

# Addiction Recovery Framework

True-Self Alignment

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# Preface

This Addiction Recovery Framework is not a prescription but rather a suggestion. This framework relies heavily on the 12 steps as a foundation and my own experience of what has worked for me. I have over 13 years of experience, coming from a place of total physical, spiritual and emotional ruin to a manageable life which is mostly joyous. I have developed self awareness and I am on a journey of continuous growth.

Recovery from addiction is not based on substances or a specific substance only, it can be gaining freedom from anything harmful that we can not stop or control. Release from that which drives our lives, bringing pain to ourselves and others.

## The 12 steps (adapted) as a basis for recovery

These are adapted from the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have made them more generic and removed the definition of God, replacing that with higher power; this is because we are free to choose our own higher power. This is not a religious programme and there is no one correct spiritual path, only that which is right for you.

1. We admitted we were powerless – 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 our higher power, as we understood it.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to our higher power, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. We were entirely ready to have our higher power remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked our higher power to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

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9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure ourselves, 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 our higher power as we understood it, praying only for knowledge of its will for us and the power to carry that out.

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

## Who is this for?

If you are reading this then you have displayed some willingness to accept change, probably coming from some level of desperation. We talk about the gift of desperation; this is what drives us to take the extraordinary measures needed to make change possible. It gives us courage because there is no other alternative. We will do whatever it takes.

A common misconception is that a substance abuse addict is the only one with the problem. The addict does have a problem, this is true, but the people who are dependent on the addict getting sober also have a problem. The addict is addicted to substances and the loved ones are addicted *to the addict*. Let us be clear at the outset, we all have work to do, it is best for us to each work only on the thing we can control, *ourselves*.

With the above said, there are specific 12 Step programmes for specific purposes. A substance abuse addict could attend AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) or NA (Narcotics Anonymous), while the loved ones may find ACA (Adult Children of Alcoholics® & Dysfunctional Families), or Al-Anon / Alateen helpful in their recovery.

\*Personal note: My primary drugs of choice were narcotics (eg. ecstasy, cat, meth) but I sobered up through AA. In my opinion, the substance is irrelevant, since this is a spiritual programme. Different fellowships / programmes have some unique characteristics and ways of doing things. If you are a substance abuse addict then I would suggest trying a few meetings in different areas, in different fellowships and see what resonates with you. Substance abuse fellowships are not limited to AA and NA, there are others too, eg. MA (Marijuana Anonymous) and CA (Cocaine Anonymous).

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## Transitioning from AA to ACA

On the 1st May 2010, after 3 months at a rehab facility, I moved into a sober-living house share. My sobriety date is February 2010. This is where I started my recovery from substance abuse. 10 years later, in 2021, I came to ACA (Adult Children of Alcoholics® & Dysfunctional Families).

This journey is quite common; as we recover from the symptom of our deeper issues we get to a point where we are ready to look at those deeper issues and get recovery on the underlying root of our spiritual dis-ease. What I realised when coming into ACA is that drugs were not my problem - *they were my solution*. The solution to the unrest in my soul and intrepid disconnection I felt. I lived most of my life in a state of dissociation, which is a common side effect of serious trauma (PTSD). AA was amazing and it kept me sober and the recovery I found in ACA was a further, even more powerful awakening.

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# Year 1: Getting started, are you ready?

Since coming into recovery I have known more than a few addicts / alcoholics still in active addiction who needed recovery but did not want to stop using. "Shit stinks but it's warm". There is nothing to be done for them. No amount of manipulation on my part, energy, love or money will save them. This is a dreadful disease, over which I have no power, as I have no power over the addict; As the addict has no power over their addiction. It is hopeless.

"Addiction is like having sex with a gorilla - you are not done until the gorilla is done". You are ready when you reach your rock bottom. Everyone has their own rock bottom, their own tolerance for pain, their own depth of insanity. I sometimes wish I had gotten sober sooner, then I wouldn't have lost so much - but I wasn't ready. I needed just one more hurrah, one more hit, one more, one more, one more.. Until I was finally done. I reached a point of hopelessness and desperation that caused a moment of clarity. In that moment I could see the path I was on and where it ended. Something from another addict's story really hit me. I remember it actually left me reeling. They told of homes in the United States where addicts with no hope of recovery from heroin and meth addiction live. They are provided with the basic needs for life and left to their own devices. Terminally ill. They would live out their lives and die there. This sent a chill through me like reality knocking on the door. I would say this was the first seed planted, where I began to become willing to change, and to do whatever it took.

Everyone's story is different, in the detail, but the golden thread is the same. When you are ready you will find recovery. Maybe you will never be ready and will likely end up in jail, an institution and sooner rather than later - dead. This is tragic and there are millions like you. But for those of us who are lucky enough to have the moment of clarity and have the capacity for open-mindedness, honesty and willingness, we do recover. If you are ready, the first thing to do is to get clean, one day at a time.

*"Belief in [a higher power], plus enough willingness, honesty and humility to establish and maintain the new order of things, were the essential requirements.*

Simple, but not easy; A price had to be paid. It meant destruction of self-centeredness. I must turn in all things to [a higher power].

These were revolutionary and drastic proposals, but the moment I fully accepted them, the effect was electric. There was a sense of victory, followed by such a peace and serenity as I had never known. There was utter confidence. I felt lifted up, as though the great clean wind of a mountain top blew through and through. [The spiritual awakening] comes to most people gradually, but its impact on me was sudden and profound."

This excerpt is taken from chapter 1 of the Big Book of AA - 'Bill's story'. William Griffith Wilson (November 26, 1895 – January 24, 1971), also known as Bill Wilson or Bill W., was the co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA).

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## Getting clean

How you get clean will differ depending on how far gone you are. Some people are able to get clean just by starting meetings. Meetings are one of the foundations of recovery in the 12 Step programmes. It is recommended that you do a 90 / 90 (90 meetings in 90 days). You can find details of meetings on the respective fellowship websites.

AA South Africa - [Find a meeting https://www.aasouthafrica.org.za/meetings/](https://www.aasouthafrica.org.za/meetings/)

NA South Africa - [Find a meeting https://na.org.za/](https://na.org.za/)

Because I was in such a depleted state (I had been high for literally a year straight), I checked myself into a drug rehab facility. I started with a one month detox, managed by therapists and medical professionals. I nearly died during this first month but I made it through. Years later seeing people who I had met at meetings were surprised to see me alive, they didn't think I had much of a chance of survival. Miracles happen. While the percentage of addicts who make it into recovery is low, there is also a low percentage of people in recovery who stay sober. Statistically the odds are against us but anyone can have it - openminded-ness, willingness and honesty are all that is required, one day at a time.

Whether you go to rehab or not, starting meetings is part of the deal. Most rehabs will introduce you to AA or NA and arrange for groups from the facility to attend meetings together. There are some rehabs which are Christian based and reject 12 step programmes completely. I had been to one of these before actually getting sober, it didn't work for me and this framework does rely heavily on 12 step philosophy.

## Staying clean

### Find a sponsor

Once you are well into your 90 / 90 you will find you can relate to other people's stories. While your story may be different, the general synopsis is the same. A sense of disconnect, a feeling of not fitting in anywhere, a general feeling of restlessness, irritability and discontent. Finding your drug of choice and feeling like it solved all your problems. For me, after my first proper drug experience, I wanted to find a way to feel like that, permanently, for the rest of my life - it was perfect! And so began the spiral, consequences getting worse and worse. Destruction in your life and the lives of those around you. Trying to control your substance use, and failing miserably, over and over. Then finally reaching that jumping off place - where you couldn't stop but you couldn't go on either. In this desperation you found recovery.

While you can relate to a lot of the shares you hear at meetings, you will intuitively start to identify with specific people. There isn't really a logic to this - it's more of a feeling, you will know it when you feel it. Choose one of these people to be your sponsor.

A sponsor is a person who has good recovery, essentially someone who has what you want. A sponsor is someone who can guide you through the steps. \*A sponsor is not a financial sponsor.

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It is recommended that you work your steps with a sponsor.

## Get started with step work (true-self alignment)

The steps can be grouped into 4 meaningful sections:

### Finding and connecting with your higher power.

Ultimately the journey through the steps is meant to bring you alignment with your true self (higher-self, higher-power). This program is so powerful because it initiates a fundamental shift in a human being. This program can be beneficial to anyone, not just addicts in recovery.

*Recovery from addiction is just a side-effect of something much bigger.*

### Internal house-keeping

This is the work of transformation. Cleaning house. Going deep within yourself and facing your darkness. Fear, shame, resentment, anger are all valid emotions but as addicts we have these in unreasonable excess. Our lives are driven by our unconscious neurosis. This work guides us in uncovering, releasing and freeing ourselves.

**\*\*It can not be overemphasised that connecting with your higher power and maintaining your higher-self connection through this work is of primary importance for your own safety and the effectiveness of this process. Be sure that you have done steps 1, 2 & 3 thoroughly before starting on step 4.**

### External house-keeping

By this stage you will have at least begun to have a spiritual awakening. There have been dramatic spontaneous experiences but most of us experience the awakening over a period of time. This was my experience and it is no less powerful.

Now that you have gotten back into integrity with yourself you can begin to mend relationships and make right any harm you may have caused. This can be things you did during active addiction or prior to active addiction. You want to get so clear that there isn't one person on this earth who you feel out of integrity with or have any shame at the thought of having to see them again.

### Spiritual maintenance and helping others

From here you maintain your spiritual well-being on a daily basis and carry the message to other addicts who still suffer.

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# Expanding your recovery

Now that you have a year of sobriety, you have a solid foundation to build your recovery on. Making it to 1 year is a massive mile-stone and your chances of staying sober increase dramatically - congratulations. This is no small deed and you can be tremendously proud of yourself. Hopefully by now you will have started to see the gifts of recovery manifesting in your life.

In my opinion one of the most important things to do at this stage is to stay humble. It may feel frustrating - as we compare ourselves to others we see that we may be “behind” with regards to having a family, our careers, buying a house, etc, etc. This feeling is normal and it helps to remember that all of these things will come, and more! When they do come we need to stay humble and grateful so that we don’t fall again and have to start from scratch. The gifts of recovery are more than what you can even imagine. Have patience, you are on the spiritual path now and wonderful adventures are about to unfold for you - *enjoy the ride, baby!!*

There are many other aspects to recovery, aside from the 12 steps; And that is the value I hope to bring to you with this framework. One of my biggest points of growth was moving out of the comfort of just hanging out with people in recovery and reintegrating into “normal” society. Dealing with social anxiety and finding my place in the world again was tough but incredibly exciting!

You will find a new way of life. You also discover a mission and purpose for yourself, in this lifetime.

The core of the framework is this document which gets you started. The rest of the framework can be found on the website where new content will be published over time. This content will explore all the aspects of recovery that I have found and worked with. I want to share *my* adventure with you! I already have so much to share but, even 13 years in, my adventure is just beginning; so I will continue to update the framework as I go.

You can continue by clicking on this link to the website -

<https://addictionrecovery.henryshepherdson.com/>

\*Please subscribe on the website so you can be updated whenever new content is added. I plan to send one newsletter a month.

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