

FREEDOM FROM ADDICTION

■ THE
■ RECOVERY
■ COURSE



STEP 1

Welcome

We would like to welcome you to the Recovery Course and we are glad that you have chosen to take a step forward on your journey in Recovery by joining this course with us.

We have created this workbook so that it will make the coursework easier to follow.

What is The Recovery Course?

The Recovery Course is a Twelve Step programme albeit one that focuses on all kinds of addiction from alcohol and drug dependency through to gambling, sex addiction, pornography, self-harming and eating disorders. It is designed to bring freedom to people who struggle with addiction or any compulsive behaviour.

The Recovery Course also differs from a typical Anonymous Fellowship in that it is designed to enhance our recovery work by integrating texts from the Bible with the Twelve Steps.

The course works alongside conventional AA and NA programmes and guests are positively encouraged to join these other Anonymous Fellowships in conjunction with The Recovery Course should they so wish.

Who is it for?

The Recovery Course is open to anyone struggling with any sort of addiction or any compulsive behaviour that is spoiling one's life, such as using drugs, alcohol, pornography, sex, gambling and self-harming to name just a few. The course is a good starter for those completely new to recovery as well as those who have been in recovery for years, but would like to take a fresh look at the steps from a Christian perspective

Format of the course

The course runs once a week for 16 weeks. A typical evening starts at 7pm for food, which is then followed by a 15/20-minute talk and then discussion in single-sex small groups for around an hour. The evening ends at 9.30pm. Each week there is some simple 'Coursework' that helps each participant to explore each of the 12 steps in a deeper way. Nobody has to do the 'Coursework', but it's fair to say that the guests who throw themselves into this are the ones who profit the most. The Coursework is entirely for the guest's benefit and no one else gets to see it; it is completely private.

We look forward to welcoming you and walking with you on this journey to freedom from addiction.

Introductory Session 1 - To Change or Not To Change?

There are no right or wrong answers to the following questions, just honest answers. Honesty is the key because as Jesus says in John 8:32: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

*"If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done."
Ecclesiastes 11:4 - The Living Bible*

1. Make a note of your main triggers.

We know there are some obvious situations that trigger off our addictive urges. For instance, you are an alcoholic and you just can't walk home past The Pig and Whistle without dropping in for a drink. Solution; take another route home. You compulsively overeat; solution, clear out the fridge and get rid of those secret hordes of chocolate biscuits; you are bored and feeling lonely and so log on to a porn website for solace; solution, put on some music instead or read a book. One word of warning, the list will never be comprehensive enough. Someone with an addiction is susceptible to every situation becoming a possible trigger, because the real triggers are not the external situations, but the internal feelings provoked by that situation. So you may take the long way home past the pub only to find that in keeping yourself busy you go off to a football match and at half time end up having a pie and a pint or ten and that situation wasn't on your list. Addiction feeds off any kind of feeling; it will soothe bad feelings and it will prolong good ones and therefore all situations can potentially set you off.

Even so it can still be useful to make a list of the main situations that have caused you problems in the past. Divide a sheet of paper into two columns. In the left hand column put the situations that might cause you to use and in the right hand column put down how you intend to deal with that situation.

The aim of the exercise below is not just to find a mechanical solution to the problem, but also to change the way we feel about the situation.

Situation

Passing the pub

Raiding the fridge at night

Looking at porn late at night

Reward for successful business deal completed

Going clubbing on a Friday night

Dealer keeps ringing you

Sitting at home alone, feeling

Strategy

Take another route home

Keep the fridge empty

Avoid looking at magazines, films or websites with sexual images in them (including advertisements)

Go to the cinema instead of the wine bar

Find an alternative drug-free venue

Change your Sim card

Keep yourself busy; get out with reliable friend

2. Write your life story

It can be a really good idea to write down your life story. This might sound terrifying as it reminds you of being back at school and you failed then. Don't panic; you are not writing your autobiography for publication or to pass an exam. It is not a blow-by-blow account of your life, it is not an act of confession, it does not have to be painstakingly accurate in every chronological detail and it does not have to be a literary masterpiece. It does not matter one iota about your ability to spell or master basic rules of English grammar. It is also not being done to supply the leaders on this course with a source of information about you.

In an article for the BBC by Brendan O'Neill he reports that back in 2007 the bestseller lists were full of memoirs about miserable childhoods. At one point there were six such books in the top 10. Waterstone's bookshop even has a 'Painful Lives' section.

What lies behind the rise of what has become known in the trade as the 'misery memoir' or 'mis lit' Some of the authors say they write in order to come to terms with their traumatic experiences and to help readers to do likewise.

Toni Maguire, author of the top-selling paperback *Don't Tell Mummy*, in which she writes of her abuse at the hands of her father, said in a recent interview it was *"difficult going back over the past, but writing helped me deal with the past."*

James W Pennebaker, a professor of psychology at the University of Texas says that writing about traumatic experiences can indeed help the writer to deal with his or her emotions. *"There's compelling evidence that writing about serious emotional upheavals can improve mental and physical health"*.

Professor Pennebaker admits scientific research into the value of expressive writing is still in the "early phases", but his research seems to show that trauma-writing is beneficial.

"In our studies we bring a group of people into the lab and randomly select some to write about a personal traumatic experience and others to write about something superficial. They write for 15 or 30-minute bursts over a period of three or four days. We found that those who write about trauma tend to see some improvement in wellbeing."

O'Neill also reports that the trauma-writers experienced health benefits - including improvement in immune function – and also reported feeling "less haunted" by their traumatic experiences.

What you need to understand is this testimony is for the benefit of you, no one else and it has three main functions:

- 1) To help you get an understanding of what has been happening in your life and possibly how and why you have become the person you are.
- 2) To help you to begin to tell others, in a small way, little bits about yourself. As these small disclosures are shared you will begin to learn to trust other people.
- 3) To give your group a rough idea of where you are coming from and where you are now. Consequently they will be in a better position to draw alongside you.

b) How many of the good things in your life do you owe to your addiction? Count them up and write down the number.

Total =

c) How many of the bad things in your life do you owe, either directly or indirectly to your addiction? Count them up and write down the number.

Total =

d) Reflect on the result. Is your addiction still a 'friend' to you?

Total =

The leaders in your group are here to help you, so make sure you have their mobile number or e-mail just in case you need to ask them anything over the next week. If you need to actually ring rather than texting or emailing them then make sure you contact them at a civilised hour (not 3am!) and try and keep the conversation relatively short, preferably no more than ten minutes as they, like you, have a lot of pressure on their time. Even if there are no problems to discuss, put in a 'check-call' or text just to touch base. They will enjoy hearing from you!

Session 2 - Out of Control?

There are no right or wrong answers to the following questions, just honest answers. Honesty is the key because as Jesus says in John 8:32: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." Hebrews 12: 1-3 – NIV

Topic for thought

This week's session looked at being out of control. We have begun to see that we have been powerless to change our addictive behaviour no matter how hard we may have tried. We might have occasionally found shortterm success, but it has never lasted. As a result our lives have become increasingly out of control.

The Issue

The purpose of Step 1 is to enable us to step out of the shadowy world of denial and to start living in the light of truth. It is the most important step of all and is absolutely foundational to the success of this course. It is upon this step that all the other steps are built. If at a later stage we relapse, it is normally this step we have to come back to and do again. In completing this step successfully a whole new way of life will begin for each one of us.

The Goals:

On completion of Step 1 we should be able to

- Acknowledge the areas of my life that are out of control and that I am powerless over
- Acknowledge the damage my compulsive behaviour is doing to me
- Acknowledge the damage my compulsive behaviour is doing to those around me
- Acknowledge how my addiction has made me do things that are contrary to my own principles and moral standards
- Acknowledge the lies that keep me in denial

The Lies:

The first step in the recovery journey is to admit we have a problem, which is what we call stepping out of denial. Up until now we have been denying the problem and we do this by listening to a quiet persuasive voice in our heads that is lying to us with words such as:

- "It's my life, I'm not hurting anyone"
- "It's no big deal, after all most people are doing it"
- "Just once more and then I'll stop"
- "It's something I have to do – it's the way I'm made"
- "It's something I inherited from my parents and I'm just going to have to learn to live with it"
- "If I don't always do what people ask they won't love me"
- "I can't help it I have to be in control"

2. Have there been occasions when I have indulged my addictive behaviour more than I intended to? Have I ever gone beyond the limits that I have set myself?

Once again, be specific: What happened? What was the result? If there seem to be too many occasions then just write down three or four of the more memorable ones!

a) -----

b) -----

c) -----

d) -----

Day 2

Today's question is designed to get us honestly looking at our obsession with our addictive process of choice. Our habit tends to become progressively more important than anything else in our life and being specific here will clearly show us this is the case even though, on first reflection, we may not want to admit it. Once again, be very specific and don't be tempted to make fun of the events you describe. By looking at the humorous side we are subconsciously trying to make it seem more acceptable to ourselves and others by presenting things in a better light.

3. Describe any occasions you have ever missed or been late for work.

4. Describe any appointments you have missed or been late for as a result of your addictive behaviour.

5. Describe any times you have got into financial difficulties because of your addiction.

6. Have you seriously damaged your relationships with friends and family because of your addictive behaviour? If so, list the relationships and how you damaged them.

Remember, be specific. Who? What? When? Where? How? Again, limit yourself to four or five of the more memorable ones if there seem too many to mention.

Day 3

Our addictive behaviour tends to make us selfish and irresponsible so today's questions are designed to help us see if this is actually the case.

7. Describe any memory lapses where you cannot account for where you were.

8. Describe any times that you cannot recall how you got home.

9. Describe any illnesses that have resulted from your addictive behaviour.

10. Describe any incidents where you expressed inappropriate anger towards other people.

11. Describe any embarrassing or humiliating incidents in your life that were related to your addictive behaviour (don't try and see the humorous side).

Day 4

Because we are all made in the image of God each of us tends to have high moral values by which we govern our life. Today's questions will help us see if our addiction has begun to erode our values in a way in which, in the cold light of day, we are unhappy with. Once again, be specific. Who? What? When? Where? How?

12. Describe times and ways that you have neglected or damaged relationships with your closest friends and family in order to indulge in your addictive behaviour or because you were recovering from your addictive behaviour.

13. Have I ever done anything in my addiction that I am ashamed of? Was it contrary to my own beliefs, standards and principles? What happened?

14. Have you avoided people because they did not share in or approve of your addictive behaviour? If so, list these people and situations.

15. Is there one incident or insight that made you realise that your life was unmanageable? If so, describe it in detail.

Day 5

Read through what you have written from the previous four days and now consider the broad picture that is emerging and ask yourself this: If this were how someone else was behaving would I consider these the actions of a reasonable, sound and sensible individual?

If we are honest the answer is probably 'No'. If that is your conclusion then keep your answers to the above in a safe place, because once we are feeling healthier, both mentally and physically, we will be tempted to forget the misery that active addiction actually is.

Somewhere down the line, especially when we are tempted to use again, we will try and convince ourselves, "It wasn't actually that bad". Read these questions and answers again, because it was!

Session 3 - Powerless

There are no right or wrong answers to the following questions, just honest answers. Honesty is the key because as Jesus says in John 8:32: "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable

"It was so bad we didn't think we were going to make it. We felt like we'd been sent to death row, that it was all over for us. As it turned out, it was the best thing that could have happened. Instead of trusting in our own strength or wits to get out of it, we were forced to trust God totally – not a bad idea since he's the God who raises the dead! And he did it, rescued us from certain doom" 2 Corinthians 1:9-11 (The Message)

Topic for thought

The subject of this week's session is powerlessness. We have come to see that over the years we have been powerless to successfully change our addictive behaviour no matter how hard we have tried. We may have occasionally found short-term success, but it has possibly never lasted. As a result our lives have become increasingly unmanageable and out of control.

The Issue

The purpose of Step 1 is to enable us to step out of the shadowy world of denial and to start living in the light of truth. It is the most important step of all and is absolutely foundational to the success of this course. It is upon this step that all the other steps are built. If at a later stage we relapse, it is normally this step we have to come back to and do again. In completing this step successfully a whole new way of life will begin for each one of us.

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The Lies:

The first step in the recovery journey is to admit we have a problem, which is what we call stepping out of denial. Up until now we have been denying the problem and we do this by listening to a quiet persuasive voice in our heads that is lying to us with words such as:

- *"It's my life, I'm not hurting anyone"*
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- *"Just once more and then I'll stop"*
- *"It's something I have to do – it's the way I'm made"*
- *"It's something I inherited from my Dad and I'm just going to have to learn to live with it"*
- *"If I don't always do what people ask they won't love me"*
- *"I can't help it I have to be in control"*

Once again we need to be honest with ourselves. We are going to be asking ourselves some searching questions and we need to answer them without excuses and without justification. !!

Day 3

3) Our resentments and our inability to forgive affect us more than the person we are holding them against. How has your anger and resentment affected you? This can be anything from mental problems and sleepless nights to physical conditions related to stress and anxiety. Once again, be specific.

4) Having an addiction or some form of compulsive behaviour can be a lonely experience. How has your denial isolated you from key people in your life?

Day 4

5) If other people have told you how you have hurt them, write down what they said.

4) Having an addiction or some form of compulsive behaviour can be a lonely experience. How has your denial isolated you from key people in your life?

Day 5

7) Do you feel any remorse from the ways that you have acted in your life? If so, write down the details.

8) Describe attempts that you have made in the past to control your compulsive behaviours. How successful have they been? Do these attempts show the powerlessness that you have over your addiction?

9) The bible is the story of God's search for us, but separation from God can feel very real and is often due to us moving away from Him rather than the other way round. What do you think you can you do to get closer to God?

Congratulations, you have just completed Step 1

Verses for Session 1

1) *"Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is mighty fortunate. For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life"* James 1:12 - *The Message*

2) *"Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil! Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life!"* Proverbs 3:5-8 - *The Message*

3) *"For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb"* Psalm 139:13 - NIV

4) *"We don't have a priest (Jesus) who is out of touch with our reality. He's been through weakness and testing, experienced it all—all but the sin. So let's walk right up to him and get what he is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help."* Hebrews 4:14-16 - *The Message*

5) *"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."* John 10:10 - NIV!

6) *"Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped."* Psalm 28:6-7 - NIV!

Verses for Session 2

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our addiction - that our lives had become unmanageable

1) *"But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realise that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time."* Romans 7:17-20 - *The Message*

2) *"My people are broken – shattered! – and they put on plasters, saying, 'It's not so bad. You'll be just fine.' But things are not 'just fine!'"* Jeremiah 6:14 - *The Message*

3) *"There's a way of life that looks harmless enough; look again – it leads straight to hell. Sure, those people appear to be having a good time, but all that laughter will end in heartbreak."* Proverbs 14:12-13 - *The Message*

4) *"The serpent was clever, more clever than any wild animal God had made. He spoke to the Woman: 'Do I understand that God told you not to eat from any tree in the garden?' The Woman said to the serpent, 'Not at all. We can eat from the trees in the garden. It's only about the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, 'Don't eat from it; don't even touch it or you'll die.'*

"The serpent told the Woman, 'You won't die. God knows that the moment you eat from that tree, you'll see what's really going on. You'll be just like God, knowing everything, ranging all the way from good to evil.'

"When the Woman saw that the tree looked like good eating and realised what she would get out of it— she'd know everything!—she took and ate the fruit and then gave some to her husband, and he ate. Immediately the two of them did 'see what's really going on — saw themselves naked! They sewed fig leaves together as makeshift clothes for themselves.

"When they heard the sound of God strolling in the garden in the evening breeze, the Man and his Wife hid in the trees of the garden, hid from God. God called to the Man: 'Where are you?"

"He said, 'I heard you in the garden and I was afraid because I was naked. And I hid.'

"God said, 'Who told you you were naked? Did you eat from that tree I told you not to eat from?'" Genesis 3:1-12 - The Message !

5) "No more lies no more pretence. Tell your neighbour the truth. In Christ's body we're all connected to each other, after all. When you lie to others, you end up lying to yourself." Ephesians 4:25 - The Message

6) "They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity - for a person is a slave to whatever has mastered them." 2 Peter 2:19 - The Message

7) "Christ has set us free to live a free life. So take your stand! Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you." Galatians 5:1 - The Message

8) "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31-32 - NIV !

Verses for Session 3

Step 1: We admitted we were powerless over our addictions - that our lives had become unmanageable

1) *"I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do...for I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do - this I keep on doing...what a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Romans 7:17-20 - NIV*

2) *"Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am faint; O lord, heal me, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in anguish. How long, O Lord, how long? Turn, O Lord, and deliver me; save me because of your unfailing love." Psalm 6:2-4 - NIV*

3) *"You can't worship two gods at once. Loving one god, you'll end up hating the other. Adoration of one feeds contempt for the other". Matthew 6:24 - The Message*

4) *"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible". Matthew 19:26 - NIV*

5) *"When troubles ganged up on me, a mob of sins past counting, I was so swamped with guilt I couldn't see my way clear. More guilt in my heart than hair on my head, so heavy the guilt that my heart gave out". Psalm 40:12 - The Message*

6) *"A person's pride brings them low, but a person of lowly spirit gains honour". Proverbs 29:23 - NIV*

7) *"Give your entire attention to what God is doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes". Matthew 6:34 - The Message*

8) *"You do well to be angry - but don't use your anger as fuel for revenge. And don't stay angry. Don't go to bed angry. Don't give the Devil that kind of foothold in your life". Ephesians 4:26-27 - The Message*

9) *"I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of." John 10:10 - The Message*

10) *"If you grasp and cling to life on your terms, you'll lose it, but if you let that life go, you'll get life on God's terms." Luke 17:33 - The Message*

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.
Living one day at a time, Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace;
Taking, as Jesus did, This sinful world as it is, Not as I would have it;
Trusting that You will make all things right If I surrender to your will;
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.
Amen.

Reinhold Niebuhr

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your Kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours.
Now and for ever.
Amen.



My life has been so much better without alcohol, the recovery course helped me find freedom from my addiction.