

Stepping Ahead



Common Stumbling Blocks in Recovery

1. Boredom is a common relapse trigger. Life can feel boring without our drug of choice and it's easy to get into the pity party that "everyone else can do it-this is not fair." STOP. Reality is reality. We can't drink or drug period. Commit to developing things that are fun to you. Otherwise, you are destined to a life of hell, prison or death. I'd rather delve into who I am, what I am good at, and what I enjoy without chemicals. You may surprise yourself! Many of us used for a long time so everything centered on using. Changing is not going to happen overnight, but it will be worth it! Create a list of the things you would like to try but haven't ever done. Think about things you used to enjoy before using took over your life. Try new things and figure out who you were meant to be!
2. Feeling defeated or hopeless. The odds of maintaining sobriety can seem pretty defeating. I remember in treatment they told us only one in ten are going to remain sober. Yikes! If at times the possibility of long-term sobriety feels overwhelming or if others doubt the likelihood of your success, stand strong. You can do this! Read about or get to know those that recover despite tough odds. Watch what successful people do and stay around those who are continuing to be successful in sobriety.
3. Frustrated with lack of progress or how slowly things change. It can be hard to work diligently each day and not see things change very quickly. Remember to acknowledge your progress. Listen to how others say you've changed because you may not be able to see it in yourself. Practice gratitude for the progress you've made to date. I found journaling about my events and my moods each day helpful because when I looked back I could see how far I had come. Write down things you've learned about yourself because later you will not be able to recall all the new discoveries you have made. Recovery is a lifetime journey and you can choose to make it the best process possible.



4. Not knowing who you are as a sober person. If you are like me, your life revolved around drinking/drugging. Many people find they don't know what they like or dislike anymore because everything was associated with drinking. Be patient with yourself. Make a list of the things you value in life. If you value family, intentionally focus on developing that part of your life. Make a list of things you've never tried before but think you would like to try. Venture out of your comfort zone and try new things to give your life some freshness.
5. Fear. Fear keeps us bound in shame and guilt. If we allow it to drive our lives, it will cause us to crash and burn. If your fears are significant, you may want to contact a professional to work through them. Otherwise, you can try writing them down and imagining the worst-case scenario. You are much stronger than you think and have gone through A LOT with your addiction. Trust that with God's help, you will make it through whatever you fear. Research shows that 85% of what we fear never happens.
6. Lack of spirituality. If you struggle with spirituality, reflect on your beliefs about God, what messages you have heard throughout childhood and why you have believed what you have to-date. People often spend more time planning a vacation than they do in understanding God. Take the opportunity to learn, ask questions, and seek out answers.



7. Special occasions are risky. You may want to consider celebrating special occasions totally differently than you've ever done before. If a holiday has traditionally been celebrated with a lot of using behavior, design a completely different way to celebrate-at least for the first year. It will give you a chance to try something new and prevent exposure to high-risk situations until you are stronger in your recovery.

8. Lifestyle patterns or habits draw you back. Many of us used alcohol or drugs to "relax" and often began in the early evening. To get out of this habit, it may be helpful to completely change your routine. For instance, after work choose to go straight to the gym or go to a meeting. Practice new ways of driving home so you don't pass your normal stops. Learn ways to "relax." This is essential to long-term sobriety. Ask yourself what is soothing. Many people set the timer for music to be playing when they arrive home. Music that is calming and relaxing could settle your need for

transition at the end of the day. Or perhaps always taking a walk upon arriving home-especially if you have a dog that needs to get out, too! Or begin to practice meditating when you arrive home. Listen to relaxing music in the car and then spend time meditating when you get home.

9. Habitual lying. Lying becomes such a habit in addiction and often continues in sobriety. We can find we are lying about really silly things of little or no importance. This behavior erodes our self-esteem and integrity so it must stop. Make a commitment to absolute honesty and have an accountability partner. When you catch yourself in a lie, tell the person and apologize immediately. You will find that practicing absolute honesty also can become a habit and it is much more rewarding!