1) Can you identify moments in a group in which you had difficulty listening?**

**2) What did you find hard about listening at these times?**

**3) What can you do in group to make it easier to listen?**

**4) Did you hear anything in a group that you found helpful for you?**

**The other difficulty people encounter in group is that sometimes they find it hard to talk. People think that what they have to say is not important, that others in the group will not understand them or laugh at them. However, when people do talk in group they usually find that other group members are supportive and understanding.**

**Describe a time in a group when you had difficulty talking about what you were thinking.**

## 2. Structure

### 1. How do you mend a broken leg?

When you break a leg, the treatment consists of setting the bone and putting a hard cast over it. The cast provides a protective structure around the injured leg which allows the body to mend itself. The cast doesn't "cure" the broken bone, the body naturally repairs itself. The cast simply provides a structure within the body is given the opportunity to bring the leg's condition back to normal.

### 2. What does this have to do with drug use?

Regular use of heroin, cocaine/crack, other drugs and alcohol produces changes in the brain's functioning which impair clear, rational thinking. Use of these drugs damages the brain's ability to work as it was designed. In order to reestablish the brain's ability to function normally, it is necessary to provide an opportunity for the brain to return to normal.

### 3. How do you mend a "broken" brain?

The key to providing protection for your brain is to establish a structure in your life which will make it impossible for you to have the opportunity to use drugs. This structure sometimes needs to be physical and disruptive to normal living. It may mean going to a hospital for detoxification or to a treatment program. Another way of providing structure is to carefully plan life one day at a time around the structure of a group program (like this one), and to start or continue non-drug using activities in your life.

### 4. Is it really necessary?

Absolutely. Drug and alcohol users develop lives that are totally out of control. To get back under control it is necessary to follow a carefully planned routine while the brain "heals." After some time has passed a more natural structuring of time will begin to occur. Initially, however, following the planned structure is as necessary to drug recovery as a cast is to a broken leg.

### 5. One day at a time -- What does it mean?

One day at a time means building a stretch of sobriety day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute. Scheduling is a tool for putting together a stretch of time. A schedule is a plan you make for yourself. It can be detailed or you can schedule large blocks of time. It should reflect what you actually will do; not what you think you ought to do. You cannot plan when you are in a crisis, so it is important to have a plan before a crisis happens. You will need to schedule recreation and rest as well as work (in or out of home)



**and appointments. Scheduling just means planning your behavior ahead of time (using your rational brain) to leave less room for impulsive, addicted behavior. It is one way to make sure you are operating from your rational part of your brain. The first step in trying to give up being an addict/alcoholic, is not acting like one.**

#### **6. What if I am not an organized person?**

**Learn to be. You just need to write down your daily schedule; schedules that are in your head are too easily revised. Schedules can be changed if necessary; you are not locking yourself into the schedule. The idea is to schedule safe, healthy days and, if you make changes, those changes should also be to non-addict, non-triggering activities. If you write it down your schedule and then follow it, you will be doing what you *should* be doing instead of what you *feel like* doing. This is a necessary first step in changing your life.**

### 3. Addict and/or Alcoholic Behavior

**Some behavior patterns are established during addiction which are completely associated with drug and/or alcohol use. The association between these behaviors and substance use is very important. Sometimes the behaviors ONLY occur when people are using or moving toward using or drinking. These behaviors are called alcoholic/addict behaviors. Learning to recognize when one or more of these begins happening will help you know when are moving toward relapse.**

**Which of these behaviors do you think are related to your drug/alcohol use?**

- 1)  **Lying**
- 2)  **Stealing**
- 3)  **Being irresponsible (not meeting family, work or other commitments)**
- 4)  **Being unreliable (late for appointments, breaking promises, etc.)**
- 5)  **Housekeeping gets sloppy**
- 6)  **Losing interest in things (recreational activities, family life, socializing, etc. )**
- 7)  **Being careless about health and grooming (messy appearance, wearing "using clothes", stopping exercise, poor-diet, etc.)**
- 8)  **Isolating (staying by yourself much of the time)**
- 9)  **Behaving impulsively (without thinking)**
- 10)  **Changing work habits (working more, less, not at all new job, change in hours, etc.)**

- 11) \_\_\_\_\_ **Using other drugs, alcohol, pills, joints, street methadone, or prescribed medication**
- 12) \_\_\_\_\_ **Being obsessive**
- 13) \_\_\_\_\_ **Stopping prescribed medication (HIV medicine, anti-depressants, anti-seizures, anti-psychotics, etc.)**
- 14) \_\_\_\_\_ **Behaving compulsively (too much "working", too much food, too much sex, etc.)**
- 15) \_\_\_\_\_ **Not attending NA, AA, 12 step meetings, or some support group**
- 16) \_\_\_\_\_ **Missing or being late for group or individual sessions**

## 4. Triggers

**Triggers are people, places, objects, feelings, and times which cause cravings. For example, if every Friday night someone cashes a paycheck, goes out with friends, and uses some heroin (or any other drug), the triggers would be:**

- \_ Friday night**
- \_ after work**
- \_ money**
- \_ friends who use**
- \_ the bar, club or party**

**Your addicted brain associates the triggers with alcohol/drug use. As a result of constant triggering and using, one trigger can eventually make your brain feel as if you really wanted to use. These feelings cause powerful cravings.**

**An important part of this program involves:**

**1. identifying triggers**

**(people, places, activities, things, situations, thoughts, emotional states or feelings)**

**2. preventing exposure to triggers whenever possible (for example, not handling large amounts of cash).**

**3. dealing with triggers in a different way (for example, scheduling exercise and a twelve-step meeting for Friday).**

**Remember, triggers will affect your brain and cause cravings even though you are using less or have decided to stop your alcohol/drug use. Your intentions to change your alcohol/drug use must therefore translate into behavior changes which steer you clear of possible triggers.**

**THE GUN IS LOADED WITH CRAVINGS**

**TAKE YOUR FINGER OFF THE TRIGGER**

- 1) What are some of the strongest triggers for you?**
  
- 2) List some activities or situations during which you would not drink or use drugs:**
  
- 3) List people you could be with and not drink or use drugs:**
  
- 4) I thought about drinking or using when I felt:**
  
- 5) I was triggered to drink or use when I felt:**
  
- 6) What particular triggers might be a problem today?**
  
- 7) What could you do to avoid them?**

## 5. Identifying Triggers

One important way to protect yourself from using when you don't mean to is to work very hard at identifying what puts you at risk of using drugs. Those things that put you in danger of relapsing one more time are called "triggers."

Triggers can be thoughts, feelings, situations, people, objects, or your own behavior. What all triggers have in common is that they are associated for you with using drugs.

One easy way to categorize triggers is those that are produced inside you (internal triggers), and those that are in the world around you (external triggers). Both are extremely dangerous and need to be avoided. Listed below are some examples of each.

### Internal Trigger (Feelings, Thoughts and Behaviors)

*Feelings:*

<input type="checkbox"/> angry	<input type="checkbox"/> ashamed	<input type="checkbox"/> confident
<input type="checkbox"/> guilty	<input type="checkbox"/> tired	<input type="checkbox"/> embarrassed
<input type="checkbox"/> sad	<input type="checkbox"/> anxious	<input type="checkbox"/> excited
<input type="checkbox"/> afraid	<input type="checkbox"/> insecure	<input type="checkbox"/> frustrated
<input type="checkbox"/> lonely	<input type="checkbox"/> jealous	<input type="checkbox"/> nervous
<input type="checkbox"/> happy	<input type="checkbox"/> abandoned	<input type="checkbox"/> pressured
<input type="checkbox"/> bored	<input type="checkbox"/> depressed	<input type="checkbox"/> tired

### *Thoughts:*

"Now that I'm going to stop using, let me use one last time"  
 "I'm going to use just \$5"  
 "I think I can use a little and then stop....."  
 "I have a limited time to go and buy drugs from the dealer, but if I get off here and ....")

### *Behaviors:*

social isolation  
 acting impulsively  
 not being truthful  
 being unreliable  
 getting overextended

## 6. Trigger-Thought-Craving-Use

### The Losing Argument

If you decide to stop using and end up moving toward drugs, your brain makes it alright by using a process we call "relapse justification". Thoughts about drug use start an argument inside your head; your rational self versus your addiction. You feel as though you are in a fight and must come up with many reasons to stay clean. Your addiction is really just looking for an excuse, a "relapse justification". The argument inside you is part of a series of events leading to drug use. How often in the past has your addiction lost this argument once it has started? What happened?

### Thoughts Become Cravings

Craving does not always occur in a straightforward, easily recognized form. Often the thought of using drugs passes through your head with little or no effect. It takes effort to stop a thought about using. However, allowing yourself to continue thinking about drugs and drug use is choosing to begin a relapse. The further the thoughts are allowed to go, the more likely you are to relapse.

### The "Automatic" Process

During addiction, drug use thoughts, cravings and use all seem to run together. However, the usual sequence goes like this:

TRIGGER --~> THOUGHT ----> CRAVING -----> USE

### Thought-Stopping

The key to success in dealing with this process is to not let it get started. Stopping the thought when it first begins prevents it from building into an overpowering craving. It is important to do it as soon as you recognize the thoughts occurring.

Identifying External Triggers (People, Places and Things/Situations)

*People:* \_\_\_ people who make me angry/ashamed/sad/etc.

\_\_\_ other drug users

\_\_\_ my loved one

\_\_\_ my mother/father/kid/other relative

\_\_\_ my coworker/boss

\_\_\_ my friend/acquaintance/being with particular people

*Places:*

\_\_\_ in the park

\_\_\_ at the street corner/dealer's residence

\_\_\_ back of an alley/an abandoned building

\_\_\_ at the movies

\_\_\_ in back of the school yard

\_\_\_ in the bathroom

\_\_\_ social club/parties/concerts

\_\_\_ bus stop/terminal or in/around the subway

\_\_\_ home alone/with friends

\_\_\_ friend's/acquaintance's home

\_\_\_ sport event/a game/festive event

*Things/Situations:*

\_\_\_ payday/paycheck

\_\_\_ before/after/during sexual activities or a date

\_\_\_ birthdays/festive occasions

\_\_\_ breakups/reunions – money

What strategies can you think of to avoid or change your triggers?

a)

b) \_\_\_

c) \_\_\_



RELAXATION- Feelings of hollowness, heaviness, and cramping in the stomach are cravings. These can often be relieved by breathing in deeply (filling lungs with air) and breathing out very slowly. Do this three times. You should be able to feel the tightness leaving your body. Repeat this whenever the feelings returns. Try this now. How do you **feel?**

CALL SOMEONE-Talking to another person provides an outlet for your feelings and allows you to hear your own thinking process. Have phone numbers of supportive, available people with you always so you can use them when you need them.

Who could you call?

ALLOWING THE THOUGHTS TO DEVELOP INTO CRAVINGS IS  
MAKING A CHOICE TO REMAIN AN ADDICT/ALCOHOLIC.

## 7. Illness

**Getting sick is a set-up for using when we don't want to.**

**"How can that be? It's not my fault that I get sick. I don't have control over getting the flu or getting colds."**

**There are a number of ways that people can be sick. Some of them are:**

- 1. Getting a cold, the flu, or some other infection.**
  - 2. Having a serious wound, and feeling soreness and swelling keeps you in bed.**
  - 3. Having a serious dental work done.**
  - 4. Having surgery.**
  - 5. Experiencing severe premenstrual cramping.**
  - 6. Having respiratory difficulties (asthma, for instance).**
  - 7. Having symptoms such as headaches, cold sweats, dizziness, irregular heart beats, etc.**
  - 8. Having symptoms such as feeling tired, weak, fatigued, run down, etc.**
  - 9. Having a wound that became infected (wound became red, or swollen, shows pus or red streaks, or feels more sore for instance).**
  - 10. Having symptoms from high blood pressure, low blood pressure, diabetes, or other chronic problems.**
- 
- 1. When was the last time you got sick?**
  
  - 2. What did you have?**
  
  - 3. Did you see a doctor?**

**Any of these situations and others make you weaker than normal. When you are physically weaker you also have less mental health energy. Changing your drug use requires a good deal of mental energy.**

**What are some of the things that happen when you are ill and have no energy?**

- \_\_\_ 1. You can't get out of the house.
  - \_\_\_ 2. You feel depressed.
  - \_\_\_ 3. You can't eat right.
  - \_\_\_ 4. You may have problems sleeping.
  - \_\_\_ 5. You don't feel well enough to take care of \_\_\_\_\_
- 
- 

**As result of the above, many people report that when they are sick**

- \_\_\_ 1. It is difficult to cope with hours or days of idle time.
- \_\_\_ 2. The lack of structure in your day is a big trigger to use.
- \_\_\_ 3. Being in bed and not feeling well makes you think of "after using time."
- \_\_\_ 4. Being alone for long periods of time is a big trigger to use.

**In order to keep all the negative effects of illness from interfering with your ability to change your life, it is important to allow yourself as little "sick time" as possible. If you push to make life style changes as soon as possible after an illness, you will feel stronger and better able to make the changes you want in your life.**

## 8. HIV/AIDS Information Review (Part I)

### **What Is HIV?**

HIV stands for Human Immunodeficiency Virus - the virus which leads to AIDS in many people.

### **What is the Immune System?**

Your body usually protects you from getting sick. There are always harmful germs around you, including viruses. Your skin is part of the immune system; it provides a barrier against germs entering your body. Another part of your immune system is your blood- made up of red cells and white cells. The white cells help protect you from disease. When a germ invades your body, your white blood cells go to work to destroy it.

### **Why does HIV make people sick?**

One type of white cell, called a CD4-T cell, is the target of HIV. When HIV gets into the blood, it seeks out, attaches to, and then destroys CD4-T cells. As CD4-T cells die, the immune system grows weaker, and the body can't fight off infections and diseases.

HIV can also target and attach to some other body cells (besides CD4-T cells) and cause infection in different parts of the body.

### **Where in the body is HIV found?**

HIV lives only in human body fluids. HIV is found in the greatest amounts in these body fluids:

- blood
- semen and pre-cum
- fluid from a woman's vagina and/or cervix
- breast milk
- fluid around the brain, joints, lungs, heart, and amniotic fluid

Other body fluids do not spread HIV to others. These fluids are:

- saliva ("dry kissing," sneezing, coughing, spitting)
- tears
- sweat
- urine
- feces

## **How is HIV transmitted?**

For any virus to spread, certain steps must happen:

1. Someone or something must carry (or have) the virus.
2. The virus needs a way to exit (leave) the body. With HIV, infected body fluids can exit and be passed to others in these ways:

- \*during sex (anal, oral, vaginal intercourse, and sharing “sex toys”)

- \* sharing injection drug works (needle, barrel, plunger, cooker, cotton/filter, water glass)

- \* from mother to baby in the womb, during birth, or during breast feeding

- \* infected blood or body fluids may infect health workers in accidental needle sticks or "splashes"

- \* through infected blood or body parts donated to others

- \* needles used for body piercing, tattooing, injecting steroids, or removing unwanted hair from a person infected with HIV, and then reused on someone else (without sterilizing)

3. The virus needs a way to enter another person's blood. Body fluids from a person infected with HIV can enter another's blood in the ways listed under #2 above.

4. Every person is susceptible to get infected if the person does something to put him/herself at risk.

## **What are the signs and symptoms of HIV?**

### **First signs**

When people first get HIV into their blood, they may or may not have symptoms. If they do, it usually happens 2-6 weeks after being infected with HIV: this is called the "Window Period". Symptoms often look like mononucleosis (mono): fever, swollen glands, poor appetite, feeling tired). Some people think they have the flu. After these symptoms go away, people will continue to have HIV in their blood and can give it to others, even if they don't have any other symptoms for a long time.

Some other health factors seem to affect whether or not a person has symptoms. These "co-factors" seem to include:

- \* Getting other infections; it's harder for the body to fight HIV if it has to fight other infections too.
- \* Drug use; using drugs or alcohol puts more stress on the body and makes it harder to fight HIV.
- \* Age; being very young or very old makes it harder to fight HIV.
- \* Poor health practices; smoking, drinking alcohol, eating badly, stress, sleeping not regularly, etc. make it harder to fight HIV.
- \* New contact with HIV; coming into contact with someone else's HIV may weaken the body.

When people have HIV, they may develop these symptoms:

- \* Swollen lymph nodes (painless)
  
- \* Oral thrush-white spots on the tongue or in the mouth; can be very severe and very painful
  
- \* Shingles- painful skin condition
  
- \* Frequent fevers

Women with HIV may also develop:

- \* Vaginal yeast infections- may cause much itching and burning and be difficult to treat
- \* Abnormal Pap smears
- \* Infections of sex organs

## 9. HIV/AIDS Information Review (Part II)

### When does a person have AIDS?

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) defines a person with AIDS as someone who either:

1) Is infected with HIV and has a CD4-T count below 200/mm<sup>3</sup> (people talk about their "T cell" count)

OR

2) Is infected with HIV and has one or more special diseases or conditions, called "AIDS indicator conditions" which are:

\* Wasting syndrome, which includes losing a lot of weight, having diarrhea, and having fevers

\* Having brain disease (dementia) which causes behavior changes, memory loss, problems with balance, etc.

\* Having unusual infections rarely seen in healthy people. Four different types of germs cause different kinds of infections:

1) Parasites - cause of PCP, a kind of severe pneumonia. This is the most common AIDS infection.

2) Viruses - cause of CMV (cytomegalovirus) infection and herpes infection (shingles) and others.

3) Fungi - cause of yeast infections (candida), cryptococcus neoormans, and histoplasmosis.

4) Bacteria - cause of salmonella infections (diarrhea) and tuberculosis (TB).

\* Having certain cancers- one of these is Kaposi's sarcoma. One other specific cancer for women is invasive cervical cancer.

### How medical care can help

Everyone who has HIV, with or without symptoms, should get a complete medical exam as soon as possible and have regular check-ups after that. Each person needs a special care plan. Doctors and clinics can help with

+ Living healthfully, meaning eating healthy, quitting smoking, quitting alcohol use, quitting drug use, sleeping regularly, etc.

+ Tests and treatments for infections and diseases + CD4-T cell testing (the higher the better)

+ New medicines and treatments + Viral load (the lower the better)

## USING CONDOMS

1. Use FDA-approved latex condoms since condoms made of animal membranes (sometimes called "natural") may be more likely to allow HIV to pass through.
2. Use only water-soluble lubricants such as KY jelly. Do not use oil-based lubricants or saliva. Oil-based lubricants, such as cooking oil or petroleum jelly, can damage the condom.
3. Never use outdated condoms. Always check the expiration date on the package.
4. Always store condoms in a cool, dry place. Heat can damage a condom.
5. Never use a condom more than once.
6. The correct way to use a condom is to remove it from the package and roll it down over the erect penis, leaving a space at the tip to catch the semen. Apply some spermicide in the tip. Don't unroll the condom before putting it on.
7. Use condom from start to finish. Don't wait until you're ready for intercourse to put on the condom. Withdraw the penis while it is still erect. If the penis goes soft while still inside a partner, the protection can be lost.
8. When removing a condom, make sure you don't spill any of the semen. Also make sure you don't allow any semen to come in contact with any cuts or sores.
9. Dispose of used condoms by flushing them down a toilet or putting them in the trash.



## HIV/AIDS QUIZ

- 1) How could you protect yourself from getting/giving HIV through needles?
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
  - d)
- 2) How could you protect yourself from getting/giving HIV through sex?
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
  - d)
- 3) How could you prevent yourself and your partner from getting/giving HIV?
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
  - d)
- 4) How could you prevent a baby from being born with HIV?
  - a)
  - b)
  - c)
  - d)

## 10. Frostbite

Being addicted to drugs/alcohol can have an effect on your emotions. For many people, feelings become numbed. In many ways, it is similar to what happens when a person is out in the extreme cold for a long time. Gradually, they lose the ability to feel hot or cold or anything. When they come in from the cold, the physical sensations slowly come back, but it is extremely painful.

In a similar way, people who have been "out there" using drugs and alcohol for a long time can slowly lose their ability to feel deep emotions like sadness, joy, or fear. In addition, feelings they do have can be confusing, because drugs have had such a powerful effect on their emotions. As a result, they are not sure whether the feeling was brought about by the cocaine or whether another experience made them feel a certain way.

In recovery, people start to have feelings that they may not have had for a long time. Furthermore, the feelings that occur are less confused, and the person begins to know what they are feeling and why they may feel that way. Some of the feelings may be pleasant, but others are quite painful.

As with recovery from a frostbite, when you become more sensitive and able to feel things again, you do experience some pain. It can be quite uncomfortable to start feeling the pain that has been "numbed out" by drugs. However those feelings are a necessary part of recovery.

As with many of the behaviors in your life that you are changing, the way you deal with these emotions as they begin to surface may need to change from the way you had dealt with them in the past.

**IT IS AS IF EMOTIONS YOU HAD DURING THE TIME OF ADDICTION WERE FROZEN. DURING RECOVERY THESE FEELINGS RETURN, JUST LIKE THE FROZEN FINGERS THAT ARE BEING DEFROSTED, AND THIS CAN BE PAINFUL. THE PAIN COMES AS PART OF THE HEALING PROCESS. GIVE IT TIME.**

- 1) Have you noticed uncomfortable feelings emerging in recovery?
- 2) What steps can you take to allow your feelings to "defrost" without relapsing?
- 3) Try role-playing situations related to this topic.

## 11. Forgiving Yourself

**When people think about forgiving someone, they often think about forgiving a person who has hurt them or deceived them. For example, a parent who did not keep a promise, or a friend who may have betrayed you, may be someone you would consider forgiving. Although it may sometimes be a challenge to forgive someone who has caused you pain, forgiving makes it possible to soothe that pain and move on.**

**A big part of recovery that is often neglected, is learning to forgive yourself. As part of their addiction, people may have treated themselves or others quite badly. Many people find it difficult to forgive themselves for things they have done that were caused by their drug or alcohol use. The feelings of shame and guilt can be so powerful that a person stays away from getting help for their drug use.... because they believe they don't deserve it!**

**Many feelings are blocked when you use drugs continuously, and feelings of guilt and remorse about the past are likely to come up when you try to quit. When feelings like these begin to re-appear, it is important to recognize and discuss them. Feeling unworthy and ashamed may act as an internal trigger. By beginning the process of forgiving yourself, these feelings of hurt, shame, or anger can eventually go away. By forgiving yourself you will be making a positive step towards recovery.**

**You may want to begin with one or two past behaviors for which you would like to forgive yourself. It may take some time, but this is the first step.**

**1. Identify two past behaviors about which you feel guilty.**

**a)**

**b)**

**2. I feel guilty about these behaviors because:**

**a.**

**b.**

**3. Have these feelings ever been a trigger?   \_\_\_YES       \_\_\_NO**

**4. Write two ways you can think about of forgiving yourself:**

**a)**

**b)**

## 12. Dealing With Feelings

### Recognizing Feelings

It is important to know more about yourself. Learning how you feel is one way you begin to know more about yourself. It is important to remember:

- 1) Feelings are neither good or bad - they just ARE.
- 2) You can control what you think and what you do - but you cannot control how you feel.
- 3) It is not ALWAYS possible to be in an adult frame of mind, or to act as an adult in every situation. For example, a person may sometimes act foolish, or joke around, or say something that is not always "grown up."

Can you remember a powerful feeling (good or bad) you have had recently?

When you feel guilty, afraid, anxious, or have any other negative feeling, do you:

- \_\_\_ 1) blame someone or something else for making you feel that way?
- \_\_\_ 2) pretend you don't really feel that way?
- \_\_\_ 3) recognize how you feel and try to accept that you are feeling that way?

### Talking about feelings

When you are actively using, it is very difficult to talk, especially about feelings, with anybody because of the guilt and shameful feelings you have had for a long time. If you get in a conversation about feelings with anybody you may probably lie, cheat, deceive and connive.

**It is important to be able to discuss how you feel without falling back into old arguments and negative ways of talking. Ask yourself if you are doing any of the following when you try to talk with other people:**

- 1) Are you assuming what someone else meant when you aren't really sure?**

**If you are not certain whether a remark was meant to be positive or negative, check it out.**

- 2) Are you hinting?**

**Ask openly for what you want or need, and try to accept the fact that your request may or may not be granted.**

- 3) Are you giving double messages?**

**Often facial expressions or gestures give a very different message than the speaker's words. Listeners need to be aware of signals they may also be giving which do not match their words.**

- 4) Can you admit a mistake?**

**If being right is more important to either party than being understood, communication will break down. The idea is to begin to understand each other and not to have a power struggle.**

- 5) Do you use "I" statements, for instance "I am angry because...." ?**

**The tendency to blame and to argue can be stopped if both people learn to speak clearly from their own experiences and feelings. Beginning sentences with the pronoun "I" and following it with your own feelings helps people to avoid blaming and arguing.**

**If you practice getting to know your own feelings and communicating them in a positive way, your relationships will become more healthy and enjoyable.**

## 13. D. H. A. L. T.

**DHALT is a short-hand way of reminding recovery people that they are especially vulnerable to using drugs when they are too depressed, hungry, angry, lonely or tired.**

### **DEPRESSED**

**Depression feels like a big black hole inside. Feeling sad, empty, hopeless, tired, and vulnerable are all common feelings. but we mask them by using drugs, alcohol, overeating, not eating, spending too much money, not finishing things that we used to Like, or doing things that feel wrong. We loose interest in things that we used to like, we start isolating ourselves from people we care about, and we create more problems in our relationships. From the outside world's view it may appear that we are fine and that we are able to function in our daily lives, but on the inside we are broken and crumbling.**

### **HUNGRY**

**When addicts /alcoholics are using, they often neglect their own nutritional needs. Being hungry can cause changes in body chemistry that makes people less able to control or to defend themselves. Often the person feels anxious and irritable but doesn't associate the feelings with hunger. Eating regularly increases emotional stability.**

### **ANGRY**

**This emotional state is probably the most common cause of using when you don't want to. Learning to deal with anger in a healthy way is very difficult for many people. It is not healthy to act out anger without thinking about the consequences of our actions. It is also not healthy to hold anger in and try to pretend it doesn't exist. Talking about situations which produce anger and how to handle them is an important way to deal with your feelings.**

### **LONELY**

**Being addicted is often a lonely process. Relationships are sometimes lost due to the addictive process. Some are regained, many are not. Addicts and alcoholics may have to give up friends or acquaintances who use drugs and/or drink when they decide to change. These feelings of loneliness are real and painful. They make people more likely to use or drink. Attending sessions or NA meetings can be very helpful to deal with loneliness, and to identify with other people's feelings.**

## **TIRED**

**Sleep disorders are often a part of addiction as well as when you try to cut down or quit using. Being tired is often a trigger for using or drinking. Feeling exhausted and low on energy may leave people unable to function in a healthy way.**

**1) How often do you find yourself in one or more of these emotional states?**

**2) What do you do when you feel depressed?**

- Do you seek others?**
- Do you stop talking?**
- Do you just lay down?**
- Do you cry?**
- Do you become active/on the run?**
- Do you become stressed out?**
- Do you shut down?**
- Do you stop taking care of yourself?**
- Do you become inventive/creative?**
- Do you not finish projects?**
- Do you use drugs?**

**3) What do you do when you get hungry?**

- Do you get agitated or jumpy?**
- Do you become indecisive?**
- Do you get sleepy?**
- Do you eat/drink anything?**
- Do you hustle for money?**
- Do you shoplift?**
- Do you get frustrated?**



\_\_\_ **Do you get inventive about finding money for food?**

\_\_\_ **Do you use drugs?**

**4) What do you do when you get angry?**

\_\_\_ **Do you act it out?**

\_\_\_ **Do you get violent?**

\_\_\_ **Do you feel frustrated?**

\_\_\_ **Do you avoid others?**

\_\_\_ **Do you feel irritable?**

\_\_\_ **Do you blame others?**

\_\_\_ **Do you feel helpless?**

\_\_\_ **Do you feel misunderstood?**

\_\_\_ **Do you take it out on someone else?**

\_\_\_ **Do you feel taken advantage of?**

\_\_\_ **Do you shout and yell at people?**

\_\_\_ **Do you use drugs?**

**5) What happens when you feel lonely?**

\_\_\_ **Do you reach out to other people?**

\_\_\_ **Do you shut down/isolate yourself?**

\_\_\_ **Do you avoid others?**

\_\_\_ **Do you just want to think/remember?**

\_\_\_ **Do you seek relief through sex?**

\_\_\_ **Do you talk to someone about it?**

\_\_\_ **Do you get busy doing something?**

\_\_\_ **Do you feel sorry for yourself?**

\_\_\_\_ **Do you use drugs?**

**6) What happens when you feel tired?**

\_\_\_\_ **Do you go to sleep?**

\_\_\_\_ **Do you read?**

\_\_\_\_ **Do you just lay down/relax?**

\_\_\_\_ **Do you watch T.V.?**

\_\_\_\_ **Do you listen to the radio?**

\_\_\_\_ **Do you start thinking/ planning?**

\_\_\_\_ **Do you stop listening to others?**

\_\_\_\_ **Do you stop caring about anything and/or anyone?**

\_\_\_\_ **Do you use drugs?**

## 14. Managing Anger

**Using drugs for a long time numbs and exaggerates your feelings. When you use drugs, and for some time after stopping, you lose touch with your feelings and the ability to recognize and say what they are. Your feelings are important signals that guide your thoughts, decisions, and behavior. Anything that distorts these signals (such as drug use) can lead you to have problems making decisions and to extreme reactions.**

**Intense anger can distort your view of situations and lead to negative and self-defeating behaviors. At times you may become violent and hurt yourself or others, at other times intense anger will lead you back to drug use.**

**The first step in managing anger is to become more aware of the physical and mental signs of angry feelings. This awareness can help you to identify angry feelings early, before you hide them from yourself or let them out of control.**

### **A) What physical signs do you notice when you are angry?**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> rapid heart beat                 | <input type="checkbox"/> knots in stomach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> insomnia                         | <input type="checkbox"/> tense muscles    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> clenched teeth                   | <input type="checkbox"/> headaches        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> heavy breathing                  | <input type="checkbox"/> sweating         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other physical signs (describe): |   |

### **B) What feelings or behaviors do you notice when you are angry?**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> increased desire for drugs              | <input type="checkbox"/> revenge fantasies        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> silence                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> avoid others             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> argumentative                           | <input type="checkbox"/> aggressive tone of voice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> irritable feelings                      | <input type="checkbox"/> hostile feelings         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> frustrated feelings                     | <input type="checkbox"/> closed-minded            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> defeated feelings                       | <input type="checkbox"/> passive                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other feelings or behaviors (describe): |   |

**C) List the types of situations that trigger your anger.**

**a. At home or with your family:**

**b. At work:**

**c. In this group:**

**d. With strangers:**

**Intense anger can be caused by different feelings. It is easy to get angry when you feel:**

- taken advantage of**
- the need to be perfect**
- unloved**
- misunderstood**
- helpless**
- hurt by criticism**
- that you are being treated unfairly**
- mentally and physically exhausted**

**D) Which feelings are most likely to trigger your anger?****1) How do you usually express your angry feelings?**

- Do you blow up?**
- Do you blame others?**
- Do you become silent?**
- Do you try to cover up?**
- Do you act as if nothing has happened?**
- Do you become harshly self-critical?**

**2) How do you feel about the way you express anger?**

- Do you beat yourself up about it?**
- Do you feel embarrassed and end up apologizing?**
- Do you feel justified?**
- Do you feel good about it?**

**3) How do other people react to your way of expressing anger?**

\_\_\_ **Do they ignore you?**

\_\_\_ **Do they get angry at you?**

\_\_\_ **Do they give you what you want?**

\_\_\_ **Do they stay away from you?**

**4) What are some ways of expressing anger that might work better for you?**

## SIX TIPS FOR MANAGING ANGER

1. *Learn how to recognize the physical, mental, and behavioral warning signs of your angry feelings.*

2. *Ask yourself if your anger is justified.*

- **is it an overreaction to a situation that is beyond your control?**
- **are you misplacing anger with yourself onto others?**
- **are you expecting too much of yourself and others?**
- **are you taking things too personally?**

3. *Talk rather than act out your feelings. Do this with someone you trust and who is not involved in the event that triggered your anger.*

4. *Explore your options.*

- **what type of response is in your best interest?**
- **play out different scenes (ways the situation could go) in your head and with someone you trust**
- **do something physical -but not violent- (for instance, take a walk, play ball, exercise) to relieve your stress**
- **let things cool down**

**Important decisions should be made only when you are in a calm, rational frame of mind.**

*S. Recall what solutions worked out for you in the past*

**Remember that difficult feelings, no matter how strong, are always temporary. No matter how uncomfortable your feelings are right now, they will go away. Acting impulsively, exploding, or getting depressed, will only make matters worse. This doesn't mean you should ignore difficult feelings and hope that they will go away, only that you don't need to get "freaked out" by them. You can deal with difficult feelings.**

6. *Reward yourself. When you have successfully handled a difficult situation, pat yourself on the back or give yourself a healthy reward. Be proud that you have been able to weather the storm.*

## 15. Dealing with Depression

**Alcohol/drug abuse and depression are related. It is not yet known if this relationship exists because depression causes substance use or because substance use causes depression. Which came first, the chicken or the egg?**

**What we do know is that drug users sometimes report having problems with depression when they try to cut down or stop using. For some people this depression, if left untreated, can result in making it harder to make changes in their lives and may cause them to use when they don't want to. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the signs of depression and be prepared to cope with the feelings.**

### Symptoms of depression

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low energy          | <input type="checkbox"/> Overeating or not eating       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sad thoughts        | <input type="checkbox"/> Losing interest in activities  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insomnia            | <input type="checkbox"/> Sleeping more than normal      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crying spells       | <input type="checkbox"/> Increased thoughts of using    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling irritable   | <input type="checkbox"/> Increased thoughts of drinking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stopping AA/NA/MA   | <input type="checkbox"/> Stopping normal activity       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stopping going out  | <input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding social activities     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling anger       | <input type="checkbox"/> Decreased sex drive            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stopping exercising | <input type="checkbox"/> Suicidal thoughts              |

**1) Are there other signs that you recognize as the beginning of a depression?**



**Responses which can help to overcome depression:**

**2) Have you ever done any of these?**

- a) Increase exercise**
- b) Plan new activities**
- c) Talk to a friend**
- d) Talk to your spouse/partner**
- e) Talk to your counselor**
- f) Consider seeing a doctor for help**

**3) Do you have any other good ways of dealing with depression?**

## 16. Emotions and Change

### A Different Strategy

#### **The Past**

**Because drugs affect the brain and feelings directly, learning to deal with feelings in a new way is very important to success in making changes in your life. Some feelings that you may have when you try to cut down or stop using are related to old issues -such as being abused as a child, the divorce of your parents, your love problems, or the death of a loved one, for instance. These experiences can leave deep emotional wounds that can cause pain later on when you are trying to make changes in your life.**

**What things in your past may give you bad feelings?**

#### **The Future**

**Other feelings are worries about the future. Financial problems, relationship problems, and anxiety about life without drugs are examples of things in the future that can cause worry.**

**What issues in the future cause bad feelings now?**

#### **The Present**

**Still other feelings are the result of what is going on right now. Irritability, mood swings, relationship problems, missing appointments, poor memory, not completing tasks, fatigue from a bad night's sleep, or anger about an argument with someone are all factors that can cause uncomfortable or bad feelings.**

**What about things that are going on right now?**

## **Understanding Yourself**

**Sorting out these feelings is a very important step in understanding yourself. Learning to recognize the feelings is also important. The best way to start is to talk about your feelings. Only by getting the feelings outside yourself can you understand what is happening. You can learn what causes you to feel the way you do. This can make feelings much less frightening and allow you to stay in control of your behavior. What do you think?**

## **Talk to Others**

**It's impossible to make changes in your life without talking about feelings. Use this group, go to AA/NA/MA meetings, talk to good friends, your counselor, your mate, or clergymen. It is very important to recognize your feelings and get them outside of yourself. Have others look at them with you. It is a necessary part of growing up and an important part of making the changes you want.**

- 1) Right now I really can talk about my feelings with:**
  
- 2) I could also discuss feelings with:**
  
- 3) I am frightened and confused when I feel:**
  
- 4) I am most likely to use when I don't mean to, when I feel:**

## 17. Guilt and Shame

**GUILT IS FEELING BAD ABOUT WHAT YOU HAVE DONE. ("I am sorry I spent so much money on drugs.")**

**SHAME IS FEELING BAD ABOUT WHO YOU ARE. ("I am hopeless and worthless.")**

### **GUILT**

- 1. What are some things you have done in the past that you feel guilty about?**

**Feeling guilty is a healthy reaction. It often means you have done something that doesn't agree with your values and morals. It is not unusual for people to get into situations where they do things they feel guilty about. What is important is making peace with yourself. Sometimes that means making up for things you have said or done. Sometimes it means realizing you are feeling guilty without any real cause.**

#### **Remember:**

- 1. It's all right for you to make mistakes.**
  - 2. It's all right for you to say, "I don't know", "I don't care", or "I don't understand" in some situations.**
  - 3. You don't have to explain yourself to anyone if you're acting responsibly.**
- 2. Do you still feel guilty about the things you listed? What can you do to improve the situation(s)?**

**SHAME**

\_\_\_ **Do you feel ashamed of being addicted to drugs?**

\_\_\_ **Do you feel you are weak because you can't stop using when you want to?**

\_\_\_ **Do you feel you are stupid because of something you have done?**

\_\_\_ **Do you feel like you are a bad person because you use drugs?**

**No one knows why some people can stop using drugs/alcohol more easily once they make that decision and other people cannot. Some of the reasons have to do with family histories, genes, and individual physical differences in people. It does not have to do with people being bad, stupid or weak. Addiction is a disease that affects different people in different ways.**

**What we do know is that most people cannot stop or cut down on using just by:**

- 1. Trying to use willpower.**
- 2. Trying to be strong.**
- 3. Trying to be good.**

**It takes three things to cut down or to stop:**

- 1. Being smart about yourself.**
- 2. Having a plan.**
- 3. Working hard at your plan.**

**Everyone who is successful at this, will tell you: "It was the hardest thing I ever did".**

**No one can do it for you, but other people can help you.**

**DO THE NECESSARY WORK AND YOU CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE**

**What are you doing to change your life and reduce the feelings of shame?**

**What are you doing to deal with your drug use and reduce the feelings of shame?**

## 18. Alcohol The Legal Drug

**Alcohol can be a problem even if you don't know it. Since alcohol is a legal drug it is very available everywhere. If you try to stop drinking you may find it very difficult. Some of the reasons for this are:**

- 1. Triggers for alcohol use are everywhere. It is sometimes hard to do anything social without facing people who are drinking.  
Do you have friends who get together without drinking?**
- 2. Many people use alcohol in response to internal triggers. Depression and anxiety seem to go away when they have a drink. It's difficult for people to realize that sometimes the alcohol causes the depression or makes it worse.  
Does feeling a certain way make you want to have a drink?**
- 3. If a person is addicted to an illicit drug and uses alcohol less often, alcohol may not be viewed as a problem. A person doesn't discover that a problem exists until the person tries to stop drinking.  
Have you been able to stop drinking whenever you want to?**
- 4. Alcohol affects the rational, thinking part of the brain. It is difficult to think reasonably about a drug that is making thinking clearly more difficult.  
Have you ever been sober at a party and watched people drink and "get stupid"?**

5. **As alcohol dulls the rational brain, it promotes less controlled activity in the lower brain. This results in alcohol helping people to become less self-conscious, more social and more sexual. When you are used to using alcohol to help you socialize and increase your sexual pleasure, it feels uncomfortable being without it. Do you depend on alcohol for either social or sexual reasons?**
  
6. **Many of us grow up using alcohol to mark special occasions. It is hard to learn how to celebrate those times without drinking. What special occasions did your family celebrate with alcohol?**

**How do you celebrate now?**

7. **In many families and social groups, drinking is a sign of strength, of being with it, or of being cool. Our culture encourages drinking. Do you feel less "with it" when you are not drinking?**
  
8. **The habit of drinking gets to be part of certain activities. It seems difficult, at first, to do those things without a beer or a drink (for instance, eating certain kinds of foods, going to a party or to sports events, relaxing, etc.). What activities seem to go with drinking for you?**
  
9. **How could you handle these activities without an alcoholic drink?**



## 19. Life Skills

### Homelessness

During addiction people often lose relationships and things that have been important to them. Addicts may lose contact with family and friends, may lose jobs, their freedom (as a result of incarceration) and their homes.

When people become homeless they lose their foundation. It becomes difficult to groom properly, to eat properly and to sleep properly. The focus of each day may be staying warm and finding a place to sleep for the night. Without an address getting benefits and mail can be difficult. It's hard to apply for jobs without an address or phone where you can be reached and it is difficult to be reliable with appointments when you are homeless.

When people are homeless, living in a shelter, or in some other temporary situation they may feel ashamed or embarrassed by their situation. There may be a feeling of hopelessness that they will ever have a home again.

Have you ever been homeless?

If so, how did you feel?

Do you feel homeless when you live in a shelter or in a temporary situation with "friends"?

Homeless people in early recovery may have difficulty focusing on their recovery because:

1. They may be staying in environments that jeopardize their recovery (i.e. shelters where there is a lot of drug use or with "friends" or associates who use).
2. They are tired and/or hungry.
3. Drugs are the only thing that take them away from their misery.
4. They may have difficulty keeping appointments or counseling sessions related to their recovery.

## Life Skills

## Homelessness (Cont'd)

Working to build structure into your life when you are homeless may be difficult but is very important. You can start to build structure into your life by:

1. Coming to the program to get your medication at the same time every day.
2. Coming to your group and individual appointments as scheduled.
3. Following through with appointments that will help in the process to get housing.

**IF YOU FOLLOW THE STEPS ABOVE YOU WILL START TO FEEL MORE IN CONTROL OF YOUR LIFE.**

Your counselor can work with you to help you take the necessary steps to find a place to live. It is critical that you follow through with appointments that will help facilitate the process to get your housing. Additionally, by attending the program regularly you may meet other people who have been in your situation and can offer support and resources. If your drug use is out of control, you may want to consider entering a long-term treatment program where you can live and work on your recovery at the same time.

Remember: Working on your recovery at the same time you are working on getting housing is very important because continued drug abuse can result in the loss of housing once you get it.

## 20. Making New Friends

**A blessed thing it is for any man or woman to have a friend,  
one human soul whom we can trust utterly,  
who knows the best and worst of us,  
and who loves us in spite of our faults.**

**Anonymous**

**Nothing in the whole recovery process is more important than relationships. Friends and family are like mirrors that reflect who we are. It has been said, you will become like those people with whom you spend your time. Use the following questions to help you think about your friendships:**

- 1. Do you have any friends like the one described in the poem above? If yes, who are they?**
- 2. Have you become like the people around you?**
- 3. What is the difference between a friend and an acquaintance?**

**4. Where can you make some new acquaintances that might become friends?**

**S. To whom are you a friend?**

**6. What behaviors do I need to change to improve my relationships?**

**7. How can I change these behaviors?**

## 21. Making Non-Drug Using Friends

**Most people who have been using drugs for a long time associate with others who are also drug users. Sometimes these people are the only friends that are left for the person who is using. In many cases, people avoid old friends who are not using drugs because they feel ashamed and embarrassed about their drug use, about their appearance, or about the difference between their lifestyle and the lifestyle of their friends.**

**This becomes a problem when a person tries to stop using drugs. It is hard to stop using drugs when everyone around you continues to use.**

**Associating with drug using people will usually lead to continuing to use or relapse if you have stopped. Ending relationships with those who continue to use is a very difficult step. Being alone is also hard, and loneliness is often a tremendous trigger.**

**For some people it is hard to reestablish contact with old non-drug using friends and family members because of shame, embarrassment, or guilt. It can also be difficult, however, to make new friends who are non-drug users or people who are in recovery. How would you go about doing these things?**

**People find different ways of finding new friends. Some may find drug free friends in AA or NA. Others may know someone in the neighborhood who, is drug free and begin to associate with him/her on a regular basis. The process of building new relationships is slow, takes a lot of patience, and it is at times uncomfortable. People may find that they are worried about what others think of them, and often feel shy or embarrassed to begin a conversation. It is important, however, not to give up, because the support and encouragement you can get from non-drug using friends can be enormous.**

Making Non-Drug Using Friends  
(continued)

**1) Do you have any non-drug using friends? \_\_\_ YES \_\_\_ NO**  
**Can you name a few of them?**

**2) Have tried to reconnect with your old non-drug using friends? \_\_YES \_\_NO**  
**What happened?**

**3) Have you tried to make non-drug using friends lately? \_\_\_YES \_\_\_NO**

**4) Where can you make new clean and sober friendships?**

**5) What have been the difficulties in making new friends?**

**6) What steps can you take to make non-drug using friends?**

**7) What activities would you like to do with your new friends?**

## 22. When Other Family Members Use

**People in recovery or who are trying to cut down on their drug use, need to keep their environment as trigger-free as possible. However, when other family members are using alcohol or drugs, this becomes a challenge. Family members who use may bring their own drugs into the home and this may trigger the recovering person, even if drugs brought into the environment are not the recovering person's drug of choice.**

**1. Do any of your family members use drugs or drink alcohol?**

**Situations of this kind can make recovery even more difficult than it already is. As the person in recovery begins to engage in non-drug related activities, other family members can secretly feel "left behind" or abandoned, because they may not be capable, at a this time, of joining in this new lifestyle.**

**2. Has this situation come up in your family?**

**As the recovering person gains more self-respect and control in his/her life, other family members who use drugs or alcohol may actually begin to use more. Additionally, non-recovering family members can develop feelings of resentment or betrayal toward the person who is "rocking the family boat." It seems that when the balance in family relationships begins to change, one or more family members may resist changing the way things "used to be", even if those old ways were bad for everybody.**

**3. How do you handle family members who use?**

## When Other Family Members Use, continued

**Having a situation where other family members are using can be very stressful. It is important to not let these situations overwhelm you. A home life where people are either using or do not support your recovery, should help convince you that you need to be selfish in guarding your recovery at this stage. Try not to let the fact that other family members are using become a relapse justification. Try to find someone in your family or out of it who are supportive and discuss the situation with them.**

**4. Who in your family, or outside your own family, could be supportive of your recovery?**



## 23. Recognizing Stress

**Stress is what a person feels as a result of difficult or upsetting events, especially those which continue for a period of time.**

**Stress, is the experience people have when the demands they make of themselves or those placed upon them are greater than they feel they can handle.**

**Sometimes we are not aware of this emotional state until the stress produces physical symptoms.**

**Check off any of these problems you may have experienced in the past 30 days:**

- 1. Sleep problems**
  - a) **You have a hard time falling asleep**
  - b) **You wake up off and on during the night**
  - c) **You have nightmares**
  - d) **You wake up early and are not able to fall back to sleep**
  - e) **You sleep during the day**
  
- 2. Headaches**
- 3. Stomach problems**
- 4. Some illness you have gets worse**
- 5. Tiredness**
- 6. Bad mood**
- 7. Being irritable**
- 8. Can't concentrate**
- 9. Dissatisfied with life**
- 10. Feel overwhelmed**
- 11. Being restless**
- 12. Feel insecure or like you are "worthless"**
- 13. \_\_\_\_\_**

**1) How do you know when you are under stress?**

**2) How could you cope with stress in a better way?**

**3) How could you reduce stress in your life?**

**4) I would start today by:**

## 24. Self-Esteem

**Self-esteem is how you feel about yourself. It is an overall judgment of how much you like yourself. The attitude you have has direct effects on how you feel about all parts of your life.**

**Drug use contributes to poor self-esteem. However, when you cut down or stop using drugs, you may feel a loss of confidence. This is only temporary. You can re-build your self-esteem by acting differently and reminding yourself of the positive actions that you already have begun by changing or stopping your drug use. The next step is to focus on thoughts and behaviors that will increase your self-confidence.**

**Make a list of the following about yourself:**

**1) Three things you like about yourself as a person:**

**2) Three things you like about your physical body:**

**3) Three skills that you are proud of:**

**4) Three people you love or like:**

**5) Three people who love or like you:**

**6) Three things you are grateful for:**

**7) Three things you would like to change about yourself:**

## 25. Taking care of Yourself

**Addicts/alcoholics do not take care of themselves. There is not enough time or energy to attend to health and grooming when you are using or drinking. How you look becomes unimportant. Health is secondary to drug/alcohol use. Not caring for yourself is a major factor in addicts losing self-esteem. When you "esteem" something, it means that you value it. You acknowledge its importance.**

**Recovering people, or those starting on the road to recovery, need to recognize their own value. In recovery, your own health and appearance become more important as you care more for yourself. It is part of starting to like and even to respect yourself.**

**Paying attention to the following things will strengthen your image of yourself as a healthy, drug/alcohol free, recovering person.**

**1. Have you seen a doctor for a thorough check-up in the past year?**

**YES**

**NO**

**2. When was the last time you went to the dentist?**

**3. Have you considered getting a "new look" or hair style next time you cut your hair?**

**YES**

**NO**

**4. Are you paying attention to what you are eating? (i.e., not eating at all, eating too much, eating too little, what is the nutritional value of what you eat?)**

**YES**

**NO**

**5. Do you still wear the same clothes you wore during most of your using/drinking episodes?**

**YES**

**NO**

**6. Do you need to have your vision or hearing checked?**

**YES**

**NO**

**7. Do you exercise regularly?                    \_\_\_YES                    \_\_\_NO**

**What exercise do you do?**

**8. Is your caffeine or nicotine intake out of control? \_\_\_YES                    \_\_\_NO**

**If trying to change all these things at once is too overwhelming, you can work on one or two items each week. Decide which are the most important and do those first. As you look and feel better, you will increase both the strength and the pleasure of your recovery.**

**a) The first thing I need to take care of myself is:**

**b) I plan to take care of it by:**

**c) The next thing I need to take care of is:**

**d) Something I need to do more regularly is:**

## 26. Helping Others, Helping Ourselves

When people are addicted to drugs/alcohol they tend not to focus on their everyday needs. Their thoughts are dominated by drugs (ways to get it, using it, getting it again etc.). These thoughts can be so powerful that people begin to neglect taking care of themselves. Common examples include not eating properly, not sleeping regularly, and not taking care of personal hygiene.

When you decide you want to stop using, it is extremely important to adopt an "I come first" attitude about yourself and your recovery. It can be very hard, however, to learn how to be "selfish" about your recovery. For instance, in the beginning of recovery, you may start to focus on external things instead of on yourself. In particular, you may find yourself trying to help other people. Lending possessions and money to others "who really need it", starting new relationships, and trying to "save" other people who are addicted, are instances where you may be losing the main focus of recovery: you.

It is not a bad thing to want to help others, but right now your recovery is going to take all the energy and resources you have. Is this a "selfish" attitude? You bet it is. It's selfish in the sense that you are taking care of your self, maybe for the first time. This is a new skill to learn that is vital to recovery. You'll have plenty of time to worry about others later. In fact, the more you put into helping yourself during recovery, the more you may be able to help others down the road.

An important thing to remember is that your "addicted brain" will be more than happy to be selfish if you're not. Recognizing where your focus needs to be right now is the first and most important step in your recovery.

**IT IS CRITICAL RIGHT NOW FOR YOU TO BE  
"SELFISH" ABOUT YOUR RECOVERY.**

**IF YOU ARE NOT, YOUR "ADDICTED BRAIN" IS  
EAGER TO BE SELFISH FOR YOU!**

## 26. Helping Others, Helping Ourselves (Cont'd)

- 1. Have you found it difficult to concentrate on your recovery? If yes, what do you believe has caused this difficulty?**
  
- 2. Are you focusing on other people more than on yourself?**
  
- 3. If yes, what do you plan to do about that?**
  
- 4. Do you sometimes feel "selfish" for concentrating more on yourself than others in recovery?**
  
- 5. Try role-playing situations related to this topic.**



## 27. Exercise

**Exercise is a very important part of trying to reduce or stop your drug and/or alcohol use. People who engage in regular physical exercise get better results in the three months of this program than those who do not exercise.**

**The physical demand that exercise places on the body causes several responses in your body. Among these responses are increases in heart, respiration, and general functioning. When you are trying to decrease your drug and/or alcohol intake, the most important benefit of exercise may be that the body produces more endorphins. Endorphins are naturally occurring chemicals produced by the body to decrease pain and to relieve depression.**

**Twenty to thirty minutes of exercise (such as walking, dancing, biking, playing basketball or jogging) stimulates the endorphin production. It also provides other benefits that are extremely important when you are trying to recover from addiction.**

**Regular exercise:**

- 1. Provides structure**
- 2. Fights off effects of the Wall (lack of energy, boredom, and an emotional stage ranging from apathy to depression)**
- 3. Aids the stabilization of the sleep process**
- 4. Improves spirit and stabilizes your moods**
- 5. Builds self-esteem**
- 6. Releases excess energy or gives you extra when the energy is low**
- 7. Helps prevent weight gain during recovery**
- 8. Offers a "downtime" escape from stress**

## 27. Exercise, continued

- 1) Do you exercise at all?    \_\_\_YES    \_\_\_NO
- 2) What type of exercise do you do?
- 3) When do you exercise? ( morning, afternoon, evening)
- 4) What type of exercise do you enjoy? which one do you plan to start doing on a more regular basis?
- 5) What will be your exercise schedule?

## 28. Nutrition

**Your body is like a machine. You need fuel to keep going and bad quality fuel can damage your body. When people use drugs they often pay less attention to the fuel they put in their bodies. How many of these things have you done or do you do to your body?**

- a) ---- Not eating for long periods of time
- b) ---- Eating lots of "junk food"
- c) ---- Eating just before going to bed
- d) ---- Eating to stuff your feelings
- e) ---- Forgetting to eat
- f) ---- Eating lots of food at one time
- g) ---- Eating "on the run"
- h) ---- \_\_\_\_\_

**If you drink alcohol, your body is getting lots of calories and no nutrition. These are known as "empty calories"& they are the reason why many alcoholics are overweight and undernourished at the same time. To get the best fuel for your life, follow these simple rules:**

- A. Eat regular meals.**
- B. Avoid being hungry (it can be a trigger to drug use).**
- C. Eat food that is healthy and nutritional.**
- D. Eat just enough to satisfy your hunger (and not your eyes).**
- E. Avoid too much sugar or caffeine.**

## 28. Nutrition, continued

**Try to remember what and when you have eaten lately. Are you giving your body the highest quality fuel possible?**

**1) What did you eat yesterday? Write down everything you ate in each category:**

**Breakfast:**

**Lunch:**

**Dinner:**

**Snacks:**

**2) What do you think you should add every day to make your diet healthier?**

**3) What do you think you should decrease or stop eating to make your diet healthier?**

## 29. Roadblocks to Getting Help: Isolation and Honesty

**For many people, dealing with their addiction becomes an isolated, lonely and vicious struggle. One of the most common features of addiction is the repeated attempt to stop, to "make this the last time," and the experience of finding yourself right back at it again the next day, week, month or year. This is discouraging and demoralizing, and often leads to a sense of failure and shame. In addition, there is a tremendous stigma attached to addiction. All of this can easily add up to a powerful sense of isolation and a cutting off from the very people who may be able to lend you a hand.**

**Another common feature of addiction is not being truthful. While this is not something people are proud of, it is almost inevitable part of the addiction process. For example, given the choice, most people would rather tell their boss that they were "out sick" rather than "crashing from yesterday's drug binge." Likewise, most people find it easier and less painful to tell themselves: "I'll be able to cut back on my use," rather than: "I thought I could stop four years ago and I still haven't."**

**The problem in not sticking with the truth is that it also leaves you feeling isolated and alone. You don't get to talk about the reality of your life and get some help with the actual problems, and you are left feeling separate and apart. This leaves you with two messages:**

- a) you are different and don't belong, and**
  
- b) no one really understands you.**

**The fact is that when you talk about what really goes on in your life you will find that other people have had the same experience and can be supportive.**

**1) Have you not been honest about your drug/alcohol use for any of the following reasons?**

**a) You are afraid others (or yourself) would be disgusted by you?**

**YES**       **NO**

**Why?**

**b) You are afraid others (or yourself) would think you are "weak."**

**YES**       **NO**

**Why?**

**c) You are afraid of real consequences (loss of job/relationship/apartment) ?**

**YES**       **NO**

**Why?**

**2) Do you feel overwhelmed at the idea of trying to change?**

**YES**       **NO**

**Why?**

**3) Are you afraid you can't change?  YES       NO**

**Why?**

**4) Have you noticed feeling alone because of these fears?  YES       NO**

**Why?**

**5) Have you found yourself avoiding others who could be supportive of your efforts to cut down your usage?  YES       NO**

**Why?**

## 30. Boredom

**A common complaint among people who have started to cut down or have stopped using, is that they find life to be boring. Boredom occurs with an unstable lifestyle and when people find themselves with no idea of what activities to do. Much of a person's current or recent behavior is/was focused on chasing, obtaining, and using drugs. If the person starts reducing his/her drug intake, he/she may be not want to start new activities (e.g., social, recreational, vocational, etc.) because it is uncomfortable to do so. Often other negative feelings emerge making boredom more intolerable. Boredom is a major trigger for many people and can become an easy excuse for using one more time again, and again. If you are noticing that you don't have a daily routine with stimulating activities and are feeling bored, consider the following:**

**1. Review your "recreational inventory" or the things you enjoy doing.**

**Have you resumed activities that you enjoyed prior to your drug use and haven't done in quite a while?**

**Have you begun new activities that interest you?**

**2. Be active in your life. Can you plan something to look forward to?**

**3. Talk about the feeling of boredom with a close friend, your mate or your counselor.**

**Are they feeling the same way you do?**

**Do they have any interesting suggestions?**

## 30. Boredom, continued

**4. Try to schedule your day and take one day at a time.**

**Forcing yourself to write out daily activities allows you to see when, how, where, with who, for how long, etc. you can have more interesting experiences, for instance:**

**5. Challenge yourself and do something different or new that will further your personal growth, like:**

**When you use drugs you are not usually aware of having a routine. An addict lifestyle lacks routine. A stable lifestyle needs to be based on routine but it does not need to feel boring. If you plan for breaks and plan fun, interesting and stimulating activities, you can keep the routine from becoming a trigger and a justification for using. This process won't happen spontaneously - you have to make it happen. It is very important to try new ways of fighting the bored feelings. If you don't, they can become a trigger and give your addicted brain a "reason" for relapsing one more time.**

**List 4 activities that will relieve boredom for you.**

- a) \_\_\_\_\_
- b) \_\_\_\_\_
- c) \_\_\_\_\_
- d) \_\_\_\_\_



## 31. Trust

Have drugs and/or alcohol affected the trust between you and people you care about? Explain.

Does someone not trusting you ever make you feel like using or drinking? (i.e., "If you are going to treat me like I am using, I might as well use.") Explain.

When an addict/alcoholic is using, it is very difficult to have an open, honest relationship with any other person. Things are said and done that destroy the trust and damage the relationship. The drug/alcohol use becomes as important or more important to the user than do other people.

When drug use stops, the trust does not return right away. One or both people may want the trust back but trust is a feeling and people cannot make feelings happen. It takes time for feelings to change. To trust means to feel certain you can rely on someone or something. People cannot be certain just because they want to be. Only time can make the difference.

Recovery is a long process. Learning to trust again is part of that process. It may be one of the last changes to occur.

- 1) How do you feel when you are not trusted?
  
- 2) What can you do to help re-establish trust between you and your loved ones? (i.e., "How can you get people to trust you again"?)
  
- 3) How can you maintain the trust you worked so hard to reestablish?

## 32. Truthfulness

### During Addiction

**Not being truthful is part of addiction. It is very hard to meet the demands of daily living (in relationships, in families, in jobs, etc.) and also use drugs or alcohol regularly. As the addiction increases, so do the activities that are necessary to obtain, use and recover from the drug/alcohol use. It becomes more and more difficult to keep everything going smoothly and addicts find themselves doing and saying whatever is necessary to avoid problems. Truthfulness is not a consideration.**

**In what ways are you less than truthful because of your addiction?**

### During recovery and on the way towards recovery

**Being honest with yourself and with others during the recovery process is very important. Sometimes being truthful is very difficult because:**

- a) you may not seem to be a "nice" person.**
  - b) your counselor or group members may be unhappy with your behavior.**
  - c) you may be embarrassed.**
  - d) other people's feelings may be hurt.**
- 1. What are the consequences of your not being truthful?**
- a)**
  - b)**
  - c)**

## 32. Truthfulness, continued

2) Has truthfulness been difficult for you?      YES\_\_\_\_      NO\_\_\_\_ Why?

Being partly honest is not being truthful. Do you ever:

1) Decide to let someone believe a partial truth? YES      NO      Give an example:

2) Tell people what they want to hear?      YES\_\_\_\_      NO\_\_\_\_ Give an example:

3) Tell people what you wish were truth?      YES\_\_\_\_      NO\_\_\_\_ Give an example:

4) Tell less than the whole truth?      YES\_\_\_\_      NO\_\_\_\_ Give an example:

## 32. Truthfulness, continued

What behaviors and thoughts can you identify that tell you when you are beginning to isolate yourself from others?

What strategies can you use to help you make the decision not to isolate?

It is very important to notice that partial truths keep you alone in your own world also. Have you noticed that it is you who:

- 1) decide to let someone believe a partial truth?
- 2) tell people what they want to hear?
- 3) tell people what you wish were true?

Attending groups, attending meetings, going to treatment, going to detox are all a waste of time and money without truthfulness. Recovery from addiction is impossible without truthfulness.

### 33. Managing Money

**When addicts and alcoholics are actively using and drinking, the out-of-control lifestyle is always felt in ways related to money. How many of these things have been true for you?**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. **Any money over \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is a trigger to buy drugs or liquor.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. **I have used money secretly to buy drugs or alcohol.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. **I have to deal with large debts.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. **I have not paid the rent, light, gas, phone, cable, etc.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. **I owe money on traffic tickets, fines, parking tickets, etc.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. **I gamble with my money (lottery tickets, the horses, playing cards, playing the numbers, etc.)**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. **I spend more than I mean to on cigarettes, candy, or \_\_\_\_\_.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. **I owe the money to the cop man or loan shark.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. **I spend my money when I feel bad, or \_\_\_\_\_.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. **I frequently argue about money with one/some family members, especially with \_\_\_\_\_.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. **I exchange my clothes/furniture/other things such as \_\_\_\_\_ for drugs/alcohol.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. **I owe money to several people but, if I had money, I would first pay \_\_\_\_\_.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. **I trade food stamps for money to buy drugs/alcohol.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. **I sold my radio/TV/CD player/other things such as \_\_\_\_\_ to buy drugs/alcohol.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. **I have stolen money.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 16. **I have sold my body for money to buy drugs/alcohol.**
- \_\_\_\_\_ 17. \_\_\_\_\_

### 33. Managing Money, continued

**Often people who use drugs and/or alcohol choose to give control of their money to someone they really trust.**

**Do you ever do this?**

**Who is this person?**

**Having another person handle your money will not work unless it is done at your request. In making the decision, you are controlling your own finances and asking the trusted person to act as your personal banker.**

**Does this happen in your case?**

**Who is this person?**

### 33. Managing Money, continued

1) I find it difficult to manage my money because:

2) I need to budget my money specifically for:

3) Owing money is very difficult because:

4) The most important financial goal I have at this time is:

5) I need to change the way I spend my money in the following ways:

**Being in control of your money is being in control of your life.**

## 34. Acceptance and Courage

God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change,  
Courage to change the things I can,  
And wisdom to know the difference.

- 1) What does this mean to you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What do you know you cannot change?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) What have you already changed?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) What do you want to change?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) How can you change it?



## 35. Holidays and Recovery

**The holiday season is often a very hard time for people. Many things can happen to increase the risk of using more than you want to.**

**Review the list below and check the items which might cause problems for you regarding your drug use.**

1. **More alcohol and drugs at parties**
2. **More stress/pressure due to having to buy gifts**
3. **More contact with the family**
4. **Daily routine of life disrupted**
5. **Not going to NA/AA/MA meetings (if you do)**
6. **More stress with family due to celebrations**
7. **Not going to treatment (if you do)**
8. **8. Not meeting family responsibilities (like being a better parent, having a job, having your own apt., not raising your own children, etc.)**
9. **Party atmosphere**
10. **Increased emotions from holiday memories**
11. **Not meeting my family's expectations (like working; finishing school; getting married; bringing a present or food or beverages to the party, etc.)**
12. **Increased anxiety regarding triggers and cravings**
13. **Not being in party mood (like feeling depressed, not wanting to socialize, being isolated, etc.)**
14. **Stress from not having time to meet responsibilities (like paying my bills, spending time with the children, etc. )**

## 35. Holidays and Recovery, continued

15. **Reflecting on yourself (like "another year gone by and nothing has changed") or \_\_\_\_\_**
16. **Stress about how you look (for instance thin, poor teeth, not having the right clothes, no good hair cut, etc. )**
17. **Not having enough money to buy anything for the holidays, especially for \_\_\_\_\_**
18. **Increased stress due to crowded shopping areas (for instance feeling claustrophobia, people pushing and shoving you, etc.)**
19. **Being arrested (for loitering, selling/buying drugs, steering, shoplifting, etc. )**
20. **Being or feeling totally alone**
21. \_\_\_\_\_

## 35. Holidays and Recovery, continued

1) Do holidays add a lot of stress to your life?

2) How well do you cope with increased stress?

3) How do you deal with family things at holiday time?

4) How can you stick to your plans regarding your drug/alcohol use during the holidays?

## 36. Saying goodbye – the tough part

Coming to the end of one stage of therapy can bring to mind other endings experienced in the past. People are often reminded of ways they said good-bye to friends or family members, of leaving and of being left. Some of these experiences may have been painful whereas others may be remembered with warmth.

People who are at the end of a therapy process may feel many emotions, including sadness, pride, anger, excitement, fear, and sometimes a feeling of being abandoned. It takes a long time to trust and open up to a therapist and to other group members. Once you have done this, it may be difficult to think about needing to end the relationship. It may feel like a rejection or as being unfair, as you have invested a lot of time and emotional energy in this process and with these people.

The experience that we have in a meaningful relationship does not leave us after the relationship is over. We carry within us the experience of closeness, of acceptance, and of the ability to open up and share pain. When this program comes to an end it may be hard to imagine that you will be able to open up to someone else in the same way. Yet, the ability to open up and trust another person, as well as the support and acceptance that you gave and received, has become part of you, and will stay with you long after the program is over.

1) Do you have any of the feelings discussed above when you think about graduating from the program?

2) What do you think you will miss most after you graduate?

3) What are you most proud of since starting this program?

4) What will stay with you after you finish the program?