

Mastering Recovery

Rooted in the Steps. Growing Through Connection

With Barry Lehman



The Power of Hope: A Deeper Recovery Mini-Series

#5.10 – Hope as Defiance: Why To Still Believe

September 3, 2025

What I'm Thinking

Hope in long-term recovery is not naïve optimism. It's a bold, sometimes gritty decision to keep going — even when we've been disappointed, tired, or spiritually dry.



We don't talk about it much, but **hope in long-term recovery** takes real courage.

In the beginning, hope comes easy. Sometimes it's all we have. That fragile spark that maybe, just maybe, life could be different. It's what gets us into treatment, into meetings, into the first raw honesty of letting go.

But after a few years, that kind of hope changes.

Because what we're really doing in recovery isn't just fixing what was broken —

We're giving up a way of life we once believed was all we had.

And we're stepping into something we've never lived before.

★ This is where Radical Hope begins.

Not the hope of getting your life back —
but the hope of discovering a life you’ve never known.

In the early years, people often say:

“Now I can finally get my life back.”

But for many of us, there was no life to get back to.

- Not one that was whole.
- Not one we want to live again.
- Not one that was free.
- Not one we ever really fully lived.

That’s where **Radical Hope** enters:

the bold, often courageous belief that even if we can’t see the future clearly —
we are *still becoming someone new*.

🌀 Where the term comes from

The phrase Radical Hope was introduced by philosopher **Jonathan Lear** to describe what happens when a culture, identity, or way of life is wiped out — and yet people still choose to move forward.

It’s not just optimism.
It’s not just resilience.

Radical Hope is the courage to believe in something better — even when we don’t know what that “better” will look like.

It says:

“I don’t know what’s ahead...
but I believe it’s worth walking toward.
This isn’t the end of the story.”



This is Recovery

Radical Hope is a vital part of recovery. When we first get sober, whether we can see it clearly or not, our whole lifestyle, personal culture, and identity is wiped out. We may have never admitted we were "alcoholic" or "addicted" but we were. As much as denial kept us from saying it, that was the way we knew how to deal with life.

Now it's gone.

For the first two years we struggle with ways to cope, what to do with free time, where to find new friends, wrestle with cravings.

We also build a new understanding of who we are and what just might be possible. By the third year we have changed our approach.

We are not just holding on.

We are not just staying clean.

We are growing into a life that's new, honest, spiritual, and real.

A life we've never had before.

A life we may not fully understand — but somehow trust is possible.

Radical Hope doesn't deny pain.

It doesn't rush healing.

It simply whispers:



"Keep going. You ain't seen nothing yet!"



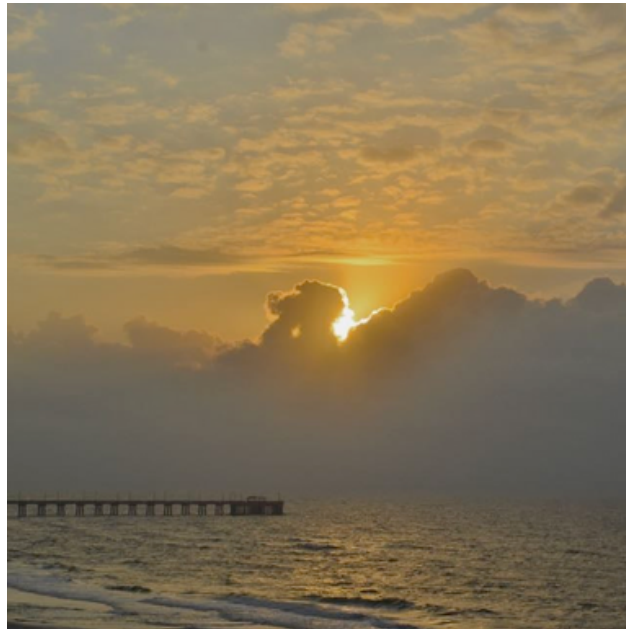
Reflection Prompts

- **Where in your life are you quietly choosing hope — even when it's hard?**
- **What kind of future are you starting to believe in — even if you don't see the whole picture yet?**

✓ Taking a Step Beyond

*Hope is being able to see that there is light
despite all of the darkness.*

— Desmond Tutu



🌀 This Week in Practice:

Hope is more than a feeling. It's a direction.
A direction to move toward.

This week, take one small action that says:

"I believe growth is still possible."

It doesn't have to be dramatic.

Reach out to someone.

Write down a new dream.

Do something you would never have imagined possible.

Because sometimes, believing is an act of resistance.

And long-term recovery is worth believing in.



I will be exploring the heart of long-term recovery with my talk:
Connection, Humility, and Grace
at the annual MARRCH Conference.

[Register today.](#)

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Relevant
Recovery

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Barry'.



Do you like the newsletter? Forward it to a friend.

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

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