Chapter 1

What is a Recovery-based Lifestyle?

If I have seen farther than others, it is because I was standing on the shoulders of giants.

-Isaac Newton
The most effective way to stay clean and sober is to prevent the process of relapse from being activated. The process of relapse is activated when you become overwhelmed by accumulated, unresolved emotional, physical, and/or spiritual pain. This pain is stimulated by the presence of activated stressors in your life. To prevent yourself from becoming overwhelmed by accumulated, unresolved emotional, physical, and/or spiritual pain, you must be able to effectively cope with the day-to-day stressors that you encounter in your life. The best way to cope with both the potential and activated stressors that you encounter on a daily basis is to [re]construct a Recovery-based lifestyle.

Make no mistake about the last statement that I just made. At the core of what it takes to stay clean and sober is the [re]construction and preservation of a Recovery-based lifestyle—not willpower, not strength of character, not the willingness to just say no, not sheer determination, not learning how to consume alcohol and other drugs in a controlled manner, not pinky swears, but the [re]construction and preservation of a Recovery-based lifestyle.

Pathfinder’s Checklist

What a Recovery-based lifestyle is

1) A Recovery-based lifestyle is a way of life in which you abstain from the consumption of ALL alcohol and other drugs.

2) A Recovery-based lifestyle is a way of life that protects and preserves the health and well-being of the four building blocks of your emotional and spiritual well-being—your physical well-being, your psychological well-being, your social well-being, and your spiritual well-being.

3) A Recovery-based lifestyle is a way of life that places the preservation of your abstinence at the forefront of every choice that you make, every belief that you honor, every action that you take, every place that you go, and every person that you go there with.

4) A Recovery-based lifestyle is a way of life that minimizes the activation of personal stressors that can potentially activate the process of relapse.

5) A Recovery-based lifestyle is a way of life that eliminates the presence of an activated personal stressor.

6) A Recovery-based lifestyle is a way of life that alleviates the emotional, physical, and spiritual pain caused by an activated personal stressor.

A Recovery-based lifestyle is the sum total of several elements. Each element is a vital ingredient—any one of which, if missing, would render your Recovery-based lifestyle vulnerable to decay and deterioration. What are the elements that make-up a Recovery-based lifestyle? Read the list below.

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Elements of a Recovery-based lifestyle

1) Abstinence from ALL alcohol and other drugs

2) Accountability

3) Balance

4) Consistency

5) Fellowship
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Trust between you and the people in your life. Accountability is the mechanism by which you [re]build trust with the people in your life.

Accountability is nothing more than being answerable for your words and deeds. The most effective way to be answerable for your words and deeds is to do what you say you're going to do when you say you're going to do it. And those times when there's a disconnect between your words and your actions, take ownership of your behavior—don't blame others, make excuses, defend your choices, or rationalize away the misdeed. Simply take ownership of the disconnect between your words and actions and acknowledge your part in that disconnect. How?

1) Acknowledge when your words and actions don't match.
2) Apologize to others for the harm caused to them when your words and actions don't match.
3) Follow-up your amends with taking whatever corrective measures are necessary to eliminate the mismatch between your words and actions.
4) Get on with your life.

In simple terms, make sure that your words and actions match. To help rebuild the bond of trust between you and the people in your life take the following daily inventory.

**Pathfinder’s Compass**

**Accountability**

1) Identify how your words and actions matched today.
2) Identify how you acknowledged those times when...
your words and actions didn’t match today.
3) Identify how you claimed what part you played in
the breakdown between your words and your
actions today.
4) Identify how you formulated a plan to correct the
mismatch between your words and actions today.
5) Identify how you made amends to those individu-
als who were harmed by actions that you had or
had not taken today.
6) Identify how at the end of today you let go of the
misdeed(s) and got on with living your life.

The third element of a Recovery-based lifestyle is bal-
ance. When you were active in your disease everything
about your life was extreme. To [re]construct a Recovery-
based lifestyle you must apply moderation and balance to
every aspect of your life.

Balance, as a condition, exists when you’re involved in
an appropriately measured manner with people, events,
and circumstances. What exactly is an appropriately mea-
sured manner? An appropriately measured manner is a
degree of involvement in which you’re not consumed nor
do you lose yourself in that person, event, or circum-
stance that’s the focus of your thoughts and/ or actions.

Imbalance, as a condition, exists when you find your-
self involved with a person, event, or circumstance that
can be characterized as compulsive, excessive, consumed,
and/ or obsessive. When there’s an imbalance in your
involvement, it’s likely that you’ll become consumed by
that involvement to the detriment of your overall well-
being.

Imbalance is escapism by obsessive, compulsive, or
all-consuming thinking and/ or acting. Balance is being
and remaining connected to the present moment and
what the present moment awakens in you emotionally.

Balance as a tool is:
1) The act of finding the mid-point or the gray in
how you think, act, and live.
2) The act of coming in from the extremes.
3) The act of living in faith by letting go of the idea
that you can control your emotions, people,
events, and circumstances.
4) The act of going through rather than around a
hard situation.

The here-and-now is where it’s at. Dealing with the
specific moment and what the specific moment provokes
within you—feelings, tension, stress, joy. To restore bal-
ance to your life, take the following inventory listed
below daily.

Pathfinder’s Compass

Balance
1) What am I feeling in this specific moment?
2) What is my body experiencing in this specific
moment?
3) What am I thinking in this specific moment?
4) What is overwhelming me?
5) What can I do about what is overwhelming me?
6) Who can I ask for help when I feel overwhelmed?
7) What am I thinking in the present moment?
8) What is out of balance in my life?
9) What is a more measured and balanced way of
being in this specific moment?
10) Identify what activities are consuming too much of your time and energy.
11) Identify what circumstances are consuming too much of your thoughts and emotions.
12) Identify what people are consuming too much of your thoughts and emotions.
13) Identify what activities you need to make more time for.
14) Identify what shifts need to occur in how much time and thought you give to the people, places, and events that you identified in questions #10, #11, and #12 of this exercise.
15) Identify what actions you need to take in order to make the shifts that you identified in question #14.
16) Identify who can help you enact the changes you identified in question #15 and help you monitor the progress that you’re making in bringing balance into your life.
17) Identify who you can be accountable to for maintaining the shifts that you’ve identified in questions #14 and #15.

The fourth element of a Recovery-based lifestyle is consistency. When you were active in your disease your life revolved around acquiring your alcohol and other drugs, using your alcohol and other drugs, hiding from others your consumption of alcohol and other drugs, recovering from your consumption of alcohol and other drugs, and then going back to acquiring your alcohol and other drugs. As a result everything and everyone else fell through the cracks. To [re]construct and preserve a Recovery-based lifestyle, routines must be established and followed, rituals must be honored and carried on, patterns of thinking and acting must be developed and maintained. Consistency in a Recovery-based lifestyle means showing up in life on a regular fashion, not when it suits your needs or your level of comfort.

**Pathfinder’s Compass**

**Consistency**

1) Identify specific actions you need to consistently take in order to maintain your emotional and physical well-being.
2) Identify Recovery-based behaviors you need to consistently take (e.g., meetings, service work, making phone calls, working with your sponsor, working a specific step).
3) Identify people with whom you need to maintain consistent contact.
4) Identify aspects of your spiritual practice that you need to perform more consistently (e.g., read spiritual materials, pray, do service work, make amends, surrender).
5) Identify specific activities in which you need to participate in order to bring fun and joy in to your life.

The fifth element of a Recovery-based lifestyle is fellowship. When you were active in your disease you isolated from others and led an isolated, compartmentalized, fragmented existence. To [re]construct and preserve a Recovery-based lifestyle you must connect with other people.
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What I tell my clients is that there are three elements that are critical ingredients for emotional and spiritual well-being—people being the first element, people being the second element, and people being the third element. You can’t avoid this truism no matter how much you may try. Connecting with the human race, letting people get to know you, taking time to know other people, getting outside of yourself and involved in someone else’s drama—that’s the stuff that strengthens your Recovery-based lifestyle. Fellowshipping entails the following actions.

**Pathfinder’s Compass**

**Fellowshipping**
1) Develop a Recovery-based support system and stay involved with them.
2) Attend Recovery-based support group meetings.
3) Become involved with a Recovery-based mentor known as a sponsor.
4) Make daily phone calls to people in your Recovery-based support system.
5) Ask for help when you find yourself feeling overwhelmed and not knowing what to do.
6) Open to the love and support of family members who may not know how to help you.
7) Offer help to others who you can help without endangering your abstinence from ALL alcohol and other drugs.

The sixth element of a Recovery-based lifestyle is joy. When you were active in your disease you were part of the living dead. To construct and preserve a Recovery-based lifestyle, you must experience the joy that comes from being alive. [Re]constructing and preserving a Recovery-based lifestyle is mostly hard work. To not derive pleasure and joy from the fruits of your labor will only make that hard work even harder. Don’t forget to give yourself permission to enjoy what you’ve earned. You haven’t forfeited your right to experience happiness. Take the following steps to experience joy from the life you’re creating.

**Pathfinder’s Compass**

**Joy**
1) Identify at least one thing about your life that you feel grateful for today.
2) Remind yourself that you deserve to experience a sense of lightness and joy in your life.
3) Make time each day for play and laughter with a person that you care about.
4) Give something of yourself to another person.
5) Take one step beyond the boundary of the limits that your fears create for you.
6) Open yourself up to new experiences.
7) Invite people into your world and join theirs.
8) Listen to music that awakens your soul.
9) Read materials that stimulate a sense of joy and passion within yourself.
10) Identify what you feel passionate about.
11) Become involved in those activities that will empower you to express your passion.

The seventh element of a Recovery-based lifestyle is integrity. When you were active in your disease your val-
ues and your essential truths were either ignored or altogether non-existent. To [re]construct and preserve a Recovery-based lifestyle you must act from the core of who you are. What this means in practical terms is that you have to declare who you are and live from that essential knowledge. What are the fundamental truths about who you are? What are the fundamental values that you hold about how to live your life, treat other people, and relate to your Higher Power? These are what should influence what shapes your Recovery-based life and how you live it. It’s a good idea at the end of each day to take the following short inventory on how you lived that day.

**Pathfinder’s Compass**

**Integrity**
1) Did I remain abstinent from ALL alcohol and other drugs today?
2) Did I live today as a Recovering chemically dependent individual?
3) Did I love well today?
4) Did my actions bring honor to my Higher Power?
5) Did my actions bring honor to my Fellowship?
6) Did my actions bring honor to my family?
7) Did my actions bring honor to my friends?
8) Did my actions bring honor to my self?
9) Did my actions bring honor to my Recovery-based lifestyle?
10) Did my actions bring honor to my Recovery-based belief system?

The eighth element of a Recovery-based lifestyle is love. When you were active in your disease you lived a life that was self-centered and egocentric. As a result of your self-centeredness your willingness to give love to others was limited. To [re]construct and preserve a Recovery-based lifestyle you must open yourself up to loving the people in your life. The emphasis here is on giving love.

When you were active in your disease you took much but how much did you give? Why are you here on this planet? What purpose does your existence serve? What does it matter whether or not you live your life abstinent from alcohol and other drugs? If these questions have you momentarily stumped, the easy answer to each and every one of them is to love and to love well! Again, a short daily inventory is helpful here.

**Pathfinder’s Compass**

**Love**
1) Did I freely give my love today?
2) Did I put into practice today the old adage, H ate the sin but love the sinner?
3) Did my heart soften in any degree towards those people that I have closed my heart to?
4) Did I let go of a little bit more of that which prevents me from freely loving?
5) Did I give more power to my fears or to my openness to courageously love others?

The ninth element of a Recovery-based lifestyle is rigorous honesty. This is critical for the preservation of your Recovery-based lifestyle as well maintaining your abstinence from ALL alcohol and other drugs. You know the old saying, You’re only as sick as your secrets? For far too
long you’ve lived a life of secrecy, manipulation, compartmentalization, deception, and deceit. You’ve been listening to your stories for so long you can’t figure out what’s the truth and what’s a lie. As a result you put more energy into maintaining the lies than you do in just living your life.

[Re]constructing and preserving a Recovery-based lifestyle depends on you living a life of openness and honesty. For far too long you’ve been estranged from the truth. You’ve been shut down emotionally. You’ve been lost in a maze of denial and rationalization. Alcohol and other drugs have distorted the lens through which you view reality as it pertains to you, the people in your life, and the circumstances of your life. Isolated from the people in your life, you’ve gone without the feedback of others who can help you see your self more clearly and honestly. So, in order to better understand what’s going on with you, to better understand what the truth is about you and your life, you have to get honest with yourself. Getting honest with yourself means two things—getting to know yourself and letting other people get to know you. Here’s a good way to get the ball rolling.

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Daily routines to help you practice rigorous honesty.
1) Work a Twelve Step program.
2) Keep a daily journal that focuses on things that you’ve learned about yourself today.
3) Keep a daily journal that focuses on the feelings that you experienced today.
4) Apply the principle of rigorous honesty to your self-disclosure at your Recovery-based support group meetings.
5) Apply the principle of rigorous honesty to your daily conversations with your Recovery-based mentor or sponsor.
6) Apply the principle of rigorous honesty to your daily self-disclosure with your Recovery-based support system.
7) Acknowledge to others the exact nature of your deceptions.
8) Commit to and live a life free of deception and half-truths.

The tenth element of a Recovery-based lifestyle is routines. When you were consuming alcohol and other drugs, the most honored routines that you followed were those that enabled you to consume alcohol and other drugs. To [re]construct a Recovery-based lifestyle you must develop routines that enable you to remain abstinent from alcohol and other drugs.

Routines are habits that you honor on a regular basis. They anchor you to your day-to-day life. The point of these habits is to fortify your emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being so that you can stay clean and sober. Eat regularly. Sleep regularly. Work regularly. Be with friends and family regularly. Go to Recovery-based support group meetings regularly. Read Recovery-based materials regularly. Journal regularly. These routines serve to reinforce the lessons that you’re learning about how to remain clean and sober as well as help you minimize the onset of any stressors that may occur as a result of not consistently doing those things that prevent the activation...
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Creating serenity
1) Serenity is a state of being that’s achieved by remaining abstinent from ALL alcohol and other drugs.
2) Serenity is a state of being, achieved by remaining abstinent from ALL compulsive behaviors.
3) Serenity is a state of being that’s achieved through your willingness to admit that you’re powerless over alcohol and other drugs, people, behaviors, and circumstances.
4) Serenity is a state of being that’s achieved through your willingness to admit that there’s a power greater than your self known as your Higher Power.
5) Serenity is a state of being that’s achieved through your willingness to surrender your will to a power greater than your self known as your Higher Power.

6) Serenity is a state of being that’s achieved through your willingness to practice spirituality in every affair of your life.

7) Serenity is a state of being that’s achieved through your willingness to practice rigorous honesty in every affair of your life.

8) Serenity is a state of being that’s achieved through your willingness to make amends to others.

9) Serenity is a state of being that’s achieved through your willingness to manage your personal stressors.

10) Serenity is a state of being that’s achieved through your willingness to open up to love and be loved.

11) Serenity is a state of being that’s absent of chaos.

12) Serenity is a state of being that’s absent of deception.

13) Serenity is a state of being that’s absent of manipulation.

14) Serenity is a state of being that’s absent of self-sabotage.

15) Serenity is a state of being that’s absent of willfulness.

16) Serenity is a state of being that’s absent of half-measures.

17) Serenity is a state of being that’s absent of stinking thinking.

The twelfth element of a Recovery-based lifestyle is spontaneity. When you were active in your disease you were a prisoner of your compulsion to consume alcohol and other drugs and therefore unable to give yourself freely to people, events, or circumstances. To construct and preserve a Recovery-based lifestyle you must learn to give yourself to the specific moment that you’re experiencing. What that means is putting all of you into your relationships or into those activities in which you hold back parts of or all of you. Spontaneity can enrich your Recovery-based lifestyle. Feeling free to act spontaneously, to give yourself freely to the moment is critical to your long-term emotional and spiritual well-being.

**Pathfinder’s Compass**

Spontaneity

1) Identify those activities that you hold yourself back from fully participating in.

2) Identify those people that you hold yourself back from fully connecting with.

3) Identify how your Recovery-based lifestyle would be different if you gave yourself fully to those people and activities that you hold yourself back from.

4) Identify what fears you attach to the act of giving yourself fully to those people and activities identified in #1 and #2 of this list.

5) Identify what you need to surrender to in order to fully give yourself to those people and activities that you’re holding back from.

6) Identify a person who can support you as you work at giving yourself fully to those activities that you’re holding back from.

The thirteenth element of a Recovery-based lifestyle is structure. Put a star by this one. This element is impor-
4) Identify what stress management activities that you must do today and do them.
5) Identify what leisure activities that you must participate in today and participate.
6) Identify who in your Recovery-based support system you must contact today and contact them.
7) Identify what spiritual practices you must practice today and practice them.
8) Identify what service work you must perform today and perform it.

Those are the elements of a Recovery-based lifestyle. They’re the raw materials that make up the building blocks of your Recovery-based lifestyle. If you don’t use the raw materials discussed in this chapter, the building blocks of your Recovery-based lifestyle will quickly crumble. In the next chapter, we’ll begin to discuss what the building blocks of a Recovery-based lifestyle are.