I WILL NOT RELAPSE.

Establishing a strong recovery from drug and alcohol addiction

A WORKBOOK CREATED BY

ST. JOSEPH Institute for Addiction
Residential Treatment for Men and Women.

ST. JOSEPH Institute for Addiction

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Building a Strong Recovery from Addiction

Recovery from drugs and alcohol is not an event; it is a journey. Unfortunately, it is often a journey plagued by starts and stops. Preventing relapse requires more than sheer willpower. Addiction, as repeatedly confirmed by science, is a chronic disease. If you want to recover from this disease, you need to learn to manage life differently. You need a plan.

This workbook will help you design a relapse prevention plan that will keep you moving forward. We encourage you to work your way through these pages, answer the questions, and refer back to them frequently.

Before you start, think about the recovery plans that have stood the tests of time. How do the people who have the best success rate manage their recovery? What does a solid recovery program look like?

Researchers have studied addicts and alcoholics who have a 90+ percent rate of success after five years. Their findings show that those who do best do the following:

- **Take time for treatment.** Detox is not enough. You need to learn about your addiction and how to manage life differently. The longer you stay in treatment, the better you will do in recovery. A residential program is the best place to start.

- **Address the co-occurring conditions.** Most people with addiction have problems that make them want to use. Depression, anxiety, trauma, bipolar disorder, PTSD, and abuse are among the issues that cause people to self-medicate. Effectively treating addiction requires that all of the mental health concerns be addressed.

- **Seek support.** Recovery is not a road that can be traveled alone. When times are tough, when the “disease of addiction starts talking,” you need the help and support of others. Fortunately, there are lots of groups for people in recovery.

- **Be accountable, stay truthful.** Addiction lives behind lies and secrecy. You need to be willing to face the truth and, at times, prove that you have not returned to your past using lifestyle. Many recovering addicts submit to random drug tests for the first three years.

- **Change.** A strong recovery requires the willingness to make tough choices. Your life must change, in both big and small ways.

- **Build a better life.** Recovery is not about giving things up, but about adopting a new and better way to live. The goal is to achieve your dreams, not leave them behind.

Learn from the success of others as you build a plan for recovery that will keep you far away from relapse. In the following sections, you will take inventory of your current situation, establish goals for recovery, and create checklists and plans to ensure that you have the necessary support.
You abuse drugs and alcohol for a reason. You want to change the way you feel. Whether you want to relax, escape, forget, celebrate, or avoid pain (and the list goes on), the driving need is to change what you're thinking and what you're feeling. This section will help you identify the emotional and thought patterns that lead to your use, the changes you want to make, and the goals that will motivate your recovery.

In order to establish a strong recovery and avoid relapse, you’ll want to pinpoint the “reasons why.” What are the thoughts, emotions, events, and circumstances that trigger your desire to use drugs and alcohol? Once you have identified these triggers, you can identify better alternatives for responding to them. Overcoming addiction does not mean that you try to make feelings go away. Rather, you learn to acknowledge feelings and find a better way to manage them.

Take some time to identify the issues that drive your use of drugs or alcohol (check all that apply).

- Too much stress  
- Conflict in relationships  
- Boredom  
- Physical pain  
- Anxiety  
- Depression  
- Anger  
- Desire to have more fun  
- Desire to overcome shyness  
- Desire to make memories go away  
- Financial problems  
- Loneliness  
- Need to fall asleep  
- Desire to fit in with others  
- Desire to manage mood swings  
- Frustration  
- Desire to reduce fear  
- Other: __________________________________________  
  __________________________________________  
  __________________________________________  

Which of the issues you have checked above need to be priorities? Why?

1. __________________________________________

2. __________________________________________

3. __________________________________________
Monitoring Stress:
What are the major stressors in my life?

Everyone knows that stress is a major reason why people use drugs and alcohol. For that reason, your Recovery Plan must consider how to reduce and manage stress in your life. Some of the strategies in your stress management “toolbox” will be simple and quick, such as taking a few minutes to close your eyes and breathe deeply. Other approaches will be more active, such as going to the gym, taking a bike ride, or working in the garden. Most importantly, remember that you cannot ignore stress. If you allow stress to build, it will fire up your cravings to drink or use.

First, identify your main sources of stress (check the top three sources):

- My job
- Financial problems
- Conflict in relationships
- Physical pain
- Loneliness/boredom
- Poor time management
- Problems sleeping
- Too many commitments
- Trouble communicating (needs, feelings, ideas)
- Past traumas, events, hurts
- Exhaustion (lack of self-care)
- Other:

Next, use the following list to help you build a “toolbox” of activities to reduce stress (check activities that you think will be most helpful and add some notes. For example, list the books you want to read):

- Reading books
- Listening to music
- Meditating
- Talking to a friend
- Exercising (gym, walking, aerobics)
- Journaling
- Engaging in hobbies
- Prayer
- Keeping an organized schedule and managing time better
- Going to meetings
- Other:
Tracking Thoughts: How can I change my thinking?

Addiction is characterized by “stinking thinking” – thoughts, ideas, and rationalizations that provide an excuse to keep using. In your recovery, you will want to identify and stop the thinking that drags you back toward your addiction (for example: “I am under a lot of stress and need my drug/alcohol to calm down”). These types of thoughts need to be recognized as the “voice of your addiction” and be replaced by positive ideas that point you in the right direction (for example: “If I stay clean, I can rebuild the trust that I lost with my family”).

List some of the things your “voice of addiction” says when it tries to get you to use.

1. ___________________________________________________________________________________
2. ___________________________________________________________________________________
3. ___________________________________________________________________________________
4. ___________________________________________________________________________________
5. ___________________________________________________________________________________
6. ___________________________________________________________________________________
7. ___________________________________________________________________________________
8. ___________________________________________________________________________________

List some positive thoughts - “the voice of your recovery” - to help you stay clean and sober.

1. ___________________________________________________________________________________
2. ___________________________________________________________________________________
3. ___________________________________________________________________________________
4. ___________________________________________________________________________________
5. ___________________________________________________________________________________
6. ___________________________________________________________________________________
7. ___________________________________________________________________________________
8. ___________________________________________________________________________________
Making Changes:
What changes do I need to make in my life?

There is a saying among those in recovery that “nothing changes if nothing changes.” This realization marks one of the hardest steps in achieving lasting sobriety: you must change your life. Most importantly, you must create a life where it is easier to not use. This demands that you address those areas of your life that have triggered your addiction.

Take time to look at your life and identify the changes you want to make to improve it. Check the statements that are important to you and add names and details.

- I want to stay away from certain people because they use. ____________________________________
- I want to avoid certain places because they were sources for my drugs. ______________________
- I want to avoid certain people because they create stress or conflict in my life. ________________
- I want to avoid some places because they represent a lifestyle I no longer want. _________________
- I want to avoid some people because they will not support the changes I need to make in my life. ________________________
- I do not want to attend certain gatherings because they are associated with my using. _________
- I want to avoid things that have been associated with using (e.g. music, clothing, paraphernalia, activities). ________________________

Take some time to reflect on these goals for change. Which changes will be easy for you? Which will be difficult? Does your recovery require any major changes, such as finding a new job, ending a relationship, or moving to a different neighborhood? If so, make a plan to find the people and resources you will need to support these changes (the section, “Taking Action,” will help you create a support group).

Now that you have considered what you want to cut out of your life, think about what you might want to add to it. Are there relationships you would like to nurture? Would you like to further your education in some way? Are there any places or groups you would like to make a regular part of your life?
Establishing Goals:
*What do I want to accomplish to make my life better/more meaningful?*

Addiction destroys your life goals. It may prevent you from achieving them or it may undermine their importance. All too often in addiction, getting and using your drugs or alcohol has become your main goal.

Recovery becomes infinitely stronger as you identify where you want to go and start striving to get there. When life has a clearer purpose, it takes on new meaning and motivation.

Decide what you want to achieve as you move into recovery. Let these goals become the beacon toward which you move and the motivation for change. Take some time to create a few short-, medium-, and long-term goals.

What are my short-term goals (to accomplish this month)?

1. ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________

2. ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________

3. ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________

What are my medium-term goals (to accomplish over the next 6-12 months?)

1. ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________

2. ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________

3. ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________

What are my long-term goals (to accomplish over the next 1-3 years?)

1. ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________

2. ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________

3. ______________________________________________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________________________________________
Taking Action

If you have an addiction, you have learned how sneaky it is. Like a prowling tiger, your addiction waits for you to let down your guard so it can strike. Any hint of weakness, stress, or pain in your life can be an invitation for thoughts about using drugs and alcohol. Don't let your addiction catch you unawares.

This section will help you create checklists to monitor your recovery. It will also help you to establish clear and accessible channels of support to prevent or interrupt relapse.

Creating a Checklist:
What must I do to keep my recovery strong?

Using the list below, identify what you must do to keep your recovery on track (check your top 3-4 priorities). Keep returning to this list; you may find that your priorities change from time to time. Whatever your priorities are, remind yourself of them daily to ensure you are not slipping back into old patterns.

- Keep my relationships healthy
- Maintain good boundaries
- Improve communication
- Reduce conflict
- Avoid those who use/hurt me/are not supportive of recovery

Stay healthy:
- Eat a healthier diet
- Improve sleep habits
- Exercise (stay active)
- Make time for recreation/relaxation
- Other:

Seek support
- Participate in self-help groups
- Work with a counselor
- Have a sponsor/mentor/life coach
- Other:

Grow spiritually
- Read/learn about spirituality
- Pray/meditate
- Join a religious community
- Other:

Other:
Noticing Danger Signs:
What will show me that things need to change?

Relapse is a process, not an event. It usually starts days, weeks, or even months before the event of using again. Being alert to the danger signs, and then quickly making changes, can stop the slide toward relapse. Seek help if you experience emotions, thoughts, or behaviors that are setting you up for failure.

Using the list below, identify your three most powerful danger signs:

- Increasing anxiety
- Intolerance/restlessness
- Anger
- Defensiveness
- Mood swings
- Isolating behavior
- Refusal to ask for help
- Discontinuing recovery activities
- Poor sleeping/eating habits
- Discouragement
- Loneliness/boredom
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Thinking about people/places/things related to using
- Lying
- Glamorizing past using

When you think about "using" you need to act. What strategies will work for you?

- **Play the tape through.** Think about what drugs and alcohol have done to your life. What will happen if you start up again?

- **Distract yourself.** Craving usually last for only 15 - 30 minutes. Do something quickly to get your mind focused on other things.

- **Talk to someone.** When we share our thoughts and feelings, the desire to use will often diminish.

- **Go to a meeting.** Spending time with others in recovery can get your thinking back on track.

- **Pray/Meditate.** Seeking spiritual strength can help you overcome negative and destructive thinking.

- **Other:** ____________________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________________
  ____________________________________________________________

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Installing a Fire Alarm:

Whom do I call if things get tough?

The battle against addiction is in your own head. Thoughts and feelings keep encouraging you to act in ways that you want to avoid. Some days you will find it easy to dismiss thoughts of using, but sometimes the battle in your head will feel overwhelming. When those times come – and they do for most people in recovery – you will want support to be within easy reach. You can’t always fight addiction by yourself.

Make a list of people to call in an emergency. These people are your personal “911” resource. Keep the list updated, and use it when you feel yourself losing control.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact numbers</th>
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Recovery meetings (e.g., AA, NA, Celebrate Recovery) can keep you strong when temptation and cravings are troubling you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Address/Telephone</th>
<th>Times</th>
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Creating an Emergency Plan:

What should happen if I relapse?

Sadly, when people relapse they often fall rapidly into the same disasters that occurred when they were using in the past. Your Emergency Plan will enroll others—friends, family, sponsor—to help you get back on track before you suffer terrible consequences.

Develop a plan of action to stop a relapse and share it with the people whose help you will require. Make the plan tough, because it may be what saves your life.

What do I want those closest to me to do? Names: ____________________________________________________________

❑ Drug test me periodically and without notice to keep me accountable
❑ Take away my car keys/don’t give me any money if they think I am using again
❑ Call my sponsor/recovery supports and ask for help
❑ Refuse to offer assistance or “enable” me until I am back in recovery
❑ Other: ____________________________________________________________________________________________

What do I want my friends to do? Names: ____________________________________________________________

❑ Challenge me to go to meetings
❑ Challenge me to call my sponsor, mentor, or life coach regularly
❑ Refuse to connect me with places, people, or things associated with my using
❑ Show “tough love” and be there for me only if I am taking steps to get back in recovery
❑ Other: ____________________________________________________________________________________________

What do I want my sponsor to do? Name: ____________________________________________________________

❑ Call my family and friends and ask them to support my recovery
❑ Take me to meetings, a rehab, or an out-patient program
❑ Refuse to accept any of my excuses
❑ Other: ____________________________________________________________________________________________
Writing My Script:
*What will I tell others about my recovery journey?*

A final question to consider is what you will say to others about your recovery. While you have no obligation to tell anything to anyone, remember that addiction loves lies and secrets and will flourish in their presence. Recall a lesson that has long been taught by Alcoholics Anonymous: “You are as sick as you are secretive.”

Think about what you might want to tell people about your recovery and what you will say when asked about it.

What will you tell your family and friends about your addiction and recovery?
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

What will you say if a colleague or acquaintance asks you why you do not drink or use?
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
Moving Forward
What will help me stay sober?

Knowing what helps and what hurts your recovery will enable you make better decisions.

The suggestions listed below are from people who have had a successful recovery for 5, 10, 15, even 50 years. You will want to incorporate many of these suggestions into your life.

• **Have a positive attitude.** Don’t allow yourself to get caught up in negative thinking. If you think good thoughts, your life will be happier.

• **Pay close attention to the symptoms.** When your body, mind, emotions, and spirit start showing signs of neglect, act quickly to make things better.

• **Have meaningful goals.** A sense of purpose gives meaning to life and motivates us to stay on the right path.

• **Don’t try to do everything yourself.** The people who do best in recovery are those who are not afraid to ask others for help.

• **Find a community.** Human beings are wired for relationships. Get involved in communities that will validate and support you (AA, Celebrate Recovery, a church or volunteer group, etc.).

• **Keep learning.** Understanding addiction is important so that you don’t get tricked by its clever games. Science is constantly being updated, so the learning never stops.

• **Have fun.** Recovery should never be a sad and lonely place. There are millions of people like you searching for friends with whom to enjoy an addiction-free life.

• **Make a commitment to self-care.** You need to take care of yourself, remembering that factors like HALT (hungry, angry, lonely, tired) are powerful invitations for your addiction to return.

• **Accept that life can be difficult.** Using drugs and alcohol is often a way to avoid life. Instead we need to accept life’s challenges and work through them.

• **Keep growing.** The tasks of recovery are all about becoming a better person. Work to become better at managing stress, building healthy relationships, and establishing goals and pursuing them with passion.

**Don’t neglect the spiritual.** The biggest questions in life should not be avoided. Think about what you believe. Strive to build your faith.
Useful Resources:

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Alcoholics Anonymous

Addiction and Grace: Love and Spirituality in the Healing of Addictions, Gerald May, M.D.

12 Stupid Things That Mess Up Recovery, Allen Berger

12 Smart Things To Do When The Booze And Drugs Are Gone, Allen Berger

Healing the Addicted Brain, Harold Urschel

Why don’t they Just Quit? What Families and Friends need to know about Addiction and Recovery, Joe Herzanek
St. Joseph Institute is a residential program for adults struggling with drug and alcohol addiction. It uses a personalized approach emphasizing one-on-one counseling and treatment for co-occurring conditions. The Institute's program is holistic and faith-based, striving to provide addicts and alcoholics with the skills and resources to establish lasting recovery.

Our objective is to offer the best possible care for the residents at St. Joseph Institute with a team of highly credentialed professionals with years of experience in behavioral health.

The mountain side campus in central Pennsylvania features log and stone lodges, a wellness center and gym, library, chapel, recreational facilities, and miles of walking trails on 200 peaceful acres.

Visit us at StJosephInstitute.com or call 888-777-1098