

Mastering Recovery

Rooted in the Steps. Growing Through Connection

With Barry Lehman



🌱 My October Manifesto

#5.14 – The Heart of Deeper Recovery

October 1, 2025

What I'm Thinking

For years I've been circling these questions:
Why do some people thrive in long-term recovery — and others stall, drift, or fade?
Why do even seasoned professionals, with years of sobriety, still feel a quiet emptiness inside?



I've asked those questions because they are my questions.
They come from the soil of my own story.

After 37 years, here's what I know:
You don't stay sober by just willpower.
You don't stay sober by just knowledge.
You don't even stay sober by just service.

**You stay sober by going deeper into recovery —
again and again.**



Depth at the Heart of Recovery

- **Humility:** I learned early that humility isn't humiliation. It's acceptance — of myself as I am, and of others as they are.
 - Three years sober, enjoying the recovery life. I still struggled with Step 3. I did not see or understand what it truly meant for me, even as an ordained clergy, to "turn it over" to God. So I worked on Step 2. Yes, I believed that could restore me to sanity (health) but why would God want to do that. Was I worthy? So back to Step 1. Powerless. Acceptance. I am not in charge.
Humility. Aha!
- **Forgiveness:** I've had to forgive myself, over and over, for being human — and to release resentments that hardened me against others and myself.
 - Yet, it hadn't all fallen into place. Until a retreat leader, a Sister from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Green Bay led a session on grief, death, and dying. You work through the well-known stages of grief and the dying process: Anger, confusion, denial, bargaining. And, she finished, "when you have reached the final stage of grief and death itself, you have reached the First Step of Alcoholics Anonymous. **Acceptance, Forgiveness.**
- **Grace:** At the very start of my growth, more than fifty years ago, I first heard the truth that changed everything: You are accepted. At the time I didn't know it was the seed of everything to come, but it has grown into the very foundation of my life and recovery.
 - At the very end of my Seminary training group, years before the above stories, my supervisor looked at me and gave me the guiding light I needed and would always need. He quoted a well-known theologian. "Simply accept the fact that you are accepted by that which is greater than you." **Grace.**

And yet even now, after decades, I still wrestle with the same enemies:

- The fraud voice that says, "This works for others, but not for you."
- The temptation to coast, to stop growing.
- The resentments that whisper I'm not enough, or that others don't deserve my forgiveness.
- The fear that grace can't really be for me.

These aren't beginner's problems. They're the hidden struggles of long-term sobriety. They're what keep people awake at night.

Connection: The Foundation We Keep Returning To

A friend once told me, more than a decade into sobriety:
“I still go to meetings. I still sponsor. But honestly? I feel flat. I’m not sure I belong here anymore.”

Maybe you’ve heard the same thing. Maybe you’ve felt it yourself.

That’s the fraud voice at work — the one that says connection is for others, not for you.
The one that whispers you’re just going through the motions.

The truth is I don’t stay sober because I’m strong.

I stay sober because I’m connected.

- Connection interrupts the fraud voice.
- Connection reminds us we belong.
- Connection keeps recovery alive when the tools feel stale.
-

Without it, drift sets in.

With it, long-term recovery opens again into meaning and purpose.

The Call of October

For the past year, I’ve been building something new:

Deeper Recovery: Living the Steps.

It’s not about starting over.

It’s about going deeper — into the practices that keep recovery alive long after the pink cloud has faded.

This month, I want to name those struggles out loud — and invite you into a deeper path.

Because recovery isn’t just about stability.

It’s not just about avoiding relapse.

Recovery is about becoming.

It’s about humility, forgiveness, and grace lived out in real time.

It’s about connection that restores us when the fraud voice gets loud.

It starts with connection.

DEEPER RECOVERY



LIVING THE STEPS

Reflection Prompts

- What's one way your hope has changed you?
- What's one part of your life that now feels aligned with purpose — even if you never planned it that way?

An Invitation Into Deeper Recovery



I will be at the annual MARRCH Conference and Expo at the end of October. I will have a table and be speaking on Wednesday morning.

It will be a time for me to talk with you, get your ideas, or to explain more about what I am working on in Mastering Recovery. We'll be able to talk about the excitement of long-term recovery and how to help you or your clients to get past the times of boredom or self-doubt.

I look forward to seeing you.

Taking a Step Beyond

Try to accept the changing seasons of your heart,
even if they seem strange.

Stay close to those who bring out your deepest
truth.
— Rumi





Awakening The Church to Address Addiction
A Virtual Conference

Thursday, October 23
10 am - 6 pm CT

[LINK for more information.](#)



I will be exploring the heart of long-term recovery with my talk:

Connection, Humility, and Grace

Wednesday at the annual MARRCH Conference.

[Register today.](#)

I partner with



The Center of Addiction
and
Faith.



Relevant
Recovery

Wherever you are in the journey-
come back to what grounds you.
You're not alone.



Do you like the newsletter?
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Barry Lehman
2370 Lexington Ave. S
Mendota Heights, MN 55120

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