

MS Christian Counseling Network
Lifeworks Counseling & Turning Point Counseling
The Center for Christian Sexual Integrity

Getting Started

-

Writing a Sobriety Plan



Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

Celebrate Recovery 12 Steps and Biblical Comparisons

1 We admitted we were powerless over our addictions and compulsive behaviors, that our lives had become unmanageable.

I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. Romans 7:18

2 We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. Philippians 2:13

3 We made a decision to turn our lives and our wills over to the care of God.

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God - this is your spiritual act of worship. Romans 12:1

4 We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord. Lamentations 3:40

5 We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. James 5:16

6 We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. James 4:10

7 We humbly asked Him to remove all our shortcomings.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

8 We made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

Do to others as you would have them do to you. Luke 6:31

9 We made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5:23-24

10 We continue to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 1 Corinthians 10:12

11 We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of His will for us, and power to carry that out.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Colossians 3:16

12 Having had a spiritual experience as the result of these steps, we try to carry this message to others and practice these principles in all our affairs.

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore them gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Galatians 6:1

**Getting Started
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Getting Started

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The Sobriety Plan Class Syllabus

Unit Length in Session: 8 Weeks

Attendees Will Be Able To:

- **Identify their Three Circles.**
- **Name and describe the five (5) stages of the addictive shame cycle and articulate their ritualized acting out behavior.**
- **Understand the components of a strong sobriety plan and articulate the importance of each component.**
- **Construct a sobriety plan to manage triggers and abstain from inner circle behaviors using the tools of recovery.**
- **Revise a sobriety plan, based on their lived experience, to improve and maintain their sobriety.**

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Week	Activities (Break-out groups)	Homework	Recovery Work
1: Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read sections on Addictive Shame Cycle (ASC) and sobriety plan on pp. 11-13 in <i>Getting Started</i>. • Complete trigger examples on p.13. • Discuss your experiences with triggers and the ASC with the group. • Distribute Sobriety Plan calendar template • Discuss with group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filled out list of triggers on p. 13. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read section on the Three Circles in the <i>Green Book</i> for next week.
2: Three Circles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read Three Circles section on p.14 of <i>Getting Started</i>. • Discuss the differences between the three circles. • Split off with a partner or independently to work on three circles. • Review Sobriety Plan Calendar. Discuss what you will include in your sobriety plan to prevent you from engaging in inner circle activities. • Fill out pp.18-19 in <i>Getting Started</i>. • Use questions on bottom of p. 19 to discuss the ASC and the Three Circles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete your Three Circles on pp.18-19 of <i>Getting Started</i>. Ask someone who has completed the Three Circles to review your work for accuracy and clarity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use your Sobriety Plan Calendar to keep track of the decisions you make to stay sober • Read carefully pp 26-28, Self-care to Rigorous Honesty
3: Tools of Recovery: Self-care, Ten immediate rewards, Rigorous honesty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review pp. 26-28. • Discuss question on bottom of p. 26. • Read “Identify ten immediate rewards” on p.27 • Make your list of rewards. • Read section on rigorous honesty on page 28. • Make a two-column chart. On top of the left column, write <i>Truthful</i>. On top of the right column, write <i>Dishonest</i>. Write 5 examples of when you told the truth over the past 48 hours and 5 examples of when you have lied over the past 48 hours. • Discuss your list with a partner. • Select meetings you will attend on Sobriety Plan Calendar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sobriety Plan Calendar that has specific meetings that you will attend. • Include some of your 10 rewards on the calendar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorize the first 6 of the 12 Steps. • Make the meetings you committed to on your Sobriety Plan.

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<p>4: Tools of Recovery: Meetings, Phone calls, Journaling, Self-talk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share with a partner your memorized 6 Steps. • Whole group discussion: How faithful were we in using our sobriety plan? Where did we fall short? • Read section on p. 29 entitled “Attend Meetings Regularly” and section “Establishing a Daily Phone Program” on p. 30. • Read section on journaling, positive self-talk. • Add journaling to sobriety plan calendar. Journal prompts: What was triggering to me today? How did I feel when I was triggered? What did I do with my trigger? What am I grateful for today? What is positive about me? What strengths, talents, and/or assets do I have? How have I been doing with my recovery? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dishonest</i> and <i>Truthful</i> list. • Sobriety Plan calendar that includes phone calls, meetings, and journaling. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorize the remaining 6 of the 12 Steps. • Use your sobriety plan calendar to help you make phone calls, attend meetings, and journal.
<p>5: Tools of Recovery: Program Literature, Meditation, Prayer, and Sponsorship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share with a partner the steps you have memorized. • Partner discussion: How faithfully did you use your sobriety plan this week? • Review p. 32 on Program Literature. • Select a book that you will start to read this month. • Read section on p. 34 about prayer and meditation. Discuss 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sobriety Plan Calendar that includes program literature and conversations with accountability partner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use your sobriety plan calendar to help you make phone calls, attend meetings, read program literature, and journal.

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	<p>your thoughts on this section with a partner.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read pp. 35-36 on sponsorship. Choose a partner in this group to be an accountability partner - someone you will text or call daily to discuss how well you are using your sobriety plan calendar. • Set a deadline for when you would like to have a sponsor if you do not have one already. 		
<p>6: Tools of Recovery: Aphorisms and Distorted Thinking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner discussion: How faithful have you been with using your sobriety plan this week? • Read section on aphorisms on p. 37. • Read pp. 38-44 on Distorted Thinking. Complete tables and identify the 5 most common types of distorted thinking that you resort to when triggered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed aphorisms table. • Completed distorted thinking tables. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Journal about when you experience distorted thinking this week. • Use your sobriety plan calendar to help you make phone calls, attend meetings, read program literature, and journal.

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<p>7: Writing Sobriety Plan and Weekly Calendar</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner discussion: Where you have you used your sobriety plan faithfully? Where have you fallen short? • Read pp. 45-48 and complete activities. • Review plan and calendar with partner. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed sobriety plan and weekly calendar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use sobriety plan and sobriety plan calendar.
<p>8: Revision and Closing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole group discussion: Where you have you used your sobriety plan faithfully? Where have you fallen short? • Sit down with a partner to revise your sobriety plan and shore up weaker parts of your plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised sobriety plan and calendar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use sobriety plan and sobriety plan calendar • Use one of your immediate rewards to celebrate completing the class.

Writing a Sobriety Plan

Your beliefs become your thoughts,

Your thoughts become your words,

Your words become your actions,

Your actions become your habits,

Your habits become your values,

Your values become your destiny.

Mahatma Gandhi

Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

Introduction

The good folks in AA make an important distinction that can prove helpful to the Celebrate Recovery newcomer.

In AA, a person is “dry” when that person abstains from drinking through willpower or self-control. Often described as “white-knuckling,” this method of abstinence requires a determination that is difficult if not impossible to sustain.

AA also says an alcoholic is “sober” when he or she successfully works the 12 Steps. The alcoholic in recovery has realized that willpower alone is useless and has decided to try something different. The sober person aligns with a Higher Power and humbly receives through *Grace* what is unobtainable through self-will.

It is true that a few of our AA cousins had their moment of clarity and never drank again, but most in AA had to work the Steps earnestly to find serenity. They white-knuckled their way while working the 12 Steps, fending off the urge to drink as they confronted and put to rest a lifetime of resentments, fears and hurts.

Newcomers to Celebrate Recovery (CR) will have to do walk a similar path. Newcomers must somehow stay “dry” long enough to work the Steps and get “sober.” This is not an easy thing to do.

Admitting our wrongs and the damage we have done *without acting out* is a tough but not impossible assignment.

What we need to help us stay “dry” is a well thought-out plan made up of the most effective strategies available – the tools of recovery - to support us every hour of the day. The tools of recovery remind us what is at stake and keep us grounded in the present moment.

Getting Started will help you understand the Addiction Shame Cycle and to use that knowledge to write three important documents:

- The Three Circles
- A detailed sobriety plan
- A week-long calendar

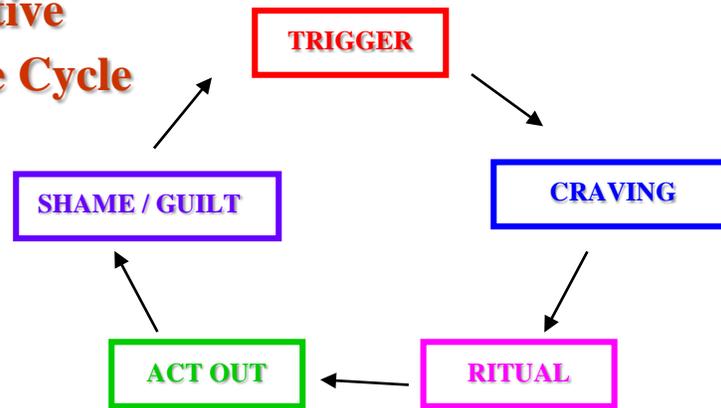
These documents take time to build but with effort you will soon have an approach that will keep you safe as you work the Steps.

Remember also that because you are constantly changing, your sobriety plan will require frequent updating.

A plan that works today may be useless next year.

Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

Addictive Shame Cycle



The five (5) stages in the cycle are:

1. Trigger – Either emotional or physical.
 - a. Can occur minutes before – or days before.
 - b. Compels us **to avoid the feeling(s)**.
 - c. Unless addressed, always leads to craving.
2. Craving – The strong desire to act out.
 - a. Mentally move into The Bubble
 - b. Reality becomes distorted.
 - c. Obsess about sex.
 - d. Think / Plan how to act out.
 - e. Can last minutes or hours
 - f. **Our last, best chance to get off the cycle on our own.**
3. Ritual – Our set pattern or ceremony that leads to acting out. An example:
 - a. 1st – Search the internet for sexually suggestive images.
 - b. 2nd Cruise streets / coffee shops / malls for visual hits.
 - c. 3rd Go to strip bars for more intense validation.
 - d. Enter a trance-like state of heightened arousal.
 - e. **Almost impossible to stop without some kind of external interruption.**
4. Using – Acting out.
 - a. Feel better for the moment but then realize what we have done.
 - b. Usually not as satisfying as we had imagined or hoped.
 - c. Realize powerlessness and unmanageability; (we are slaves.)
 - d. Despair / Hopelessness lead to next stage.
5. Shame – “I am bad.” Usually accompanied by Guilt - “I did something bad.”
 - a. Betrayed spiritual beliefs, possibly a partner, and our sense of integrity.
 - b. Alternating waves of pseudo-guilt and shame.
 - c. Insincere promise to “never do it again.”
 - d. May trigger a new cycle.

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Examples of Physical Triggers:

- People - My mother. Your example: _____
- Places – My mother’s living room. Your example: _____
- Things – Conversations with my mother. Your example: _____

Examples of Emotional Triggers:

- Feelings – Feeling Less Than. Your example: _____
- Thoughts – I will never please my mother. Your example: _____
- Circumstances – Being my mother’s son. Your example: _____

Breaking the Addictive Shame Cycle requires intense self-awareness and courage.

We must identify and analyze the triggers so that we can recognize them while they are happening or ideally before they happen.

This task is critically important for the addict who can only go “X” number of days without acting out. When an addict sincerely works to remain sober yet engages in a cyclical pattern of sobriety – relapse – sobriety – relapse, the likeliest causes are either a failure to identify the trigger(s) **or** a sobriety plan that does not adequately address those triggers.

There are several effective ways to identify our triggers. Here are three:

- Talk about our own addictive behavior at meetings. Listen to others talk about their triggers. Ask ourselves if that also triggers us.
- Our spouses and significant others are attuned to our behavior and can frequently shed light on it. Ask them if they know why you are feeling sad, for example.
- Journal daily, especially about our feelings. Writing about our daily life makes it possible to go back and review what happened to us right before we acted out.

Pseudo-Shame and Guilt, the final stage of the cycle, deserves some additional scrutiny. First, the shame and guilt we feel after acting out is **not** genuine. True shame and guilt motivate us to change. The fifth stage keeps us from changing by feeding our self-loathing (Trigger) which sets us up to act out again.

Second, we wallow in this phony sensation because, strangely, doing so suggests that we are not as awful as we feared. If we despise ourselves for acting out, then we must still have a functioning conscience. We feel “better” when we hate ourselves. The more we hate ourselves, the more reassured we are that we are not completely “lost.” This urge is so strong that for many of us, shame and guilt come to permanently define who we are.

Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

The Three Circles

You do not need drugs or alcohol to have a healthy life but you do need sex. Your addiction corrupted your sex life in insane ways. One of the goals of the program is to help you stop the insanity and reclaim sex as a healthy, loving activity. To do that you have to first clearly define what crazy looks like for you because destructive sexual behavior takes many forms.

If you have a clearly defined list of Middle and Inner Circle behaviors, you and your sponsor can use it to decide if any future sexual behavior is healthy or not; in other words, to tell whether or not you have relapsed.

Example of a not-so-clear definition:

Compulsive masturbation

Example of a clear definition:

Compulsive masturbation is more than once a day with or without pornography.

What follows is a wonderful approach to writing the 3 Circle submitted by one of the facilitators from the Saturday Class. It is used frequently to great effect.

In Celebrate Recovery we work to abstain from our addictive behaviors. But this simple instruction poses a difficult question – of all of the sexual behaviors we express or engage in which are the ones we abstain from? The answer – abstain from those sexual behaviors that are compulsive, destructive and unwanted by YOU.

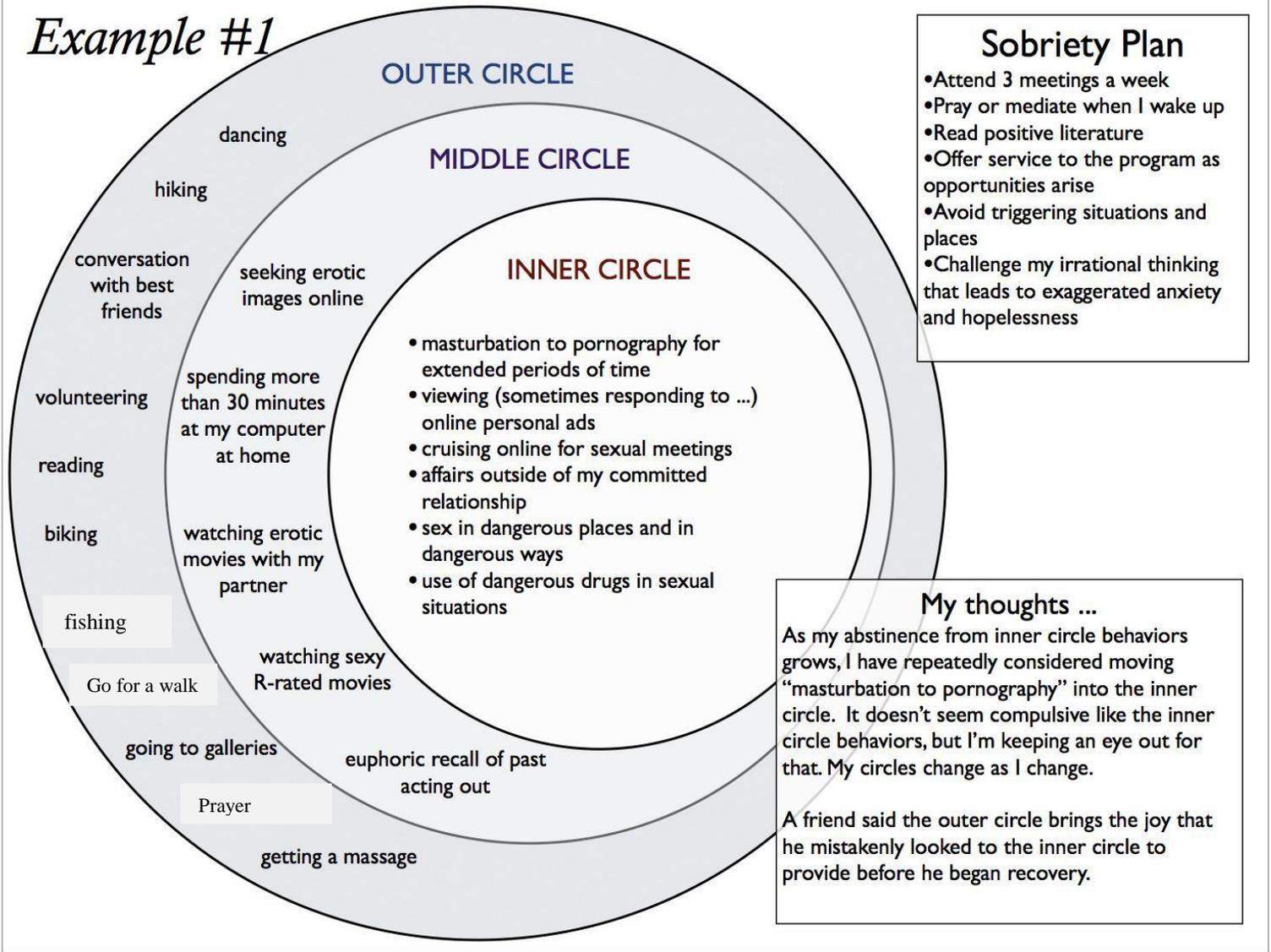
We all differ. You will find two real life examples in the diagrams below.

So from the beginning and on an on-going basis it is important to identify your compulsive sexual behaviors. Many find it helpful to make lists of three types of behaviors:

- Inner circle (also called bottom line or addictive behaviors) are the ones you choose to avoid because they are innately unhealthy for you.
- Middle circle behaviors are slippery-slope activities that can lead to your inner circle.
- Outer circle behaviors are the joy of life – they are the behaviors that provide the satisfaction you thought acting out would provide but never did. They are the meaningful activities that replace acting out as we learn to care for ourselves and enjoy life.

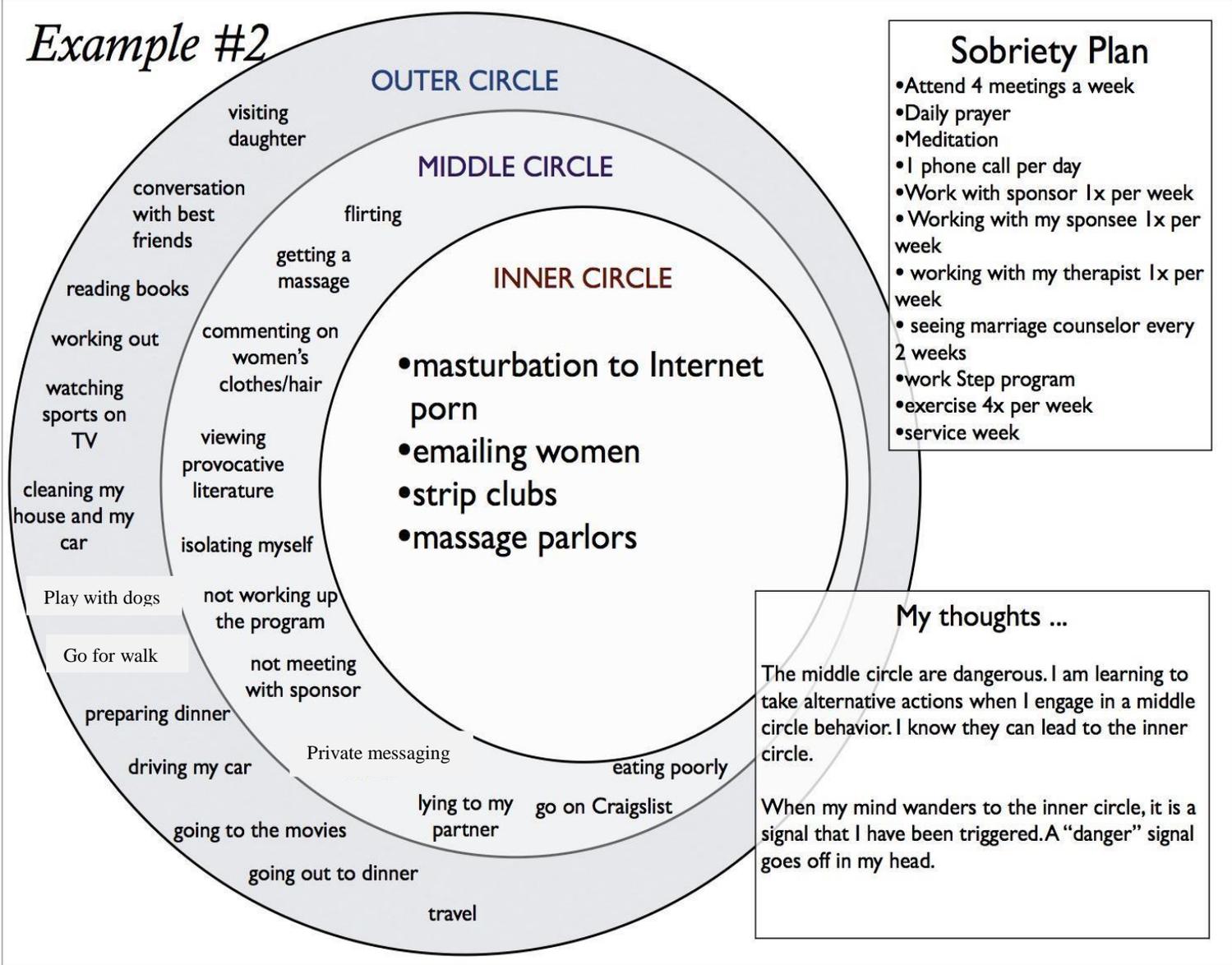
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Example #1



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Example #2



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OUTER CIRCLE

MIDDLE CIRCLE

INNER CIRCLE

Sobriety Plan

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

My Thoughts.....

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OUTER CIRCLE

MIDDLE CIRCLE

INNER CIRCLE

Questions for discussion, contemplation, or journaling:

Exercise 1: Which stage in the Addictive Shame Cycle is the safest?

Exercise 2: Describe the relationship between the Three Circles, the Bubble, and the Addictive Shame Cycle.

Exercise 3: Can you overlay the Three Circles and the Bubble on the Addictive Shame Cycle?

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Recovery Timeline for Sex Addiction*

Pre-recovery	Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Year Five
Developing Stage 2 years or more					
	Crisis/Decision Stage Up to 3 months				
		Shock Stage About 8 months			
			Grief Stage 4 to 8 months		
		Repair Stage 1 ½ to 3 years			
				Growth Stage Two years and continuing	

The First Year

- Life is better, but improvement is small.
- Extraordinary turmoil – there is testing of the resolve to change
- Most slips occur in the second six months.
- Health indicators – accidents, sickness, and visits to physicians are the worst for the second six months and are the worst for any other portion of the first five years

Second and Third Years

- Significant rebuilding starts (finances, coping with stress, spirituality, self-image, career status, and friendships)
- Greater stability and sense of well-being
- A period of intense personal work.

The Fourth and Fifth Years

- Improvements in relationships to loved ones
- Shift towards more healthy and satisfying sexual expressions
- Overall life satisfaction improves dramatically

Don't Call It Love by Patrick Carnes 1992

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The Stages of Recovery for Sexual Addiction*

The Developing Stage

- Unmanageability and powerlessness force the addict to acknowledge the problem, but continues actively in the addiction.
- This often lasts two or more years.

The Crisis / Decision Stage

- Decide whether a commitment to change will be made
- Can take up to 3 months (and many false starts)

The Shock Stage

- A time of emotional numbness
- Follow A.A.'s caution – “Nothing major the first year”
- Up to the first 8 months of recovery

The Grief Stage

- Often appearing in earlier stages, this stage settles into the sadness and pain when losses are finally acknowledged.
- Addicts tend to act out in order to manage the pain
- Lasts 4 to 8 months – towards the end of the first year and beginning of the second

The Repair Stage

- Sobriety, intense spirituality, and personal growth
- Achieving balance and focusing on the basics
- First 1 ½ to 3 years

The Growth Stage

- Explore new options and restructure relationships
- Quality of relationships improve dramatically
- Start to focus on the needs of others
- Greater balance and intimacy
- Improved capacity to resolve conflict
- More compassionate
- Greater satisfaction with life
- Deep abhorrence of old behavior
- Usually during years 4 and 5

* from *Don't Call It Love*, Patrick Carnes, 1992

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Disclosure - How Not To Screw Up

A disclosure occurs when the addict tells a family member, usually the spouse, the details of acting out. A disclosure serves many purposes. It is done most often to help the spouse understand the extent of the addict's powerlessness and unmanageability, and hopefully preserve the relationship.

There is no question preparing a disclosure will provoke anxiety. It would not be wise to allow that stress to cloud your judgment. As you prepare, keep these things in mind.

A disclosure is a therapeutic event best performed under the watchful gaze of a trained sex addiction therapist. The therapist explains the disclosure process and encourages the addict to prepare. He or she also provides guidance on how much to disclose.

Family members and spouses differ as to the amount and degree of detail they want. The addict should explain the disclosure process and ask the spouse how much they want to know. Ideally, the spouse is working with a separate therapist who helps answer that question.

Preparation is critical to a successful disclosure. Saying too little will incite suspicions. Saying too much may cause unnecessary harm and more resentment. It usually takes the addict several drafts of the disclosure letter to get it right.

A disclosure is a rehearsed confession of past transgressions. The addict usually reads a prepared statement that insures the family member or spouse's questions are answered in full and that no more is said than is required.

A disclosure is planned and **never** spontaneous. Because of the very real possibility of an angry reaction, disclosures are best given on neutral ground when all parties are well rested and able to focus completely on the disclosure.

A successful disclosure makes a new beginning possible. If all goes well, it can also be the prelude to improved communication, trust, and reconciliation.

A bad disclosure does not mean the relationship is over. Even the best plans can fall apart.

Have faith.

Keep trying.

Good luck.

Tools of Recovery

*How we alter our thinking, manage our emotions, and
change our actions.*

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Tools of Recovery

The first 12 tools of recovery - and by far the most important - are the 12 Steps of Celebrate Recovery and their Biblical foundations.

The 12 Steps work across cultures, languages, and religions.

The 12 Steps work for the rich and the poor, the well-educated, and the uneducated alike.

The 12 Steps work for communists, socialists, capitalists and every other form of governmental paradigm.

To work them requires absolute resolve and those capable of such commitment are almost certainly assured recovery.

They who do not recover most often fail to do so because they cannot be honest about their failings, their brokenness, or their fear. The long history of Alcoholics Anonymous and the shorter history of Sex Addiction Recovery bear faithful witness to these facts.

The literature of recovery and the behavior modification techniques of addiction therapy contain many strategies and tactics that can be used by the determined addict to stay “dry” long enough to work the Steps and recover the life God intended us to live.

What follows is a brief overview of some of the more popular and effective tools used by the CR community.

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Memorize the 12 Steps

This is so obvious it is hard to imagine the need to state it.

The fact is an unsettling number of regular meeting attendees have yet to memorize them. This is sheer pridefulness; the addict's private, rebellious declaration that "I already know what the Step means so why do I have to memorize what it actually says?"

We believe that AA's greatest gift to humankind is the precise phrasing of the individual Steps. They are brilliant guideposts that represent the condensed wisdom of hundreds, if not thousands, of minds struggling to mark the way out of the darkness of addiction.

Memorizing them *exactly* will eliminate confusion over what to do, will save valuable time, and will spare you avoidable pain.

If you have not already done so, take a moment to memorize the Steps. You would be wise to look upon any reluctance to commit the Steps to memory as simple willfulness, the poison fruit of pride.

- **The antidote to pride is humility, the honest admission that willfulness is poison. Memorizing the Steps and their Biblical foundations is the next right, *humble* thing to do.**

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Practice Self-Care

Self-care is the attentive regard paid to one's own well-being across all dimensions: spiritual, physical, mental, and psychological.

Addicts entering the program talk frequently about how tired they are; how it is impossible to complete all they have to do. Life for them is one long series of occasions when they arrive late, perform poorly, argue with family, and/or face looming financial meltdowns.

Sadly, it is very difficult for the novice to understand that most of the drama in their lives is self-inflicted and avoidable, the product of poor self-care.

Newcomers should chronicle their daily activities for a few days and look for ways to avoid or eliminate stressors.

- Spiritual
 - Learn to pray and meditate alone
 - Attend church and men's coaching meetings
 - Memorize scripture verses and recite them throughout the day
 - Subscribe to daily devotionals.
 - Give thanks at all times, in all places, under all circumstances.
- Physical
 - Go to bed at a decent hour. Every day. Really.
 - Go for long walks. Take your dog. Dogs are experts on long walks.
 - Eat nutritious meals regularly.
 - Drink plenty of water every day.
- Mental
 - Take mental health breaks when you can.
 - Do something fun on your list of *Ten Fun Things To Do*.
 - Ask your dog if going for a walk is fun.
 - Eat some chocolate.
- Psychological
 - If you need a therapist, **get one**.
 - If your doctor prescribes medications, take them as directed.
 - Do more than attend meetings. Learn to live connected in community.
 - Get to know other people; end your loneliness.
 - Do random acts of kindness. Practice giving and the discipline of tithing.

You will notice that the larger non-addicted community commonly promotes and practices these activities all the time. In fact, addicts often say they know they need to go to sleep earlier, eat better, etc. They “just do not.”

Is your self-care what it should be? What can you do **now** to improve it?

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Identify Ten Immediate Rewards

For a long time, we reinforced our destructive behavior by using the pleasures of sex to numb the pains of life. Sex is certainly an intense reward. We now want to break that habit (Inner Circle) and replace it with new, healthier choices (Outer Circle).

Human beings need a reason to abandon a behavior or to adopt a new one and life-changing motivation comes in two flavors: Enjoyable Rewards and Unpleasant Rewards

We want to focus on positive rewards. Most addicts begin the Program with only a handful of enjoyable rewards that are not related to acting out. For a sad few, the *only* reward they allow themselves *is* to act out.

Step work is hard and often very triggering. Without a positive, healthy reward to immediately reinforce the new behavior (Step work, attending meetings, calling brothers, service work,) it will soon feel like torture that will then build into a resentment that will likely end in acting out. We need to avoid thinking negatively about the Program because our addict is actively looking for reasons to not work the Steps.

To start and then maintain a steady pace of change will depend greatly on *how well* **and** *how consistently* we reward our new habits. We should select our reward ahead of time and always provide it.

An important aspect of this reward system is that it should be for you and you alone. Taking your significant other out for dinner is fun and rewarding but it is not what we have in mind. In a sense, this is another form of good self-care. You are the one doing the heavy lifting to get sober. You should be the one rewarded.

Another key point is that you should reward yourself immediately after your practice your new behavior or as close to it as possible. Delayed gratification loses its intensity.

It takes time to identify health rewards. Before you write your sobriety plan or do any Step work, make a list of ten immediate, wonderful and personal rewards. You can write on the page opposite this one or in your journal. Frequent examples include:

1. Chocolate (if on your diet)
2. Go for a walk in the country.
3. Have fun playing.
4. Going to a movie.
5. Buying some clothes.
6. Take yourself to dinner.
7. Attending a sporting event.
8. Take the day off.
9. Go fishing.
10. Take a nap.

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Commit To Rigorous Honesty

You walked in the meeting room door a world-class liar.

Point of fact, you walked into a roomful of world-class liars.

Even though we are mindful of the cost of lying, we continue to lie. If you are like the rest of us before we got sober, you go through the day lying - even when the truth will do.

You need to stop lying to work this program and to help you do that we recommend a little, simple exercise.

We recommend that for the first few weeks, you practice telling the truth in all circumstances.

If a workmate invites you to lunch at a place you do not like, say so, tactfully.

Keep track of the number of times you lie. Check it in at meetings and phone calls.

There are two points to this exercise. The first is clear: To Break Yourself of the Habit of Lying. The second is not as obvious. By monitoring your conversations throughout the day, you will become aware of all of the unnecessary energy you waste thinking up cheap lies when simply telling the truth would cost you nothing.

We lie for no reason at all.

We lie when the truth will do.

That can end now if you want.

Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

Attend Meetings Regularly

Isolation is not our friend and never has been.

It robs us of all the comforts of human companionship and allows our deep-rooted shame to fully occupy our minds.

Worse, it is in isolation that relentless self-criticism blares in our heads, sapping our will and pushing hope away.

For these and other reasons it is imperative that we attend meetings regularly. We need to immerse ourselves in the new atmosphere of hope and change. We need to meet people who share our struggle but not our despair. We need to re-attune our ear to the strange new sound of the truth being spoken. We need to tell our own story, honestly.

Thirty meetings in 30 days is a good beginning for the newcomer. Sixty meetings in 60 days is better still. AA wisdom lore says ninety meetings in 90 days.

There are many types of meetings for men in our area: Walking Free, Sex Addicts Anonymous, Celebrate Recovery, Men's Coaching, Men's Groups where guys are authentic and real.

You can combine Walking Free/Celebrate Recovery meetings with other meetings to fill the days with hope.

If you travel or live in an area where meetings are not currently held, you can add teleconference or web-based meetings.

Make a schedule each week. Report your progress in check-ins.

If you slip, start over. Stick to it.

- **You can hold your own meeting any time you want by holding a conference call with three or more recovery partners joining in. Caller A calls Caller B who conferences Caller C and so on.**
- **Each gets 3 minutes to check in and 5 minutes can be devoted to a topic of interest or to allow someone in trouble extra time to talk things through.**
- **This is an especially effective strategy whenever you travel.**

Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

Establish a Daily Phone Program

Shame can isolate us even when we are in a crowd, triggering us to act out.

The workplace is a particularly tempting place. We can hide in our office, cubicle, or car and pretend to work.

Others of us find ourselves isolating at home just after work, before the wife or kids get home.

There is a straightforward way to avoid the isolation trap: Call someone in the program or arrange for someone to call you during those times you are most vulnerable.

Most meetings maintain a list of people willing to accept phone calls. Ask for one.

Announce that you would like three people willing to accept your calls to speak with you after the meeting.

Put their phone number in your cell phone immediately. Call them before they depart to insure you entered their number correctly and so that they will have your contact information.

Tell them when you are most vulnerable and need them to call. Ask them when they want you to call. Be there for them.

Three calls a day (morning, noon and night) is a healthy average.

- **You can strengthen your sobriety plan by arranging to make and receive phone calls at those times of the day when you usually act out.**
- **You can magnify the benefit of the phone call by holding a conference call with three or more recovery partners joining in. Caller A calls Caller B who conferences Caller C and so on.**
- **Each gets 3 minutes to check in and 5 minutes can be devoted to a topic of interest or to allow someone in trouble extra time to talk things through.**

Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

Journaling and Positive Self-Talk

Negative self-talk is the most destructive ongoing activity we engage in and is chiefly responsible for keeping us on some stage of the Addictive Shame Cycle.

This negative internal dialogue began on the playground when we were children and were the last one picked for the team, continued into high school with all of its social pitfalls, and is still at work today, whispering that we are frauds when we project a composed and confident persona at work.

As awful as it is, internal dialogue is remarkably responsive to counter-measures. This quotation from Hazelden explains why.

One comes, finally, to believe whatever one repeats to one's self, whether the statement is true or false. Napoleon Hill

Our inner dialogue can have awesome power. It often determines the behavior that defines who we are. We do, of course, have some choice as to the direction this inner dialogue will take. It is as easy to affirm our self-worth with positive messages as it is to tear ourselves down with negative ones, yet many of us habitually prefer negative patterns of thought.

We become proficient at what we practice daily. The sustained use of positive self-affirmation profoundly contributes to our well-being and can change the course of our lives. All we need do is develop the discipline to make these positive messages habitual. In so doing, we align our vision of ourselves with God's. We are imperfect creatures who need daily, loving encouragement.

The messages I give myself today will remind me that I am a capable and lovable child of God.

- **Keeping a journal allows us to write down our negative messages or A.N.T.S. (automatic negative thought systems) as they occur as well as the feelings (a Trigger) we experienced. A.N.T.S. are pre-trigger thoughts that lead to Triggers (feelings).**
- **Taking the time to write positive statements aimed directly at the negative ones gets us off the Addictive Shame Cycle and moves us in the direction of wholeness and confidence.**
- **Once you have written your positive self-affirmation consider writing it on your bathroom mirror at night so that it is the first thing you read in the morning. Email it to your work address so that you can open it when you get there. If your computer allows it, add it to your screensaver so that it scrolls on the monitor when it is idle.**

Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

Read and Write Positive Literature

Another excellent way to combat the negative internal dialogue is to read positive literature. In no particular order, here is a short list of recommended books.

- *AA Big Book*
- *The AA Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (available as a free download)
- *SAA Green Book*
- *Hope & Recovery* – CompCare Publishers
- By Patrick Carnes
 - *A Gentle Path Through the Twelve Steps*
 - *A Gentle Path Through the Twelve Traditions*
 - *Out of the Shadows*
 - *Sexual Anorexia*
 - *Facing the Shadow* (workbook)
 - *Recovery Zone*
 - *Don't Call It Love*
 - *Open Hearts: Renewing Relationships with Recovery, Romance, and Reality* (with Laaser & Laaser)
- *Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction* by Mark Laaser
- *Faithful & True Workbook* by Mark Laaser
- *The Conquer Series* by Dr. Ted Roberts (6 DVD's)
- *A Hunger for Healing* by Keith Miller
- *The Search for Significance* by Robert McGee
- *The Fight of Your Life* by Tim Clinton & Mark Laaser
- *Every Man's Battle* by Steve Arterburn
- *Worthy of Her Trust* by Steve Arterburn & Jason Martinkus
- *Emotional Sobriety* by Tian Dayton
- *Changes that Heal* by Henry Cloud
- *How People Grow* by Henry Cloud
- *Helping Your Spouse heal from Your Affair* by Linda McDonald
- *The Path to Serenity* by Hemfelt, Fowler, Minirith, Meier
- *False Intimacy* by Harry Schaumburg
- *Night Light* by James & Shirley Dobson
- *Renovation of the Heart* by Dallas Willard
- *The Gifts of Imperfection* by Brene Brown
- *Daring Greatly: How the Courage To Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent and Lead* by Brene Brown
- *Drop the Rock: Removing Character Defects -- Steps Six and Seven* by Bill P.
- *The Spirituality of Imperfection* by Ernest Kurtz
- *Answers In The Heart* available from Hazelden
- *Unattended Sorrow: Recovering from Loss and Reviving the Heart* by Stephen Levine
- *The Hole in the Sidewalk* by Claudia Black
- *The Brain that Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science* by Norman Doidge
- *You Can't Make Me Angry* by Dr. Paul O

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- *Healing the Hardware of the Soul* by Daniel Amen
- *Mind Over Mood: Change How You Feel by Changing the Way You Think* by Dennis Greenberger, Ph.D. and Christine Padesky, Ph.D.

Start your own library of recovery literature and read it regularly. Well-written classics like those on the list will offer wisdom each time you reach for them.

Another way to bring positive energy to your day is to join email distribution lists that deliver an inspirational email daily.

You can reinforce the positive message you read by writing down your reactions to it. Do you agree with it? Can you recall a time in your life when the example applied to you? How can you begin to apply it in your life now?

Share your writings with your men's community, accountability partners, co-sponsor, or sponsor.

The take-home lesson is this: The best way to end the negative self-talk is to change the subject.

Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

Pray and Meditate

All 12 Step programs are spiritual programs, founded on the principle that compulsive, destructive addictive behavior is the **hallmark of a conflicted soul**; a soul recklessly committed to perfection and tortured by persistent failure.

As self-appointed accusers (shame), judges, and juries, addicts engage in endless self-judgment and condemnation. The god of the addict's understanding lacks compassion and insists on payment in full for sins of commission and omission.

The 12 Steps and Biblical Foundations state the way out of our self-inflicted suffering is to accept the free, undeserved, and unearnable love and forgiveness of God. That is what is meant by "*From Shame to Grace*."

The 12 Steps and their Biblical Foundations are for the perpetually ashamed and guilt-ridden who desperately need Grace but who will not allow themselves to accept it precisely because it is free.

Prayer and meditation are the moments in our lives we carve out specifically to connect with and become aware of God's created order right in front of us, to ask questions like:

- What would my life look like if I were sober?
- Why do I insist things be done perfectly when I know perfection is impossible?
- What would it take to be free of the need to always be right?
- Do I have to hate myself?
- How do I stop?

When we pray and meditate, we invite hope and compassion to join the conversation. We stop *doing* and start *being*.

Prayer, Scripture, connection, and meditation are the roads that help us to accept the Grace we desperately need and that has always been ours.

You will practice both during this intensive retreat.

Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

Get a Sponsor, Co-Sponsor, Mentor, Guide, Coach, or Accountability Partner

Getting a Sponsor

The line from the Big Book goes something like, “If you see someone who has the kind of sobriety you want, ask that person to be your sponsor.”

Excellent advice.

To find someone with that kind of sobriety, you must attend meetings, pay attention to what is said, get to know people and allow yourself to be known, the benefits of which are as real as they are obvious.

Do not be shy. (Well, you can be shy but that will not help you.) Get out of your comfort zone.

Ask for what you need.

Ask (politely) as many people as necessary. Go to
any lengths.

You know that time in every meeting when the facilitator says, “The meeting is now open for check-in and sharing.”

That is your cue to stand up, introduce yourself, say you need a sponsor, and ask that anyone interested reach out to you at the end of the meeting.

Do NOT take it personally if no one responds. Everyone has life constraints.

Attend more meetings. Introduce yourself to more people.

An effective strategy is to ask someone to sponsor you to *find* a sponsor. That person will support your efforts and help you strategize.

Yet another successful approach is to find a temporary sponsor to help you through the first couple of Steps while simultaneously looking for a permanent sponsor.

Sponsors looking for new sponsees will occasionally join the Step Class to evaluate the students. Distinguish yourself in the Step Class by actively participating, doing the work, reading the material, and learning other people’s names and stories.

Persevere.

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Co-Sponsor

If push comes to shove, you do not need a sponsor to work the Steps. What is required is access to 12 Step materials and a resolve to work them. Incarcerated prisoners daily demonstrate the truth of this by successfully work the Steps without a sponsor being physically present. They rely on letters from people willing to serve as correspondence sponsors, but this role is nothing like the traditional sponsor role.

Luckily if you cannot find a sponsor you also have the option of working with a co-sponsor(s), ideally in a Step Class.

A co-sponsor is someone who works the Steps with you. In this type of working relationship each party helps the other work the Steps. Both support one another through phone calls, getting to meetings, and actively discuss the Steps.

This is an excellent near-term strategy to work the Steps until you find a sponsor.

Accountability Partner

An accountability partner helps you stay sober by holding you accountable for your daily actions. This is someone you commit to being thoroughly honest with on a daily basis.

To establish this kind of relationship, you must attend meetings and allow yourself to be known. Get to know the members and look for someone willing to take your calls when you are especially vulnerable.

Explain your Three Circles and your triggers as best you can. If you have one, share your Sobriety Plan with your accountability partner

Being an accountability partner is usually part of being a co-sponsor.

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Add Aphorisms to Your Conversation

Aphorisms, or sayings, express in simple terms some rich wisdom or truth.

Guides that point to safe passage or that warn of danger, they are easy to remember recovery tools that should be in everyone's sobriety plan.

This section contains a few of the more common aphorisms most of which come to us from AA.

In this exercise you must define what the aphorisms mean and then give an example of how and when to use it.

You are encouraged to expand on this purposefully brief list. Listen for them in the meetings and discussions.

Your facilitator will help you with ones you do not understand.

APHORISM	WHAT IT MEANS	APPLYING IT
Let go and let God.		
One day at a time.		
F.E.A.R. (negative)	False Evidence Appearing Real	
F.E.A.R. (positive)	Face Everything And Recover	
B.S.H.A.A.L.T.		
My best thinking got me here.		
I have not done that yet. (negative)		
I have not done that yet. (positive)		
The heart of anger is always fear.		
Feelings are not facts.		
All or nothing.		
S.O.B.E.R.		

Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

Understanding Distorted Behavior

Behavior is defined as a combination of what we think, feel, and do at any given moment. (*Why this is true is a great discussion topic.*) We label someone's behavior as *Normal* if they act in a way that suggests they see the world as it is. In other words, if their actions are appropriate to the situation.

We call someone's behavior abnormal or distorted when they behave in a way that suggests they do not see the world as it is. When what people do is not appropriate to what is going on around them, their behavior is distorted.

For most people distorted behavior is a fleeting event with the worse outcome being a silly or funny misunderstanding. (Think *Awkward!*) That is not true for addicts.

Distorted behavior leads to and keeps addicts on the Addictive Shame Cycle. Understanding this is critical to writing an effective sobriety plan. We need to spend some quality time discussing patterns of distorted behavior before we start writing.

The addict not in recovery spends a great deal of time in a thick fog of distorted behaviors we call the Bubble. Think of it as a contact lens that distorts the way we see and interpret reality. The events taking place around us may be innocent but when we are in the Bubble we see them as invitations to act out. The curved surface of the Bubble transforms the world we see into a sex-intense delusion.

The Bubble always starts with a trigger. A triggered addict enters the Bubble and steps on the first stage of the Addictive Shame Cycle. An addict's thoughts, feelings, and actions quickly move the addict to the second stage: Craving.

An example explains this best:

Steve, an addict, is fearful of any upcoming job performance evaluation. He has always received excellent evaluations but his self-story always predicts disaster. He decides to go to lunch alone. He picks a restaurant where He has previously met anonymous partners but justifies it by telling himself the restaurant serves healthy salads.

The new waiter is cute and smiles warmly when she greets him. He immediately responds to her attention. To impress her, he orders an expensive lunch he cannot afford and stays at lunch longer than he should. She returns repeatedly to his table to ask if there is anything she can do for him. When he pays he overly tips. He waits for the waiter to ask for his cell or offer hers. Instead she thanks him for the tip and wishes him a good day.

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Steve leaves the restaurant feeling foolish and mentally berates himself for being late to work. He tells himself it is this kind of wastefulness and poor judgment that his boss sees and is the reason his evaluation is going to go badly.

As we examine Steve's situation more closely what we want to emphasize is how completely deluded he was, how wrongly he interpreted what was going on around him. His **behavior** was inappropriate because his thoughts, feelings, and actions were based on inaccurate perceptions.

Steve was also powerless, unable to see how triggered he was and how desperately he craved relief from his fear. We have all been there.

It is important to realize that no matter how insane our behavior appears to others, when we stand in the center of our Bubble of madness, ***it all makes sense to us*** and so we stay on the Addictive Shame Cycle, moving blindly from one stage to the next.

When we enter the Bubble, we do not see the world as it is, we see the world as we are.

- Our thinking is unhinged: (i.e., Rationalizing, All-or-Nothing, Catastrophizing, etc. See below.) This leads to risky, even dangerous, decisions.
- Our feelings are intensified and take the place of reason. Feelings ***become*** facts.
- Our actions, even those we take to keep us from acting out, actually predispose us to more acting out.

Once we understand how distorted behaviors happen, writing a sobriety plan becomes clear. We first need to understand what we are thinking, feeling and doing when we are about to act out or when we are acting out.

We can study each part (thoughts, feelings, actions) and then write strategies to help make our thinking clearer, help us better manage our feelings, and select healthier things to do.

In the next sections we look at examples of distorted or inappropriate feelings, thoughts, and actions. As you read them, try to find examples from your own life.

We used information from this site (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_distortion) because it is general in nature and easy to read. Check it out.

Distorted thinking is a well-studied psychological phenomenon with dozens of books and hundreds of websites on the topic. We will review 17 of the most common examples of distorted reality. Seventeen may seem like a big number BUT people tend to use the same ones over and over. Do your best to identify your distorted pattern. It will make writing an effective sobriety plan easier.

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Distorted Thinking (from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cognitive_distortion)

	Distorted Thinking	Definition	Example	Did "Steve" do this? Do you? Explain your answer.
1.	All-or-Nothing Thinking	Thinking in absolute terms, like "always", "every", "never", and "there is no alternative".	I cannot stay sober more than a week, and I never will.	
2.	Over-generalization	Looking at a few examples of an event and concluding that what is true about those few examples is true about All of them.	I tried going to meetings but I never got anything out of it so I stopped.	
3.	Magical Thinking	This is where we believe that if we do one thing, that act will cause something to happen that is totally unrelated to it.	If I wear the team jersey it will help the team win the game.	
4.	Mental Filter	Inability to view positive or negative features of an experience, i.e., noticing only tiny imperfection in a piece of otherwise useful clothing.	I am sober from 3 out of 4 of my bottom line behaviors. I am not getting any better!	
5.	Disqualifying the Positive	Discounting positive experiences for arbitrary, ad hoc reasons.	I had a hard time staying sober this past weekend. I did it but I was just lucky.	
6.	Mind Reading	Sense of access to special knowledge of the intentions or thoughts of others.	My wife told me in couple's therapy that she forgives me, but I can tell she does not. I know she is leaving me.	
7.	Fortune Telling	Inflexible expectations for how things will turn out before they happen.	My wife and I are meeting with our couple's therapist today for my full disclosure. I know she is not even going to try to understand me so I am not going to the meeting.	

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8.	Magnifying or minimizing a memory or situation such that they no longer correspond to objective reality	Example of Magnification	My ex called last week asking about the child support check. She does every month. She never lets up. She just sits around and thinks of new ways of making my life miserable!	
		Example of Minimization	Last year I spent \$5000 on prostitutes and massage parlors. My therapist tells me that was wasteful but I had plenty of money and my family did not suffer.	
9.	Catastrophizing is a special type of Magnifying Thinking	Inability to foresee anything other than the worst possible outcome, however unlikely. (Chicken Little). Or experiencing a situation as unbearable or impossible when it is just uncomfortable.	I have been sober for a month and my annual review is coming up. I have had a great year but that will not matter. They have figured out I am a fake, and I am going to be fired.	Write an example of a situation you thought was unbearable or impossible when it was just uncomfortable.
10.	Emotional reasoning	Experiencing reality as a reflection of emotions, e.g. "I feel it, therefore it must be true."	I feel like I am going to fail on my new project! What am I going to do when it happens?	

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11.	“Should” statements	Patterns of thought which imply the way things "should" or "ought" to be rather than the actual situation the person is faced with, or having rigid rules which the person believes will "always apply" no matter what the circumstances are. Albert Ellis termed this "Musturbation".	Asking for what I want or need is selfish, and I should never do it! Or People should know what I need. If they do not, they do not love me.	
12.	Labeling and mislabeling –	Limited thinking about behaviors or events due to reliance on names; related to overgeneralization. Rather than describing the specific behavior, the person assigns a label to someone or himself that implies absolute and unalterable terms. Mislabeling involves describing an event with language that is highly colored and emotionally loaded.	Addicts are pathetic losers who disguise their laziness with the help of doctors out to make a buck.	
13.	Personalization	Attribution of personal responsibility (or causal role or blame) for events over which a person has no control.	My girlfriend is not returning my phone calls. She must hate me!	
14.	Denial of Action	I did not do it!		
15.	Denial of Intent	I did it but I did not mean to!		
16.	Denial of Responsibility	I did it but it was not all my fault!		
17.	Denial of Impact	I did it but it really was not so bad.		

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Distorted Feelings (Types of Emotional Thinking)

Distorted Feeling	Definition	Example	Did “Steve” do this? Do you? Explain your answer.
Entitlement	A claim, privilege, or right.	I have worked hard so I deserve to have a good time.	
Worthless	Valueless; of no worth or merit.	I fail at everything. I am useless.	
‘Poor Pitiful Me’	Exaggerated, self-indulgent pity.	Nothing and no one can help me.	
Anger	Intense hostility	I hate that person!	
Loneliness	A dejected feeling caused by the awareness of being alone.	I know lots of people but I do not have any friends.	
Tired (mental)	Mentally exhausted; weary.	I do not know if I can take much more!	
Abandoned	Deserted; forsaken.	Nobody cares about me.	
Shame	A feeling of disgrace or dishonor.	I am bad.	
Guilt	Proven to have committed a crime or offense.	I did something bad.	
Bored	Made weary by being dull, repetitive, or tedious	I have nothing to do.	
Can you think of another?			

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Distorted Actions- Middle Circle Behaviors

Distorted Action	Example	Did “Steve” do this? Do you? Explain your answer.
Hunger	Not eating when you should.	
Tired (physical)	Working even when you are tired.	
Staying Up Late		
Having unsupervised access to any trigger (computer, extra money, telephone with internet access, i.e.,)		
Being around people who drive you crazy – unsafe people.	Family; co-workers; authority figures	
Driving by places you used to act out. Or could act out.		
Balancing the checkbook alone, at night, on the computer.		
Subscriptions to online movie service / magazines with triggering material.		
Having open time slots in your day		
Drinking when drinking is part of your pre-acting out ritual		

Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

Write a Sobriety Plan Using the Tools of Recovery

It is now time to use what you have learned to write a sobriety plan tailored for you. Once you have done that, you will convert your written sobriety plan into a weekly calendar to help keep you on track.

There are plenty of theories on how people change but for our purposes change happens in two phases. The **first phase** involves changing our immediate environment and improving self-care. These “low hanging fruit” of a healthier lifestyle are *preventive* measures.

The **second phase** changes our mental interior, re-arranging how we respond to Triggers, and is the specialty of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). We discuss both here.

This is an example of a Phase 1 plan that includes 3 distinct types of activities:

What actions do you take to “work your recovery program,” to actively participate in recovery and pursue this path to health?

- Example -- I attend (#) number of recovery/connecting meetings each week.
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

How do I keep my body, mind, and spirit strong so that I can make smart decisions, tolerate discomfort, and resist temptations? Many people will include how they prevent the B.S.H.A.A.L.T. states of being (Bored, Stressed, Hungry, Angry, Anxious, Lonely, Tiredness), but there are many other states of mind that predispose a person to acting out. What states put YOU at risk?

- Example -- I eat three good meals daily (because when I am hungry I do not think clearly.)
- Example -- I pay my bills every two weeks (so that I do not get behind and become anxious.)
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

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Practical Prevention Steps – what do I do to make triggers unlikely and to make acting out more difficult to arrange? (If you need more ideas, ask for suggestions.)

Brothers in the program will have lots of suggestions.)

- Example – Put porn filters on all Internet-enabled devices so erotic images and websites are blocked. Or limit my Internet access to only those sites that I know are safe for me (“restricting” triggering web sites).
- Example – Get rid of every phone number and every email address of all my acting out partners.
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Phase 2 Sobriety Plans are built on self-awareness, on understanding how and why our Triggers make us believe we “have to act out.” Journaling, Prayer, Scripture reading, and Meditation, and talking honestly about our feelings are critical if this is to work.

Phase 2 Sobriety Plans replace the old story we tell ourselves (Old Cognition, i.e., “I acted out again. I will never stop”) to justify our acting out (Old Behavior.)

Phase 2 Sobriety Plans write our new story (New Thinking, i.e., “I will stop acting out if I keep trying and work the Steps”) in the form of strategic interventions (New Behaviors) we will use when we are triggered.

A *simplified* look at the Addictive Shame Cycle looks some something like this:

Trigger → **Avoid** the Trigger (Crave) → Ritual → Acting Out

The Trigger causes us discomfort so we avoid the Trigger and try to numb it (crave). Carving is never enough so we Act Out.

Writing a sobriety plan amounts to doing this:

Trigger → **Confront** the Trigger → Get off the Addictive Shame Cycle → New Healthier Behavior

Our addict brain convinced us long ago that we can do nothing about our Triggers except numb ourselves. That may have been true when we were children, or drunk, or isolated, but it certainly is not true now.

A good sobriety plan will keep us *Abstinent* or “*Dry*” long enough for us to get *Sober* by working the 12 Steps.

For this approach to work, we must identify our Triggers.

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To uncover all our individual triggers will take time. We can start with the Triggers we all share:

Person	Place	Circumstance	Feeling
Parents / Family	Home	Hungry	Angry / Fear
Boss / Co-workers	School	Tired (physical)	Tired (mentally)
Exes	Work	Isolated	Anxious
Spouse / Children	Acting Out Place	Abandoned	Lonely

The goal of this exercise is for you to confront your Triggers using the Tools of Recovery you read about earlier.

THIS IS THE TEMPLATE YOU WILL USE TO CONSTRUCT YOUR PLAN.

- Trigger → Old Response (Distorted Thought / Feeling / Action)
 - New Undistorted Thinking - Use a Tool of Recovery to stay sober or,
 - New Self-talk - Use a Tool of Recovery to stay sober or,
 - New Action - Use a Tool of Recovery to stay sober

HERE ARE A COUPLE OF EXAMPLES TO GET YOU STARTED:

- Example - When I talk with my **ex-wife**, I feel **sad**. This makes me crave.
 - Phone Program - I will arrange to make “bookend” phone calls before I call my ex-wife.
 - Self-talk - I will comfort myself by telling myself that sadness is natural and remind myself that my sadness will pass.
 - Self-talk – I will gently remind myself that acting out will only make matters worse.
 - Prayer and Meditation - I will sincerely pray for her and for our family.
- Example – When I get a **bonus** at work, I think I **deserve to act out**.
 - Self-talk - When I think I deserve to hire a prostitute I will remember that it is not right for me to use myself or another person that way.
 - I will care for myself by calling my accountability partner.
 - I will look for a meeting to go to.
 - I will get a new perspective by doing service work instead.
- Example – When I **isolate**, I want to **surf the Net**.
 - Put filters or blockers on all Internet-enabled apparatus.
 - I will lock my laptop and cell in the trunk of my car.
 - I will go for a walk.
 - I will call someone on my phone program.

Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

You can start to write your sobriety plan on this page. An effective plan usually take several pages.

- Your TRIGGER_____.
 - Old Response_____.
 - New Undistorted Thinking - _____
 - New Self-talk - _____
 - New Action - _____
 - New Action - _____

- Your TRIGGER_____.
 - Old Response_____.
 - New Undistorted Thinking - _____
 - New Self-talk - _____
 - New Action - _____
 - New Action - _____

- Your TRIGGER_____.
 - Old Response_____.
 - New Undistorted Thinking - _____
 - New Self-talk - _____
 - New Action - _____
 - New Action - _____

- Your TRIGGER_____.
 - Old Response_____.
 - New Undistorted Thinking - _____
 - New Self-talk - _____
 - New Action - _____
 - New Action - _____

We recommend you develop strategies for your Inner Circle and your Middle Circle behaviors.

Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

A Weekly Sobriety Plan Calendar

Now that you have created a sobriety plan it is time to turn it into a calendar for the week ahead. Doing so makes it possible to review the calendar with your sponsor or accountability partner at the end of *each* week to assess how well you adhered to the plan.

Ask yourself where you did well. Celebrate your successes.

As you review the calendar look for patterns where you skipped the same task. Ask yourself why you did not complete the activity and try to think of legitimate reasons you failed. What threw you off your schedule? What can you do to insure you complete the task the coming week?

For example, maybe you planned to read positive literature when you got home from work and discovered you were too tired to concentrate on it. Can you move that activity to another time instead of trying to force yourself?

It will take some time (think *weeks*) and a lot of honest self-examination to get a plan that works.

Be prepared to go to any lengths to make it work. It is the best way we know of to stay dry while working the Steps.

We included a sample weekly sobriety plan to demonstrate the idea. There are plenty of applications that can produce a calendar like the one below.

Once it is complete, share it with your support network, the people you call when you are in trouble.

With a strong, energized sobriety plan in place, you are ready to work the Steps.

Getting Started Writing A Sobriety Plan

SAMPLE SOBRIETY PLAN CALENDAR

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	TOOLS OF RECOVERY	10 IMMEDIATE REWARDS	PRINCIPLES TO PRACTICE DAILY
5:00 AM								3 Meetings / Week	Go to a movie	HONESTY
6:00 AM								3 Calls / Day	Buy myself a shirt	FAITH
7:00 AM		1st Call		Therapist Weekly - Counts as Meeting	Go to my favorite restaurant	HOPE				
8:00 AM	1st Call							Sponsor Daily (M-F)	Buy a new CD	COURAGE
9:00 AM		Call- Sponsor		Step Work (M-F) 15-30 mins	Go for a walk	INTEGRITY				
10:00 AM								Step Class	Play with my dog / cat	WILLINGNESS
11:00 AM								Step Class	Chocolate!!	HUMILITY
12:00 PM		Meditate 10 min			Take a nap.	BROTHERLY LOVE				
1:00 PM		2nd Call			Read my favorite	JUSTICE				
2:00 PM		REWARD	REWARD	REWARD	REWARD	REWARD			Watch an episode of my favorite TV show	PERSEVERANCE
3:00 PM	2nd Call							2nd Call	MY CALL LIST	SPIRITUAL AWARENESS
4:00 PM	REWARD							REWARD	Jeremiah A. 919-555-1000	SERVICE
5:00 PM		3rd Call			Obediah D. 919-555-1001					
6:00 PM		15 - 30 min Step Work			Hesekiah B. 919-555-1100	% Completed This Week?				
7:00 PM	Read Positive Lit	Read Positive Lit	Read Positive Lit	Read Positive Lit	Therapist				Cletus D. 919-817-5512	
8:00 PM		Mon Mtg		Wed Mtg					Festus D. 919-884-2232	% Completed Last Week?
9:00 PM									Rufus D. 919-889-5511	
10:00 PM	Principle I Will Work Tomorrow			% Completed 2 Weeks Ago?						
11:00 PM										