

Hauling it to the Curb: Cleaning up your life in early recovery

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INTRODUCTION

- Some of us are born into a dump.
- Some of us create our own dumps from scratch.
- In either case, many of us suddenly realize we live in a dump.
- We cannot understand why they keep "dumping" on us.
- Not using alcohol and other drugs (AAOD), slows the pace of delivery.
- Recovery requires cleaning out the dump.

1. DENIAL ("What dump?")

- Alcohol and other drugs (AAOD) drown out the little voice telling us we have a problem.
- We employ the nevers, not yets, worsers
- Some of us blame our AAOD abuse on tragic events.
- Theological, constitutional, biological arguments
- Some of us go looking for second opinions
- We blame others or question their motives.
- We arrange our lives to fit our substance use.

2. Accepting Addiction ("Couldn't I hire someone to clean up the dump?")

- Denial is part of addiction because the corpse won't go away.
- Some of us stay in denial to avoid feeling betrayed by our chemical.
- We may ask ourselves what kind of person has this problem?
- We blame the world for not helping us sooner.
- When we find out that recovery takes a lot of work, many of us hit the roof.
- Little by little, we become less angry.
- We start to bargain
- "What am I supposed to do for fun?" we ask.
- We also worry about our friends' reactions to our recovery.
- We wonder, what kind of person recovers?

3. Early Recovery ("Oh God, it really is a dump")

- Early recovery requires many difficult adjustments.
- Important slogans: Don't Pick Up The First Drink/Drug ☼ One Day At A Time ☼ It Gets Better
- Twelve Step Meetings, good for most, but not everyone
- Take medications judiciously
 1. Do I really need this?

2. Is there a non-drug alternative treatment? (For example, many cognitive-behavioral "talk" therapies are effective in treating mild depression, anxiety, and panic.)
3. Have I picked a doctor familiar with addiction?
4. Have I been completely honest with my doctor about my addiction?
5. What is the potential for abuse? Am I taking it exactly as prescribed?

Denial is when . . . you wrap your car around a tree and blame it on a landscaping error.

4. Getting to a Recovery Program ("You want me to haul it where?")

- Many of us wait too long before we go to a recovery program.
- Our unrealistic expectations keep us from going.
- What if someone sees me?
- We wonder if the people we see understand our predicament.
- I can't afford it
- I don't have the time
- What will it cost our careers?
- Some folks fear getting addicted to Twelve Step meetings.
- Some folks wonder if they are really "bad enough" to go to a meeting.

5. First Meeting ("It's a long way from the house to the curb.")

- Pick a meeting where you think you will feel most comfortable.
- If you don't like a meeting, go to another, Goldilocks.
- Some of us expect to like everyone we meet in recovery.
- Find the format you like.

6. Step One ("I Hope I Don't Step In Something.")

"We admitted we were powerless over _____, that our lives had become unmanageable."

- What's this **we** stuff?" We learn at the meetings that we are not alone.
- Accepting powerlessness loosens its grip on us.
- Unmanageability comes from trying to control things we are powerless over.

7. Step Two ("I'm so rich God takes my garbage away.")

"Came to believe a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

- Help means support and guidance.
- We at least try a recovery program.
- People forced into recovery do recover.
- Coming to can be a rude awakening.
- The step says nothing about blind faith.
- Believing in a power that can change our lives helps.
- Our Higher Power can be anything greater than ourselves.
- Knowing, loving, available

- Some folks confuse their Higher Powers with the Sobriety Genie. .
- Recovery only guarantees that we will be as close to sanity as many of us get when faced with the insanity of everyday life.
- We trick ourselves by deciding what is part of ourselves and what isn't.
- Restore is the easiest part of the step to understand and the happiest.
- Us can be the trickiest part of the step.
- Insanity is all the progressive craziness of an addictive lifestyle

8. Step Three: ("You want me to start where?")

"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

- Made is indeed a wonderful word simply for being a verb.
- Made implies thought. To stay clean we must change how we think.
- A decision is not a blood pact.
- Care is more like physical rehabilitation.
- We can, as most people do, choose the Judeo-Christian God as our Higher Power.
- God as we understand Him can be anything. The trick is to choose wisely.
- We must make some effort to understand our Higher Power.

9. Step Four: ("Just 'cause I smell like garbage doesn't mean I'm a bad person.")

"Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves."

- Too many people try to write the ultimate inventory in one sitting.
- A searching moral inventory should be thorough.
- Look for the good as you write your inventory.
- Do not rationalize, minimize, or deny.
- Judge yourself on your efforts to lead a different life today.
- Working this step means taking a hard look at your moral code.
- Writing a fearless inventory is as important as writing a searching one.
- Twelve Steps morality is most concerned about honesty.
- Helping others requires being strong in your own recovery first.

10. Step Five ("Did I ever tell you about life in the dump?")

"Admitted to God, ourselves, and another human being the exact nature of our wrongs."

- People get stuck on the fifth step, too ashamed to face some of their behavior.
- We work the steps to the best of our abilities.
- We need support from meetings while working the fourth and fifth steps.
- You are only as sick as your secrets.
- Admitting our wrongs to God can have several benefits.
- Why should we admit to ourselves we have done wrong?
- Stick to your own inventory.
- Picking the person can be the most important part of this step.
- Being exact is another way of cracking our denial.

11. SLOGANS ("We got us a sayin' here in the dump.")

- Think, think, think,
- Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired
- Sober Not Somber
- Easy Does It
- Live and Let Live
- Let go and Let God
- Principles Before Personalities
- Do the Next Right Thing
- People, Places, and Things

12. A WORD ABOUT FAMILIES AND OTHER PEOPLE ("It's not a dump, it's a fixer upper.")

- Family may not see our situation the way we do.
- Oftentimes, we don't realize how much damage we did abusing AAOD.
- Others may not know how we have changed.
- Some of us use a strange formula for deciding when our families should be "over it."
- Not everyone will be thrilled that we are getting clean.
- People must understand you can't use AAOD, in any amount, at any time, for any reason.

13. Relapse Prevention ("I thought I was done cleaning up until I slipped on something.")

- Relapse and recovery have been compared to walking up a slow-moving "down" elevator.
- Relapse is like the movement of the escalator.
- Relapse is a process rather than an event.
- Slips can be the beginning of the end of your recovery.
- The authors of the "Big Book" cite resentment as the primary killer of recovery.
- You are not alone if you feel depressed in early recovery.
- One of the problems with AAOD is the effect is prepackaged and easily obtainable.
- Many of us feel anxious early in recovery.
- Another feeling tied to relapse is loneliness.
- Life may be so good that you start to forget why you quit using AAOD in the first place.
- This can seem like borrowing fear from the people at meetings
- Too many people in recovery label all mental illnesses as self-pity.
- Many of us made a list of events that we were sure would start us using again.
- Another problem you may encounter is too much time on your hands.
- Working the steps is that they can help you be more comfortable with your past.
- Post acute withdrawal, or PAW, is common
- Triggers are everywhere.
- The price of freedom is vigilance, and that includes our personal freedom from addiction.
- Taking care of our bodies lowers our risk of relapse.
- Physical pain poses a problem because painkillers do more than dull the pain.
- Treating only one of multiple addictions guarantees relapsing on both.