

Chapter 5

Here-and-Now:
Recovery-based Behaviors

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*You never can tell
when you do an act
just what the result will be;
for with every deed
you are sowing a seed
though its harvest
you may never see.*

-Stanley Phillips

“What do you mean I shouldn’t go to that wedding? Don’t you think you’re being a little too black and white?” “Why can’t I skip tonight’s meeting so I can go to my kid’s school’s open house? You’re so damn rigid about everything?” “So what if I want to go with my friends to a bar after work! Get off my back—you’re not my mother!” “My dentist told me it would be okay to take these pain killers for a few weeks. He said he would control how much I took. Don’t you ever budge?”

The simple answer is “No, I don’t budge on anything!” Each moment of your day compels you to act, to move closer to or further from where you want your life to be. And the most elemental response to what each moment confronts you with is an act, a singular behavior that is either Recovery-based or using based.

Recovery-based behavior is the third element of the psychological building block of a Recovery-based lifestyle. A Recovery-based behavior is an act that preserves and protects your Recovery-based lifestyle. A Recovery-based behavior restores balance, stability, and harmony to your Recovery-based lifestyle. A Recovery-based behavior is the manifestation of the answer to the question, *“What choice should I make in this moment to preserve and protect my Recovery-based lifestyle?”*

To better understand what a Recovery-based behavior is, let’s compare and contrast Recovery-based and using-based behaviors.

Pathfinder’s Checklist

Comparing and contrasting Recovery-based with using-based behaviors.

- 1) A Recovery-based behavior is any behavior that preserves and protects your abstinence. A using-based behavior is any behavior that may activate the process of relapse.
- 2) A Recovery-based behavior is any behavior that reflects a regard for the consequence of that specific act. A using-based behavior is any behavior in which you have no regard for the consequence of that specific act.
- 3) A Recovery-based behavior is any behavior that keeps you connected to a Recovery-based support system. A using based behavior is any behavior that leads to isolation, secrecy, and compartmentalization of your life.
- 4) A Recovery-based behavior is any behavior that [re]constructs and preserves the integrity of your Recovery-based lifestyle. A using-based behavior is any behavior that undermines the viability and unravels the fabric of your Recovery-based lifestyle.
- 5) A Recovery-based behavior is any behavior that enables you to minimize the activation of stressors in your life. A using-based behavior is any behavior that activates or exacerbates a stressful situation(s).
- 6) A Recovery-based behavior is any behavior that eliminates the presence of an activated stressor(s). A using-based behavior is any behavior that perpetuates an activated stressor(s).
- 7) A Recovery-based behavior is any behavior that alleviates the discomfort caused by an activated stressor(s). A using-based behavior is any behavior that fuels the fire of confusion, chaos, and loss of control of self.

Pathfinder's Checklist

Characteristics of Recovery-based behavior

- 1) An act in which the preservation and protection of your abstinence from ALL alcohol and other drugs is the sole basis for doing or not doing that act.
- 2) An act that is based on choice rather than habit and/or compulsion.
- 3) An act the origins of which is your Recovery-based belief system.
- 4) An act that is thought through rather than impulsively acted-out.

You may say that I'm beating a dead horse here, but it can never be said enough—the [re]construction and preservation of your Recovery-based lifestyle starts and ends with you remaining abstinent from ALL alcohol and other drugs. And every choice that you make, every act that you take leads you one step closer to or one step farther from consuming alcohol and other drugs. We've looked at the issue of abstinence from the viewpoint of both your Recovery-based belief system and your Recovery-based thinking. And the point I made in both instances was that what you believe and what you think will influence how you choose to act in any specific moment. In the end, the viability of your long-term abstinence from ALL alcohol and other drugs will be predicated on the choices that you make and the actions that you take that protect and preserve your abstinence.

Any Recovery-based behavior has three ingredients. The first ingredient is *choice*. The choice that you make—that's the genesis of any Recovery-based or using-based

action. Choosing whether or not to be a prisoner of your habits. Choosing whether or not to be a slave to your compulsions. Choosing whether or not to repeat the same action over and over again—expecting different outcomes with each repeated effort. Choosing to *choose* rather than react! Knowing that not to choose but merely doing what you've always done will only get you more and more of what you've already gotten—not a new outcome, not a different outcome, not a subtly different variant of what you've always gotten before but *exactly* what you've always gotten!

Below I have created two lists for you to compare and contrast Recovery-based choices with using-based choices. The first list is a list of Recovery-based behavioral choices. The second list is a list of using-based behavioral choices. Look at each list carefully as you answer the set of questions in the Pathfinder's Exercise that follows the two lists immediately after the using-based behavioral choices' list.

Pathfinder's Checklist

Recovery-based behavioral choices

- 1) Abstain from ALL alcohol and other drugs.
- 2) Active involvement with a Recovery-based support system.
- 3) Frequent and regular attendance at Recovery-based support group meetings.
- 4) Reliance on stress reduction management techniques.
- 5) Talk about your feelings with other people.
- 6) Ask others for help.

- 7) Become involved with service work.
- 8) Learn how to [re]construct and preserve a Recovery-based lifestyle.
- 9) Work a Twelve Step program.
- 10) Practice surrendering in all aspects of your life.
- 11) Take a regular quiet time.
- 12) Live your life honestly and openly.

Pathfinder's Checklist

Using-based behavioral choices

- 1) Consume alcohol and other drugs.
- 2) Isolate from people who can support you.
- 3) Do not attend Recovery-based support group meetings.
- 4) Rely on compulsive behaviors as a method of reducing stress.
- 5) Emotionally shut down or numb out as a way of coping with your feelings.
- 6) Going through by yourself or avoiding altogether difficult situations.
- 7) Remain self-involved—focus on what you can get out of a situation.
- 8) Remain uninformed about how to [re]construct and preserve a Recovery-based lifestyle.
- 9) Work your own program.
- 10) Rely on willfulness in every aspect of your life.
- 11) Keep your life immersed in chaos, endless activities, and random disorder.
- 12) Live your life deceptively and secretly.

Pathfinder's Exercise

- 1) Write about or discuss how each choice on the two lists above relate to you, your life, and the circumstances of your life.
- 2) Write about or discuss what place each choice on the two lists above have in your life.
- 3) Write about or discuss what Recovery-based behavioral choices you need to adopt to your lifestyle.
- 4) Write about or discuss what using-based behavioral choices you need to accept as no longer being an option for you.
- 5) Make your own list of Recovery-based behavioral choices you're willing to commit to making.
- 6) Make your own list of using-based behavioral choices you're willing to commit to abstaining from.

The second ingredient of a Recovery-based behavior is your *Recovery-based belief system*. Remember all the hard work you did about your Recovery-based beliefs in chapter 3, *Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Recovery-based Belief System*. Well, Recovery-based behavior is where you apply the fruits derived from that work. Relapse prevention is nothing more than consistently *doing* what you *believe* you need to do to remain abstinent from ALL alcohol and other drugs. Simply, your actions *must* match:

- 1) What you believe about the steps you need to take to [re]construct and preserve your Recovery-based lifestyle.
- 2) What you believe about the steps you need to take

to minimize the activation of personal stressors.

- 3) What you believe about the steps you need to take to eliminate the presence of activated personal stressors.
- 4) What you believe about the steps you need to take to alleviate the discomfort caused by the presence of the activation of personal stressors.

If you ever have a question about *what the next right thing is to do* or what the *right action to take in a specific moment is*, use *what you believe* as a reference point.

Pathfinder's Compass

Reference point for what action to take in any given circumstance.

- 1) What do you believe about what kind of people you should be and not be with?
- 2) What do you believe about what kind of places you should be and not be at?
- 3) What do you believe about the kind of circumstances you should and should not expose yourself to?
- 4) What do you believe about how many Recovery-based support group meetings you should attend?
- 5) What do you believe about how often you should attend Recovery-based support group meetings?
- 6) What do you believe about the necessity to [re]connect with your Higher Power?
- 7) What do you believe about how to honor your Fellowship?
- 8) What do you believe about what kind of foods you

should eat?

- 9) What do you believe about the amount of sleep you should get?
- 10) What do you believe... What do you believe... What do you believe...

Did you notice that not one of the questions that I just rattled off started with the phrase, *What do you want* or *What do you desire* or *What do you prefer* or *What is most fair* or *What is the easiest* or *What is the most convenient* or *What is the most fun* or *What would most piss off my...*, or *What would make me feel better*.

No, in determining what is the next right thing to do, ask yourself, **WHAT DO I BELIEVE ABOUT WHAT ACTION THIS SPECIFIC MOMENT REQUIRES FROM ME TO PROTECT AND PRESERVE MY ABSTINENCE AND RECOVERY-BASED LIFESTYLE?** If you know what you believe, then you'll always know why you do what you do. So don't ever be confused as to why you chose any actions you've taken because your actions are only a reflection of what you believe.

Pathfinder's Exercise

- 1) Write about or discuss a circumstance at home, work, or in one of your leisure time activities that potentially may activate the process of relapse.
- 2) Write about or discuss the Recovery-based dilemma that this circumstance poses.
- 3) Write about or discuss what your Recovery-based belief is in regards to the identified circumstance from step #1.

- 4) Write about or discuss what your Recovery-based belief is in regards to the identified Recovery-based dilemma identified in step #2 above.
- 5) Write about or discuss what Recovery-based behavior is appropriate to resolve the circumstance and dilemma identified in steps #1 and #2 above.
- 6) Take the action(s) identified in step #5 above.
- 7) Write about or discuss what you've learned from steps #1 through #5 above.
- 8) Write about or discuss what you learned from applying the action you applied in step #6 above.

The third ingredient of a Recovery-based behavior is *consequences*. You must not only think *about* what is the next right thing to do, but *think through* what is the next right thing to do. In determining what the right action is in any given moment, you should consider not only what you believe but also what *consequence* your action(s) will have on your Recovery-based lifestyle.

This means that you have to *think through* rather than impulsively *act-out* your chosen Recovery-based behavior! "Huh," you may think to yourself. "Think through? What is there to think through? Wasn't it enough that I just got done thinking about what my *choices* were and what it was that *I believed?*"

Well, that was a *good start*, but in addition, you must think through what the *consequences* of your intended action might be. For example:

- 1) What *impact* will the act that I'm considering have on my abstinence?
- 2) What *impact* will the act that I'm considering have on my Recovery-based lifestyle?

- 3) What *impact* will the act that I'm considering have on my ability to practice self-care?
- 4) What *impact* will the act that I'm considering have on my relationship with my Recovery-based support system?
- 5) What *impact* will the act that I'm considering have on my relationship with my sponsor?
- 6) What *impact* will the act that I'm considering have on my relationship with my friends and family?
- 7) What *impact* will the act that I'm considering have on my occupational well-being?
- 8) What *impact* will the act that I'm considering have on my legal and financial well-being?
- 9) What *impact* will the act that I'm considering have on my relationship with my Higher Power?
- 10) What *impact* will the act that I'm considering have on my spiritual practice?

Pathfinder's Exercise

- 1) Write about or discuss a circumstance at home, work, or in one of your leisure time activities that potentially may activate the process of relapse.
- 2) Write about or discuss the Recovery-based dilemma that this circumstance poses.
- 3) Write about or discuss what your Recovery-based belief is in regards to the identified circumstance from step #1 of this exercise.
- 4) Write about or discuss what your Recovery-based belief is in regards to the identified Recovery-based dilemma identified in step #2.
- 5) Write about or discuss what Recovery-based

behavior is appropriate to apply to the circumstance and dilemma identified in steps #1 and #2.

- 6) Write about or discuss what the consequence(s) of applying the behavior that you identified in step #5.
- 7) Write about or discuss what consequences identified in step #6 that you're willing to take responsibility for.
- 8) Write about or discuss how you will take responsibility for the consequences of your actions as identified in step #5.
- 9) Take the action(s) identified in step #5.
- 10) Write about or discuss what you've learned from steps #1 through #8.
- 11) Write about or discuss what you've learned from applying the action you applied in step #6 and taking responsibility for whatever consequences you had to take responsibility for.

I know, thinking about *choices*, *beliefs*, and *consequences* isn't fun. It's a lot of hard work. And to do it correctly, you'll have to make many hard choices. But in the end, the hard work will bring you one more day of abstinence, clear headedness, and hopefully, serenity.

Remember, all the thinking, insight, and knowledge in the world is meaningless if you don't *act* on what you know. Review the following checklist again and again. Develop a strong resolve to adopt the criteria listed as guidelines for the choices you make and actions you take!

Pathfinder's Checklist

What Recovery-based behavior is.

- 1) An action taken that demonstrates thoughtfulness about how a contemplated action will affect your abstinence from alcohol and other drugs.
- 2) An action taken that demonstrates thoughtfulness about how a contemplated action will affect your Recovery-based lifestyle.
- 3) An action taken that is based on choice rather than habit or compulsion.
- 4) An action taken that isn't the repeat of the same action previously taken with the hope of an outcome different than the outcome from the previous attempts.
- 5) An action taken that is based on your Recovery-based belief system.
- 6) An action taken that demonstrates thoughtfulness about what the consequence of that action may be.
- 7) An action taken for which you take ownership of the act.
- 8) An action taken in which you're willing to be responsible for any amends to be made if that action causes harm to somebody else.
- 9) An action taken that is reality-based rather than denial-based.
- 10) An action taken that is faith-based rather than manipulative-based.
- 11) An action taken that is honesty-based rather than deception-based.
- 12) An action taken that is surrender-based rather than willfulness-based.
- 13) An action taken that is service-based rather than ego-based.