



Reading books may be difficult as the client's attention span is shortened. He/she may have long ago lost touch with non-drug using friends and may not even know if they still live in the same town. For every activity, there may be some problems like these, which makes this area a difficult one to deal with.

The counselor: The catalyst in recovery

The strength of the counseling relationship greatly influences the recovery process. The counselor's professional ability to identify problem areas and work with the client, is based on a good grasp of the issues involved in addiction recovery, along with an attitude that is helpful and optimistic.

The recovery period can be difficult for the client as it calls for developing insight into his/her problem, accepting responsibility for it and changing himself/herself. The supportive, non-judgmental relationship with the counselor is often the only source of support available to the client during this trying period.

Being sensitive to what the client wants to do, even while staying in tune with what is healthy and appropriate for the client and working in a sense of partnership with him/her, requires skill as well as patience and tolerance.

A fine sense of balance and judgment is often needed. Drug abusers carry over their obsessive traits into their recovery period and approach problems with an 'all or nothing' attitude. From being completely unemployed, the addict may swing to a fifteen-hour workday. Helping the client balance the different areas in his/her life, with adequate emphasis on each without overdoing any, is a skill indeed.

Recovery can be conceived of as a journey that the client undertakes. The unfamiliar terrain, the unexpected twists and turns, the need to respond differently to each, the effort it demands - all this can make it challenging and satisfying at the same time. The counselor works as the client's ally, prodding him/her on when progress is poor and urging them to slow down when they go too far too soon. The appreciation and encouragement, along with caution and guidance, of the counselor can help the client go smoothly through their journey to achieve qualitative recovery.

Developing Community Drug Rehabilitation and Workplace Prevention Programme

(AD/IND/94/808)

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

Shastri Bhawan, New Delhi - 110 001
Tel : 3388580 Fax : 3384918

United Nations International Drug Control Programme, Regional Office for South Asia

EP 16/17, Chandragupt Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi - 110 021
Tel : 4104970, 71, 72, 73 Fax : 4104962, 63 E-mail : undcp@undcp.ernet.in

International Labour Organization

Core 4B, 11th Floor, India Habitat Centre, Lodi Road, New Delhi - 110003
Tel : 4602101 Fax : 4602111 E-mail : delhi@ilodel.org.in

European Commission

65 Golf Links, New Delhi - 110003
Tel : 4629237, 38 Fax : 4629206 Email : eu@delind.cec.eu.int

National Centre for Drug Abuse Prevention

Ground Floor, West Block 1, Wing 7, Rama Krishna Puram, New Delhi - 110066
Tel : 6173257 Fax : 6173257 E-mail : nc_dap@excite.com

Acknowledgements

Principal Author : Ms. V. Thirumagal, TTK Clinical Research Foundation
Scientific Editor : Dr. Pratima Murthy
Coordinated by : UNDCP, Regional Office for South Asia
Design : Lopez Design

The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the official policy of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, ILO and the European Commission.

Recovery

Recovery

Building a New Future

Introduction

Addiction affects practically every area of a drug abuser's life. It makes the person physically weak and run down. It interferes with education and messes up job prospects. It results in emotional scarring - the user is often torn by shame, guilt and fear of the future. Family relationships become weaker and lack emotional closeness and warmth. Socialization gets limited to alcohol- or drug-abusing peers and the drug user comes close to losing the regard and respect of others.

Does Recovery simply mean getting treated and being drug-free?

Receiving treatment and not using drugs is an essential step, but it is not enough for complete recovery.

What then is Recovery?

- Recovery is a process of change that takes place over a period of time. Undergoing treatment is just the first step in the recovery process and not an end in itself. The primary treatment program only stabilizes the client; the major part of recovery starts later. The recovery process proceeds differently for each client and the same client may find it easier to change in certain areas than others.
- Recovery requires giving up alcohol/drugs as well as initiating qualitative changes in lifestyle. Both these aspects of recovery need to progress hand in hand as they support, complement and sustain each other. Progress in one aspect without the other does not lead to complete recovery. For example, if the client is drug-free, but is demanding, irritable and does nothing worthwhile throughout the day, it means that he/she has not really recovered.





- Recovery does not occur automatically after treatment. It requires a conscious effort and continuing support for change. It is erroneous to believe that once abstinence is established after treatment, recovery in other areas will follow automatically. Simply recognizing problems will not lead to qualitative changes without the active, sustained effort of the client.

Recovery means a new way of life for the drug user. It not only involves giving up drugs, but also changes in his/her thoughts, behavior, functioning, relationships and lifestyle.

Responsibility for Recovery

The responsibility for recovery rests mainly with the client. While the client's motivation influences recovery to a large extent, professional help, family support and self-help groups are also important. Years of drug abuse alter the person's thoughts and behavior. The individual has to learn or re-learn how to live and become integrated in society. The intervention and support of others can make a big difference to the quality and tempo with which such changes can be made.

What does Recovery involve?

Recovery involves working through many of the problems in the drug user's thoughts, behavior, functioning, relationships and lifestyle. To work through these problems while maintaining abstinence is not easy. The person's attitude, actions, reactions and responses need to change.

Abstinence - The Stepping Stone to Recovery

Being drug- or alcohol-free is the foundation on which recovery rests.

- A structured treatment program is necessary to strengthen the commitment to remain

abstinent. It should help the person overcome denial, understand the damage caused by addiction and look forward to a meaningful future without drugs/alcohol.

- The client should understand the chronic, permanent nature of the disease and the need to completely give up drugs of all kinds as well as alcohol. Drugs that are medically prescribed must be used only under specific instructions by a physician.
- The client must follow a daily routine to sustain recovery and remain ever watchful of threats to his/her abstinent state.
- As abstinence is crucial to recovery, it may be necessary to slow down other aspects of recovery if action on those fronts puts the abstinent person at risk for relapse. For instance, accepting a challenging job assignment early in recovery ought to be discouraged as it may trigger a relapse - if the person will not be able to cope with the demands and stresses of the new job. Once abstinence has been established and coping strategies have been strengthened, he/she may be ready for such an assignment.

Five Pillars of Recovery

Complete recovery involves changes in five major areas of life: physical well-being, work routine, healthy relationships, personality changes, and meaningful leisure activities.

i. Physical Well-Being

Health, which is totally neglected during the days of drug use, becomes an important concern in the

early part of recovery. While on the one hand continuing health problems can increase the person's frustration, on the other hand an improvement in physical well-being can motivate him/her to greater efforts in other areas.

As a counselor, you can provide some common sense directives to help in the client's improved health:

- Establishing a regular meal routine with at least three balanced meals a day is important. Excessive smoking, too many cups of coffee or tea, and frequent consumption of junk food are to be avoided, as they reduce appetite and increase restlessness.
- Maintaining regular sleep hours (at least 7-8 hours every night) is necessary. While too much sleep can make the person lazy and dull, too little can make him/her tired and irritable. If medications are given to stabilize sleep patterns, care should be taken to prescribe medications with low addictive potential, and they should later be tapered off systematically.
- An exercise routine or a brisk walk of at least 10-15 minutes each day should be encouraged. Exercise keeps away dullness and lethargy, and improves physical fitness. Taking pride in physical fitness is a strong motivator to staying alcohol- or drug-free.
- Bathing daily, dressing neatly, shaving regularly etc. are activities that may seem commonplace. Yet, due to the client's dysfunctional lifestyle, even these need to be stressed upon.
- Physical problems like gastritis, neuritis, respiratory infections or needle abscesses may need to be treated. Drug abusers tend to postpone seeking help for health problems, and are irregular with medications even when they do. The counselor needs to be on his/her

guard, for physical pain and discomfort can often trigger a relapse.

Complete recovery involves changes in five life areas: Physical well-being, involvement in productive work, developing meaningful relationships, positive personality changes, and learning to enjoy life without drugs.

ii. Productive Work Routine

It is employment that gives the recovering client a sense of fulfillment as well as financial independence. It also does wonders for his/her self-esteem. If nothing else, it keeps away boredom and gives the client something to occupy themselves with. Many drug abusers are unemployed or employed well below their potential, without a sense of regularity and permanence. These clients need help and encouragement from the counselor to find employment opportunities and handle job interviews. Vocational training may also need to be considered.

Even when employed, the client may need the counselor's help to work with the right attitude, involvement and commitment. Poor interpersonal skills and poor judgment of one's ability can create problems in the workplace. Problems created during the days of active addiction - the memos, absenteeism records, etc. - may also need to be dealt with.

Work and financial stability are closely linked. Budgeting, prioritizing expenses, and saving a sum regularly, are part of the financial discipline that the client needs to follow.

iii. Meaningful Relationships

The few relationships that the client managed to retain in spite of the addiction need to be

strengthened further. More than that, he/she also needs to learn to form new relationships. He/she needs to break out of the self-imposed social withdrawal and learn to relate to people again. But this aspect of recovery is easier said than done. The client may need some social skills training in this area. Starting conversations, communicating one's thoughts and expectations clearly, and handling conflicts are some issues that may need to be re-learned.

The family is a readymade support system available in our culture. Family members can make the client feel wanted, and can also be a source of great happiness. Helping him/her work through family conflicts and clarifying his/her role in strengthening family bonds can be beneficial. The user's relationships with parents, siblings, spouse as well as children need to be discussed, and concrete steps taken for improvement.

iv. Positive Personality Changes

Personality changes are indispensable to qualitative recovery. Negative personality traits have to be identified and worked on. Wishful thinking, impulsiveness, excessive and inappropriate expressions of anger, and indiscipline are commonly present. Presenting the client with information, through lectures or printed material, as well as providing testimonies of others in recovery can help him/her work through and change some of these undesirable responses.

It is equally important to focus on the client's positive qualities and achievements. It is on the strength of these positive qualities that he/she begins to view himself/herself as a valuable person, and it is these qualities that change the way others view him/her. Reviewing progress periodically, helping the client become aware of his/her

personality strengths and building on them is very important for recovery.

Building a value-based lifestyle is essential to the user's continued recovery. A clear understanding of what is ethical and what is not, is important. Respecting others' needs and feelings, honesty, accepting responsibility, and above all not participating in anti-social and criminal activities influence the quality of recovery.

Many clients find that belief in a Higher Power gives them tremendous support. It can also add a sense of urgency and purpose to efforts to alter the client's personality traits. A routine of just repeating the serenity prayer reminds him/her of what he/she can and cannot do, thus making a difference to the way he/she deals with problems. The act of surrender to the Higher Power and asking for His help is a lesson in humility, even while increasing the client's confidence to cope with problems.

v. Experiencing Pleasure Without Drugs

Learning to have fun and enjoy oneself without drugs/alcohol is something the client must do. As leisure and fun were always associated with alcohol/drugs, having fun differently now may seem strange. It will take a while before the client spontaneously participates in social activities and enjoys them.

Going back to the client's past history and identifying activities that he/she used to enjoy prior to addiction is a good starting point. A list of activities can be readily generated even otherwise - playing games, reading, meeting friends, music etc. Yet, even if he/she has done it all before, effort is needed to revive these activities. For instance, it has probably been months since he/she showed up for tennis practice and the old partners may no longer be available.