

The Serenity Prayer and the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

The Serenity Prayer

God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

The 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous*

1 We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

2 Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

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

4 Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

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

6 Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7 Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

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

9 Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

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

11 Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

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

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Guilt and Shame



Guilt is feeling bad about what you've done: "I am sorry I spent so much time using drugs and not paying attention to my family."

What are some things you have done in the past that you feel guilty about?

Feeling guilty can be a healthy reaction. It often means you have done something that doesn't agree with your values and morals. It is not unusual for people to do things they feel guilty about. You can't change the past. It is important to make peace with yourself. Sometimes that means making amends for things you've said and done.

Remember the following:

- It's all right to make mistakes.
- It's all right to say, "I don't know," "I don't care," or "I don't understand."
- You don't have to explain yourself to anyone if you're acting responsibly.

Do you still feel guilty about the things you listed? What can you do to improve the situation?

Shame is feeling bad about who you are: "I am hopeless and worthless."

Do you feel ashamed of being dependent on substances? Yes ___ No ___

Guilt and Shame

Do you feel you are weak because you couldn't or can't stop using?

Yes ___ No ___

Do you feel you are stupid because of what you have done?

Yes ___ No ___

Do you feel that you are a bad person because you are involved with substance use? Yes ___ No ___

Recovery is always a hard process. No one knows why some people can stop using substances once they enter treatment and decide to be abstinent and other people struggle to maintain abstinence. Research shows that family histories, genes, and individual physical differences in people play a role. Being dependent on drugs or alcohol does not mean you are bad, stupid, or weak.

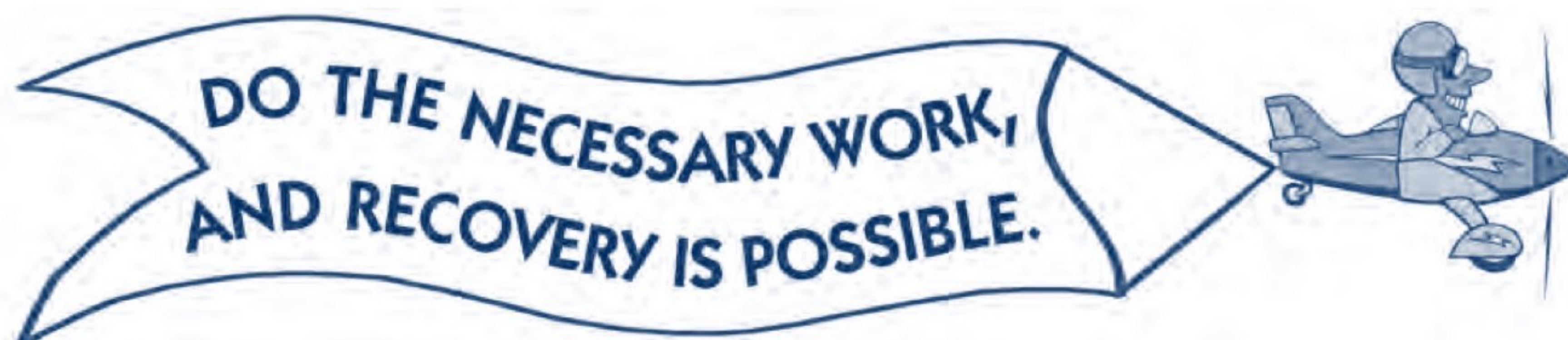
What we do know is that you cannot recover by

- Trying to use willpower
- Trying to be good
- Trying to be strong

Two things to make recovery work are

- Being smart
- Working hard

Everyone who is successful at recovery will tell you, "It was the hardest thing I ever did." No one can do it *for* you, and it will not happen *to* you.



Staying Busy



Learning to schedule activities and structure your recovery is important in outpatient treatment. Staying busy is important for several reasons.

Often relapses begin in the head of a person who has nothing to do and nowhere to go. The addicted brain begins to think about past using, and the thoughts can start the craving process. **How has free time been a trigger for you?**

How could you respond to prevent relapse if free time led to thoughts of using?

Often people who abuse substances begin to isolate themselves. Being around people is uncomfortable and annoying. Being alone results in fewer hassles. **Did you isolate yourself when you used? If so, how did this isolation affect your substance abuse?**

How does being alone now remind you of that experience?

Staying Busy



Being involved with people and doing things keeps life interesting. Living a substance-free life can sometimes feel pretty tame. You begin to think being abstinent is boring and using is exciting and desirable. People have to work at finding ways to make abstinence fun. **What have you done lately to have fun?**

When people's lives become consumed with substance use, many things they used to do and people they used to do them with get left behind. Beginning to reconnect or to build a life around substance-free activities and people is critical to a successful recovery. **How have you reconnected with old activities and friends? How have you built new activities and brought new people into your life?**

If you have not reconnected with old activities and friends or added some new activities and people to your life, what are your plans to do so?

Motivation for Recovery

Ask any group of people who are new to recovery *why* they want to stop using right now and you will get many different answers:

- I was arrested, and it's either this or jail.
- My wife says if I don't stop, we are finished.
- Last time I used I thought I was going to die; I know I'll die if I use again.
- They are going to take the children from us unless we stop.
- I've been using for 20 years now; it's time to change.

Which of the people quoted is most likely to be successful in recovery? It seems logical to think that people who want to stop using for themselves and not because someone else wants them to are more likely to do well in treatment. However, that may not be true. Research shows that the reasons people stop using don't predict whether they will be able to lead substance-free lives.

What does make a difference is whether they can stay substance free long enough to appreciate the benefits of a different lifestyle. When debts are not overwhelming, relationships are rewarding, work is going well, and health is good, the person in recovery *wants* to stay abstinent.



Motivation for Recovery

List some of your reasons for entering treatment (for example, medical problems, family pressure, job problems, depression).

List some of your reasons for continuing to work on your recovery today.

Do you feel that your reasons for initially stopping substance use are the same as your reasons for staying abstinent today? Why or why not?
