

Chapter 1

What is a
Recovery-based Lifestyle?

T

*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 psy-

chological 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.

Pathfinder's Checklist

Elements of a Recovery-based lifestyle

- 1) Abstinence from ALL alcohol and other drugs
- 2) Accountability
- 3) Balance
- 4) Consistency
- 5) Fellowship

- 6) Joy
- 7) Integrity
- 8) Love
- 9) Rigorous honesty
- 10) Routines
- 11) Serenity
- 12) Spontaneity
- 13) Structure

The first element of a Recovery-based lifestyle is *abstinence* from ALL alcohol and other drugs. I'm not going to say much about abstinence from ALL alcohol and other drugs at this point because I'll discuss abstinence from ALL alcohol and other drugs with you in much greater detail in chapter 2, *How to Maintain Your Physical Well-being*. But I just wanted to get abstinence from ALL alcohol and other drugs on the record at this point because there's no way that you can discuss the elements of a Recovery-based lifestyle without putting abstinence from ALL alcohol and other drugs at the head of the list. The acts of consuming ANY alcohol and other drugs and [re]constructing a Recovery-based lifestyle are mutually exclusive. You simply can't live a Recovery-based lifestyle if you're consuming ANY alcohol and other drugs. Now this may be the first time that I mention this to you but I promise you it won't be the last!

The second element of a Recovery-based lifestyle is *accountability*. When you were active in your disease it's likely that much damage was done to your relationships because of inconsistent, unpredictable, unreliable, and irresponsible behaviors. As you [re]construct your Recovery-based lifestyle you'll need to rebuild a bond of

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 individuals 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 *balance*. 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 measured 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 circumstance that's the focus of your thoughts and/or actions.

Imbalance, as a *condition*, exists when you find yourself 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 balance 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 *fellowshipping*. 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.

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. Fellowshiping 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, *Hate 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 even 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.

Pathfinder's Compass

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

of stress.

Pathfinder's Compass

Routines

- 1) Identify those actions that you should take daily in order to stay abstinent from ALL alcohol and other drugs.
- 2) Identify those actions that you should take daily in order to take care of yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
- 3) Identify those actions that you should take daily in order to practice spirituality.
- 4) Identify those actions that you should take daily in order to repair and nurture your relationships.
- 5) Identify those actions that you should take daily in order to honor yourself.
- 6) Identify those actions that you should take daily in order to keep your living environment Recovery-based.
- 7) Identify those actions that you should take daily in order to keep your relationships Recovery-based.
- 8) Identify those actions that you should take daily in order to keep your thinking Recovery-based.
- 9) Identify those actions that you should take daily in order to keep your emotional well-being Recovery-based.
- 10) Identify those actions that you should take daily in order to keep your behaviors Recovery-based.

The eleventh element of a Recovery-based lifestyle is *serenity*. Serenity is a state of being. This state of being is

created from the combination of abstinence from ALL alcohol and other drugs, abstinence from ALL compulsive behaviors, effectively managing the stressors in your life, consistent contact with your Recovery-based support system, [re]building relationships with friends and family members, actively working a Twelve Step program, and actively working your spiritual practice.

The serenity I am referring to is not some theoretical utopian state of being that exists in books but not in life. The serenity I am referring to is real. You can touch it, taste it, feel it—most important of all, experience it. The serenity I am referring to is the by-product of all the hard work that [re]constructing and preserving a Recovery-based lifestyle entails. It's real. It's yours for the asking. Just do what I suggest below!

Pathfinder's Compass

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 hold 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-

tant. Structure is to a Recovery-based lifestyle what food and water are to you and me. Simply put, no structure, no Recovery-based lifestyle. No how. No way. Without structure you're merely faking it till you make it and by my way of seeing things, without a *structured* Recovery-based lifestyle, you're not going to make it!

What is structure? It may sound repetitious but even if it is, the concept bears repeating. You know that old saying about how *The whole is greater than the sum of the parts?* That's true with structure as well. Structure is the whole that's greater than the sum of the parts. The parts are abstinence from ALL alcohol and other drugs, abstinence from ALL obsessive behaviors, accountability, balance, consistency, fellowshiping, integrity, joy, love, rigorous honesty, rituals, routines, Recovery-based environments, Recovery-based relationships, spiritual practice, and regular attendance at support group meetings.

You want a tip about this one? You can't do it alone. Get somebody to help you. Get someone that you must be accountable to for the day-to-day execution of the plan that you create. What should the focus of the plan be?

Pathfinder's Compass

Structure

- 1) Identify what Recovery-based rituals that you *must* perform today and perform them.
- 2) Identify what Recovery-based practices that you *must* practice today and practice them.
- 3) Identify what self-care routines such as sleeping, eating, and taking medicines that you *must* do today and do them.

- 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.