

#4.37- April 2, 2025



Living the Journey

What I'm Thinking



Before moving forward over the next two months, let me give a basic skeleton of where I am going with the idea of mastery. The transitions I've been working through personally over the past couple months have opened some new directions that I will be using to build out *Mastering Recovery*.

♦ The Phases of Mastery:

From Foundation to Freedom—Living the Journey of Recovery

Each phase isn't a destination, but a rhythm we return to over time. I needed each of these as the process to deal with the changes I was (and am) experiencing. I reflect, set goals, practice what I need to do, and discover new freedom to move on.

• **Foundation**

This is the solid ground we build on—our routines, beliefs, supports.

Example: "In early recovery, my foundation was meetings and daily readings. Now, it's reflection, mentoring, and purposeful routines that still hold me steady."

• **Flow**

The phase where things start to move—intention becomes action.

Example: “Flow is when I’m working with others, creating, practicing self-care, and the rhythm of recovery feels alive—not forced.”

- **Freedom**

Not just freedom from substances—but freedom *to be who you are becoming*.

Example: “Freedom, for me, is when I realize I’m not bound by old definitions of success. I can choose new paths, explore new parts of myself.”

Reflective Prompt for Readers:

“Where are you right now—building a foundation, finding flow, or stepping into freedom?”

The Pillars of Mastery

Rooted in Humility, Forgiveness, and Grace

These are the deeper qualities we grow into, often when life is messy. If I am missing one of these, chances are I will be brought up short. The more I know the more I am aware of how little I really know. That awareness in itself is enough to make me pause and remember these qualities.

- **Humility**

Not weakness, but openness. The recognition that we still have things to learn.

Example: “After years in recovery, humility now means being curious—letting go of ‘shoulds’ and listening differently.”

- **Forgiveness**

Not just of others, but of self. Recovery without forgiveness becomes rigid.

Example: “Forgiveness has helped me let go of the guilt of not getting everything right the first time—or the fifth.”

- **Grace**

The spaciousness to grow, change, and begin again.

Example: “I see grace when someone relapses but returns; when I have a hard day and still show up the next.”

Prompt:

“Which of these pillars has been strongest for you recently?
Which one do you want to lean into more?”

The Goals of Mastery

Guided by Connection, Purpose, and Gratitude

These aren't boxes to check—they're lived experiences that deepen over time. The greater my experience of the process, the more connection, purpose, and gratitude I will find. Moving on from the communities I have been part of for over 17 years reminded me, for example, of what I must discover ahead, doing so with purpose and meaning, and always being grateful for whatever I have had and whatever is next.

• **Connection**

With others, with self, with life. The opposite of isolation.

Example: “I used to think connection meant attending meetings. Now, I see it as being known, being honest, and being open to others again.”

• **Purpose**

What drives us beyond survival.

Example: “Purpose showed up when I began mentoring others—not because I had all the answers, but because I remembered how hard it was to feel alone.”

• **Gratitude**

The ongoing choice to notice the good and to build from it.

Example: “Even on hard days, I try to find something that anchors me—my breath, a moment of stillness, someone's kindness. That's gratitude in motion.”

Prompt:

“What's one way you're living into connection, purpose, or gratitude this week?”

Join me on the Journey

Over the next two months, I'll be exploring these themes—not as a checklist, but as living parts of the recovery journey. You'll hear stories,

questions, and maybe even challenges that come from these foundations, pillars, and goals. I hope you'll walk this path with me—and with yourself.

For you

- Use the prompts for your own reflection on where you are in recovery, your job, your relationships- or life in general.
- Hit reply—I'd love to hear your thoughts about the direction of *Mastering Recovery*.



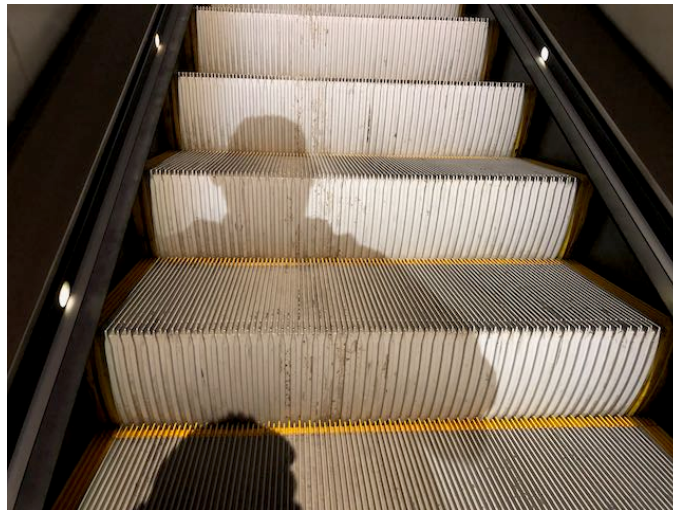
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Quote of the Week

You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step.

– Martin Luther King Jr.



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#4.38- April 9, 2025



Surviving Change Living the Journey of Recovery

What I'm Thinking



April 9 Newsletter: *Surviving Change & Transitions*

Over the past few months, I've been moving through a major life transition—stepping away from my role at Mayo Clinic after 17 years. Even though it was expected, even chosen, it still came with emotion, questions, and a quiet sort of disorientation.

If you've been through any kind of transition—retirement, career change, loss, or new beginnings—you probably know what I mean. Even in long-term recovery, these shifts can stir up old doubts and bring up surprising emotions: grief, restlessness, or even a strange kind of success-fatigue. That's when even a long quiet substance use disorder can jump in.

Transitions are part of life because change is inevitable.

Whether we welcome it or resist it, change always calls for some kind of shift—from *what was* to *what will be*.

We may find ourselves longing for “the good old days,” whatever they were. That's a natural response when the ground feels uncertain. But even while we honor the past, we're also invited to step into what's next. Because- if for no other reason- that's life.

Where Mastery Begins

In the *Mastering Recovery* framework, this is where the first phase—**Foundation**—comes into play. Not just the foundation we started with in early recovery, but the one we *revisit and rebuild* whenever life shifts.

Mastery is a process of change—and that means learning to move through transition with awareness.

This phase asks us to:

- **Notice what has changed.**
- **Remain aware of what has worked before.**
- **Re-explore what steadies us when things are shifting.**
- **Ask how what has worked in the past can support us now—even if the situation is different.**

In the weeks ahead, we'll look more closely at how to **reclaim and apply what has worked**, especially in the face of what feels unfamiliar or off-balance.

Your Reflection This Week

Take a moment to consider:

“What transition are you navigating—or avoiding—right now?”

“What is asking to shift in your recovery—or in your life?”

“What has worked in the past that might help you re-center now?”

Whether you're in a season of change or watching one on the horizon, I invite you to walk through it with awareness, self-compassion, and the knowledge that you're not alone.

Mastery doesn't mean control or perfection. It means showing up, noticing what's real, and staying in relationship with the journey.



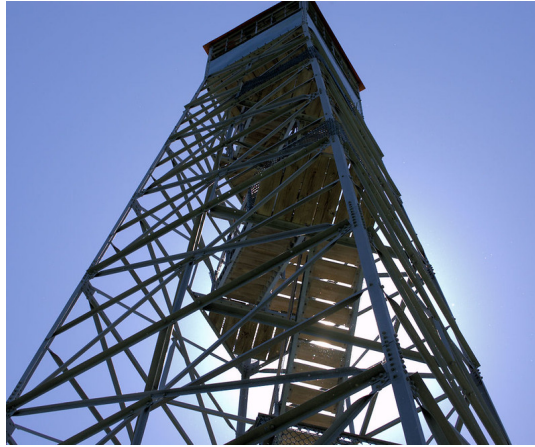
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Quote and Picture of the Week

The journey is the reward.

– Chinese Proverb



And what a view you might discover as you travel.

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#4.39- April 16, 2025



The Journey of Recovery: The Good, The Bad, and the Unexpected

What I'm Thinking



Last week, we looked at transitions—the ways life shifts beneath us and how *Mastering Recovery* starts with returning to our **foundation**. But what happens when the transition is *done*, the dust settles... and you're exactly where you hoped you'd be?

You're stable. Sober. Maybe even thriving.

And yet—it doesn't feel the way you thought it would.

This is one of the most surprising parts of long-term recovery:

Success doesn't always feel like success.

You might feel:

- A quiet emptiness after reaching a long-sought goal
- Pressure to maintain your progress without faltering
- A lack of clarity about what comes next
- Even guilt or confusion about not feeling more fulfilled

This mix of emotions is normal—but often unspoken.

Where Mastery Evolves

In the *Mastering Recovery* process, this is where the foundation you've built begins to shift into **flow**—the second phase of mastery.

Flow is where we **re-engage with our recovery**, not out of desperation, but out of curiosity and purpose. It's where the practices we once used to survive are refined into rhythms that help us grow.

Mastery recognizes that success is not an end point—it's a new beginning.

And sometimes, the most important work begins *after* the milestone:

- Re-connecting with purpose
- Making more and deeper connections
- Creating meaning beyond survival
- Learning to live in alignment with who you're becoming

Success Isn't Simple

Success often brings what I call **“the good, the bad, and the unexpected”**:

- **The good:** pride, progress, stability
- **The bad:** pressure, fatigue, restlessness
- **The unexpected:** a sense of “now what?” or the urge to start over

In these moments, we may not need a new strategy—we need a deeper anchor.

That's where the **Pillars of Mastery** come in.

These three core qualities—**Humility, Forgiveness, and Grace**—are not tied to any one phase of the journey. They are **essential across all of recovery**, whether we're laying a new foundation, finding flow, or stepping into freedom.

They help us stay grounded in what matters, especially when success complicates things.

- **Humility** reminds us that we're still learning, still becoming.
- **Forgiveness** helps us release unrealistic expectations and self-judgment.
- **Grace** gives us space to grow, even when we feel like we “should have it all together” by now.

These pillars are what turn recovery from a checklist into a relationship—something we live into with honesty, depth, and compassion.

Your Reflection This Week

Take a moment with these questions:

“What success in your life hasn’t felt the way you expected?”

“Where might you need grace or forgiveness—not because you failed, but because success changed you?”

“How can you move from surviving to flowing again?”

You’re not alone in asking these questions. In fact, this is exactly where mastery begins to deepen.

Next Week:

We’ll talk about what it means to *renew life* after the struggle—the idea that recovery isn’t just what we avoid, but what we create.

- Hit reply—I’d love to hear your thoughts.



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Quote of the Week

Recovery is about progression, not perfection.

– *Anonymous*



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#4.40- April 23, 2025



Renewal, Recovery and the Life You're Still Creating

What I'm Thinking



Here's the arc we've been developing this month...

- April 9: *Transitions and survival*
- April 16: *Success and complexity*

Now, we move into:

- **April 23: *Renewed Life—What Comes After the Struggle***

After the storm of transition, and the strange stillness of success, something new begins to stir.

That *something* is often quiet—like a first breath of spring. A hint that maybe, just maybe, you're ready for more than surviving. Maybe you're ready to build again.

This time of year carries that energy. Whether you observe Easter, Passover, or simply the changing season, the message is the same:

Life doesn't stop with struggle. Renewal is possible.

In recovery, we're not just healing from the past—we're learning how to create the future. And that means asking not only:

- *What do I need to let go of?*

But also:

- *What do I want to grow into?*

Where Mastery Comes Alive

This is the moment where mastery shifts from **reaction to creation**—from holding steady to building something new.

It's not about reinventing everything at once. It's about showing up where you are and choosing to engage with what's possible next.

As a musician, I've learned this firsthand.

- We don't just pick up our instruments and start fresh every time.
- We practice—over and over—not to return to the beginning, but to build on where we are.
- Each note, each phrase, each breath is part of a **relationship**. With the music. With the moment. With ourselves.

That's what creation is.

It's not always grand or dramatic. It often begins in the familiar—something we've done before—but now we bring more awareness, more freedom, more connection.

Recovery is like that.

We don't start from scratch every time life shifts.

- We start from experience. From foundation.
- And from there, we allow something new to emerge—not because the past is gone, but because it's given us what we need to take the next step.

This is where the **pillars of mastery**—Humility, Forgiveness, and Grace—become more than support. They become **soil** for growth:

- **Humility** keeps us open to learning, even from success.
- **Forgiveness** clears space to move forward, without perfection.
- **Grace** reminds us we don't have to earn our renewal—it's already in us, waiting.

Mastery isn't about controlling outcomes—it's about entering the process again, more aware, more honest, and more free.

Looking Ahead:

Next week, we'll begin looking at how the third component of *Mastering Recovery*—the **Goals of Mastery**—can help shape this renewed life.

These goals aren't outcomes to chase. They are values to live by:

- **Connection**
- **Purpose**
- **Gratitude**

We'll explore what it means to grow a recovery that feels fully lived—not just maintained.

Your Reflection This Week

“What part of your life feels ready for renewal?”

“What are you beginning again—quietly or boldly?”

“What would it mean to build your recovery like something new is possible?”

- Hit reply—I'd love to hear your thoughts.



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Quote of the Week

Start where you are. Use what you have. Do what you can.

– Arthur Ashe



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#4.41- April 30, 2025



Foundation to Freedom- The Living Cycle of Recovery

What I'm Thinking



Over the past month I have been living through a transition in my own life. I am now retired and we have moved to a new place. The boxes are (mostly) gone and we can even find some things where they are now located.

We are surviving the change.

But it hasn't been a straight forward line that just kind of happens. I sat for a while in my office one day trying to figure out where too put things and how to arrange it. It was a mixture of thinking, asking myself questions, and just seeing how things fit together. No we didn't start from scratch as if nothing existed. All those now empty boxes proved that.

We made it and are now living in the successful followup.

It is a time of renewal, for in this past month I had to let go of all the things I had been doing. All the things that have been at the center of my life just sat around and waited for me to be done. I have been thinking and watching, ready for new beginnings.

Over the past few weeks in the newsletter, we've looked at how transition stirs up change, how success isn't always simple, and how renewal invites us to build again from what we've lived and learned.

This week, then, we move into the third component of *Mastering Recovery*—the **Goals of Mastery**.

Since recovery is an ongoing cycle, it doesn't happen just once. Neither does it freeze once we've reached a milestone. Instead, it follows a living rhythm:

- **Foundation:**

Regular review (or inventory) of where we are—our recovery basics, our supports, the skills and values that have already carried us this far.

We ask: What's holding steady? What's shifting? What needs reinforcement?

- **Flow (or Action):**

Engagement with life—improving and adapting our daily living skills, responding to new challenges, finding new rhythms.

We ask: How am I moving forward? How am I growing in this season?

- **Freedom and Renewal:**

As foundation and flow deepen, we begin to live into a renewed experience of recovery—not just maintaining sobriety, but creating a life that feels full, rich, and meaningful.

We ask: What am I creating now? What is my recovery relationship inviting me into?

The Goals of Mastery: Values to Live By

These goals aren't external achievements.

They're not trophies to collect or standards to measure against.

They're the ways we embody a recovery that feels fully lived—not merely maintained.

They shape the freedom we step into:

- **Connection:**

A recovery that stays grounded in relationship—with self, with others, with the world around us.

Isolation pulls us backward. Connection moves us forward.

- **Purpose:**

A recovery that's animated by meaning, not just survival.

Purpose gives direction to our energy, even in seasons of uncertainty.

- **Gratitude:**

A recovery rooted in recognition of what's good, what's been given, and what continues to unfold.

Gratitude keeps us open, honest, and hopeful for what's still ahead.

As we move into May, we'll take this one step deeper—into the idea that recovery, growth, and even mastery itself aren't about arriving at a fixed point.

They're about building and maintaining **a living relationship** with our recovery, our purpose, and our lives.

Not once. Not perfectly. But over and over again—with humility, forgiveness, and grace leading the way.

Reflection for the Week:

"Where do you feel most connected, purposeful, or grateful right now?"

"Which of these values is asking for more attention in your life today?"



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Quote of the Week

What we call the beginning is often the end. And to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from.

— T.S. Eliot



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