

# STEPS FOR RECOVERY

## Help For Addiction - How To Stay Clean On The Outside

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A person seeking help for addiction and guidance about how to stay clean from their addictive behaviours will have a wide variety of options to choose from. However, most do not realise that in order to stay clean once out of treatment, a daily programme of recovery is needed such as a Twelve Step Programme to keep them present and aware.

When a person is immersed in obsessive and compulsive behaviours, their life revolves around this behaviour. Whether it is substance abuse, sex addiction, gambling addiction, alcoholism or any other addiction, the addict will usually have been on a path of avoidance regarding their feelings and reality for a long while. Addiction is seen by many today as a disease, incurable, progressive and eventually fatal if it is not arrested.

Addicts in recovery often report having felt 'different' and somewhat uncomfortable with life and normality since a young age, despite sometimes appearing normal, healthy and well balanced on the exterior. Most addictive behaviours are not simply about the substance or the behaviour, they are about the individual. Abstinence is the start of the recovery process. Change and healing is the rest of the process, occurring for the rest of a recovering addict's life.

### Going Into Rehab

When a person seeks help for an addiction by going into a rehabilitation centre this provides a safe and constructive environment for their being able to deal with their deeply rooted issues and begin a healing process.

Life in a rehabilitation centre is also a learning experience and preparation for them to begin a new life after rehab. Any addiction requires the using habit to be broken and ceased completely before healing can begin.

Intense therapy will help deal with issues of the past, anger of the present and fear of the future. However, after a period in treatment, an addict will often leave, feeling they have been 'cured' and can carry on their lives without attending to themselves any further. This usually leads to relapse, taking the addict to an even darker place than they were before.

### Secondary Care and a Programme of Recovery

So how does an addict stay clean after leaving a treatment centre? Therapy and abstaining for a time seems not to be enough, which is why many treatment centres endorse working a Twelve Step programme and continued treatment at a secondary care facility.

A primary care facility is usually a facility where patients stay on the property under supervision the entire time. A secondary care facility is a rehabilitation centre where addicts have more freedom and responsibilities than in a primary care facility and is an incredibly helpful step in assisting newly recovering addicts in re-integrating back into normal life in a safe and assisted manner.

An addict has the best chance of maintaining sobriety if working a programme set to help them deal with life constructively and provides a tight net of support and guidance. Life is not easy, whether clean or using. Every person alive has to face pain. Losing a loved one, work problems, break ups and divorces and other problems and disappointments, even simple boredom. Yet addicts deal with these emotions in self-destructive ways.

It is easy for an addict to slip into old ways. An addict needs constructive methods to process heavy emotions, the same thing applies to happy emotions. Some addicts have no idea how to feel happiness and celebrate without using. Extreme emotions are one of the hardest things for an addict to experience after years of numbing themselves with compulsive acts which remove them from their feelings.

### Applying the Steps

The only price an addict will pay for working a Twelve Step programme is vigilance.

Knowing is not enough - an addict in recovery needs to work at bettering themselves on a daily basis. A Twelve Step programme will help them to have a better quality of life - as has been mentioned, pain is inevitable. Yet misery is optional. With working a programme, an addict will heal the pain of living and have a method of

coping with life on life's terms, not the addict's terms.

A Twelve Step fellowship offers a daily programme for maintenance and growth for an addict, mixed with the support of other member's experience and new comer's needs. When two addicts help each other in life to find a better way of living, true recovery is seen. The main purpose of addicts working a Twelve Step programme is to help those that still suffer so the suffering may find help and the addict who is helping may find a way to give back what they have been given.

Such a fellowship is not affiliated with treatment centres but treatment centres are allowed to advise clients to follow the programme and work the steps whilst they are there as well as participating in therapy. A Twelve Step programme is what will help an addict to stay clean from compulsive and self-destructive behaviours after leaving treatment.

The programme consists of attending meetings regularly, working the Twelve Steps through written work on the Twelve Steps, giving back to their respective fellowship (such as Narcotics Anonymous), reading literature, working with a sponsor (a more experienced member of the fellowship - it does not relate to finance), giving back through service (such as sponsoring, helping out at meetings or even putting chairs out before a meeting) and allowing a loving higher power and spiritual principles to work in their lives (the Twelve Steps are not religious, they are based on spirituality).

Through working the Twelve Steps, an addict will find their life become more focused on doing good for themselves, becoming responsible for their actions and finding a new way to live that is far from the hell of active using. The steps help an addict stay present and aware of their behaviour and patterns and can be a powerful force in alerting an addict as to a possible imminent relapse or negative behaviour.

At meetings, it is emphasised that "alone we can't but together we can". Knowing that they are not alone is incredibly comforting and helpful for any addict in recovery - especially an addict that is struggling or wanting to get abstinence from their compulsive, self-destructive behaviours.

After getting help for addiction and learning how to stay clean, an addict faces quite a big feat in staying abstinent from using. With the help and support of a programme in their lives, they are able to find a reprieve from themselves and live a normal life, without the use of addictive behaviours. Many addicts become extremely successful, marry and become wonderful parents and constructive members of society. But due to the nature of their disease, vigilance and awareness of themselves and their condition as well as working on their patterns is an important tool for their continued survival.