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Matt Talbot Retreat
“Growing Ourselves Up: Ongoing Recovery”
”Pursuing Recovery with Vigor”

*We have to pursue recovery with the same
enthusiasm that we had when we were drinking.*

If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it-then you are ready to take certain steps.

At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not, with all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and through from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely. Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 58

From a novel by Michael Connelly called, The Brass Verdict. The main character is a lawyer, who is also in recovery from addiction to painkillers. In one section, the character makes an observation. It puts things in a stark perspective:

“There are three roads that can be taken in recovery. There is the clean path of sobriety and there is the road to relapse. The third way is the fast out. It is when the traveler realizes that relapse is just a slow suicide and there is no reason to wait.”

Michael Connelly, The Brass Verdict, p. 189.

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe in his piece titled On Commitment:

Until one is committed there is hesitancy, a chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness. Concerning all acts of initiative and creation there is one elementary truth, the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans; that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too. All sorts of things occur to help one that would never otherwise have occurred. A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents and meetings and material assistance which no man could have dreamed would come his way. Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it. Begin it now.

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“Growing Ourselves Up: Ongoing Recovery”

“THE THERAPEUTIC VALUE OF THE TWELVE STEPS”		
Step Number	Text of the Step	Therapeutic Value of the Step
One	<i>We admitted we were powerless over alcohol-that our lives became unmanageable.</i>	This Step helps us shatter our reliance on a false self, which was fed through lack of self-awareness, poor self-worth, and lack of language, plus denial and a physical, mental and spiritual compulsion.
Two	<i>Came to believe that a Power great than ourselves could restore us to sanity.</i>	Hope is an important ingredient in all forms of healing. In this Step, we are given hope, and humbled further because we won't be able to solve our problem on our own.
Three	<i>Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.</i>	This Step is about commitment. We need to make a commitment to finding a new and more effective way of living.
Four	<i>Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.</i>	The essence of this Step involves increasing our self-awareness, self-honesty, and insight into our behavior.
Five	<i>Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs,</i>	In this Step, we learn the value of self-disclosure, authenticity, and healthy relationships. This Step also continues to dismantle the false self and false pride and helps develop more humility and authenticity.
Six	<i>Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.</i>	In this Step, we experience the pain of what we have done to hurt ourselves and others, and we begin to understand and develop insight into our behavioral patterns and the psychological functions of our character defects.

“THE THERAPEUTIC VALUE OF THE THWELVE STEPS”

Seven	<i>Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.</i>	In this Step, we are learning the importance of being vulnerable and asking for help.
Eight	<i>Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.</i>	The lessons taught in this Step have to do with the fundamentals of healthy communication; delivering our message to the proper person and being as specific as possible.
Nine	<i>Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.</i>	In this Step, we learn to be responsible for our behavior, we learn how to respect others, and we learn that we are as important as others, no more and no less.
Ten	<i>Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.</i>	This Step concerns maintaining our humility, being honest with ourselves and guarding against false pride.
Eleven	<i>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.</i>	Maintenance is not enough. We need to continue to grow or we will regress. This Step is about expanding our consciousness and continuing to seek more knowledge about our new way of life, <i>with the help of God.</i>
Twelve	<i>Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.</i>	In this Step, we develop a new purpose to our life that is We discover the importance of being of value to others, and we learn that we need to maintain our integrity in all our affairs.

(Adapted from Allen Berger, Ph.D. 12 Stupid Things That Mess Up Recovery, pp. 27-29)

Matt Talbot Retreat
“Growing Ourselves Up: Ongoing Recovery”
“Being Rigorously Honest”

Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest. Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 58

At the heart of recovery lies the notion that we must challenge our old ideas, which are rooted in a faulty pride system. Neutralizing the power of false pride and loosening its control over our life is critical. These anachronisms need to be replaced by more effective principles of living.

We can think of the process of recovery as a salvage operation. We are recovering our lost self and sometimes discovering our true self. What we recover is our ability to be human. We have tried to be perfect and hold ourselves to an inhuman set of expectations. Recovery is about salvaging our humanity. We replace unreasonable expectations of perfection with an understanding of what it means to be human. We are not perfect; we are humans, being.

Once the crack in our false self has occurred, we automatically begin the process of searching for and developing our true or real self. We can think of this as finding our spiritual self.

Understanding, respecting, and being responsive to this true, spiritual, self is what integrity is all about. Another way of thinking about recovery is that it is establishing and maintaining integrity. I use the word integrity here to mean wholeness, a process in which we are committed to respecting our true, spiritual, self. Maintaining integrity and wholeness is based on our ability to be honest with ourselves. We need to be honest about what is important to us and what we need.

Self-awareness, defined as the ability to know or have a sense of who we are and what we are experiencing, it means that we are present in our experience, our experience is personally accessible, and we are able to identify what we are experiencing. Without an idea of who I am and what is important to me, I will be unable to be honest with you or myself.

Self-worth. Do I feel worthy of your time or interest? Do I feel worthy of recovery? Deep inside someone who has a self-worth wound is the belief that no one really cares, and that he must manipulate others to get what he wants.

Personal language: the ability to communicate with another person on an intimate and personal level. This relates to how well we can find words that truly reflect and help us express what we are experiencing or thinking.

Recovery is an initiation into life. If we stay the course, we will grow up and learn how to take care of ourselves. No one is perfect, and if we try to have the perfect program, we will end up miserable in recovery. Our humility, open-mindedness, and willingness are the keys to our spiritual growth.

Matt Talbot Retreat
“Growing Ourselves Up: Ongoing Recovery”
“Life is Difficult”

Life is difficult. The sooner we are initiated into this reality,
the sooner we learn how to deal with life on its terms
rather than waste our time looking for the easy way.

Dealing with painful experiences and anxiety is not easy, and we are setting ourselves up if we expect it to be easy. How many of us have seen people stop attending meetings because things got worse before they got better. The truth is that this is exactly what is supposed to happen.

If we accept this truth that life is difficult, then we will not be seduced by the idea that all our days should be good ones and that the easiest path is something we should expect. We accept good days for what they are. We accept difficult days in the same spirit. We will not look for the quick or easy fix; we learn to take life as it is rather than trying to turn it into something it is not. We don't fight life or complain-we accept life on its terms, not ours. And, isn't this the message from most spiritual teachers, and the message of our program, as well?

Discerning whether action or acceptance is the best response is a hallmark of wisdom. (Consider this: which comes first: Acceptance or Serenity? Do we not pray for the Serenity to Accept things we cannot change? And, of course, the more we learn acceptance, the more we can pray for Serenity.) The more we correctly assess a situation and respond appropriately, the more we are in sync with life; and not at cross-purposes. When we inaccurately assess a situation and try to force a change or control the outcome, the more we create tension and struggle.

The more we accept life for what it is, the more we will see tremendous benefits. We will stop judging. Judgment is irrelevant because life is what it is. We won't need to control or change our partner, our life, or our friends. We will accept them the way they are, and if we don't like it, then we can look into the meaning of our own reactions instead of trying to make others feel bad about who they are. The more we stop manipulating people, places and things, the more we will free up all that energy and put it to work on our own personal development, which is where it is best focused in the first place.

Matt Talbot Retreat
“Growing Ourselves Up: Ongoing Recovery”
“Relationships in Recovery”

Relationship problems are one of the top reasons for relapse. Why? Because important relationships expose our emotional immaturity more than any other experience. The more a person means to us, the more trouble we have keeping ourselves centered and soothing ourselves when things are uncertain or when the person doesn't meet our expectations. When someone is very important to us, it is hard to hold on to ourselves when we feel disappointed, threatened, or frustrated.

When our partner doesn't behave according to our specifications, trouble starts and manifests itself in one of three ways: (1) we try to control our partner to ensure that he or she will do our bidding; (2) we submit to our partner's will; or (3) we run away by emotionally stonewalling our partner or literally splitting from the relationship.

Any relationship that requires our partner to behave a certain way in order for us to feel okay or good about ourselves will not work in the long run. We need to identify and deal with our emotional immaturity and how it is controlling us, or the relationship will not survive. This is when a relapse is most likely to occur.

Consider responding to relationship difficulties with the phrase: “of course.” Of course there is going to be trouble in your relationship because your partner is important to you. Relationship problems don't necessarily indicate that something is wrong; quite the opposite it's true. Problems may well indicate that something is right; we pick a partner who will cause a particular kind of trouble in our life. The trouble we encounter gives us an opportunity to take the next step in our emotional and spiritual growth and development. Problems are gifts that need to be carefully unwrapped. If we put our problems into a healthy perspective, we will be well on the way to discovering a real solution, which will result in emotional growth and maturity.

Some people may ruffle when I say that the problem is basically one of ignorance. But, when you think about it, ignorance is the most appropriate diagnosis for the cause of our troubles because it offers hope. Ignorance is curable; it can be corrected with new information. New information is necessary because we can only do what we know how to do, which we now realize is not enough. We must be open to help because it is hard to see how emotional dependency is affecting the climate of our relationships when we are so close to the problem. The program works by being honest, open and willing.

Many of us lose sight of the fact that we are part of our relationship problems. We may waste time by focusing on our partner's behavior, when focusing on our behavior is much more helpful.

In summary, we are sabotaging our recovery if we are having trouble in our relationship and we refuse to get help. Relationship problems will persist; they will not magically disappear until we address their source. If we are painstaking about this phase of our development, we will discover that emotional dependency may well be a real problem our life. Until we face how we are emotionally dependent and how it affects our self-esteem, self-worth, and self-confidence, real emotional sobriety will elude us and we will be more likely to relapse.

Matt Talbot Retreat
“Happy, Joyous & Free”
“Growing ourselves Up: Ongoing Recovery”

The Simple Approach to the 12 Steps!!

Step 1: There's a power that will kill me.

Step 2: There's a Power that wants me to live

Step 3: Which do I want? (If you want to die, stop here. If you want to live, go on)

Step 4: Using examples from your own life, understand that selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear control your actions.

Step 5: Tell all your private, embarrassing secrets to another person.

Step 6: Decide whether or not you want to live that way any more.

Step 7: If you want your life to change, ask a Power greater than yourself to change it for you. (If you could have changed it yourself, you would have long ago.)

Step 8: Figure out how to make right all the things you did wrong.

Step 9: Fix what we can without causing more trouble in the process.

Step 10:

Understand that making mistakes is part of being human (When you make a mistake, fix it-immediately if you can.)

Step 11: Ask for help to treat yourself and others the way you want your Higher Power to treat you.

Step 12: Don't stop doing 1 through 11, and Pass it On!!

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