

#4.46- Shifting Gears



Getting Ready: What We're Building Together

What I'm Thinking



We're at a turning point—not a departure.

I'm zeroing in on those of you beyond year two, who've hit a plateau or begun to wonder, *Is this it?*

I recently discovered that one of my memorable quotes from my earlier years in recovery was this:

- Everything I know about living my life in healthy ways, I found in the 12-Steps.

This work has always been rooted in the 12-Steps. But growth doesn't stop there. If you've ever felt stuck, bored, or unsure where your recovery is going, I want to offer tools that move beyond maintenance—and into meaning.

Over the past two months, you may have sensed a shift. I've been hinting at it, circling around it, and now it's time to say it plainly:

- I'm shifting gears in ***Mastering Recovery***—not away from the 12-Steps, but deeper into their long-term potential.

Why?

Because I've heard from too many people—clients, friends, even colleagues in recovery—who tell me the same thing:

I'm not struggling with staying sober anymore.

But I'm not sure what comes next.

You followed the path.

You showed up.

You worked the Steps.

You stayed sober.

You built a life that, by all accounts, works.

Way to go! That's what long-term recovery is all about!

But lately, something feels off.

Not broken—just... unfinished.

The cravings are quieter.

The chaos has settled.

But in the stillness, a different kind of restlessness sets in.

Not a fear of relapse— but the fear of staying exactly where you are. It's like you've climbed a long, winding trail and now find yourself on a plateau. You can see how far you've come.

You're grateful for the view.

But you can't help wondering... Is this it?

The tools that helped you survive don't always help you grow. The Steps are still true—but they speak differently now. Because *you* are different. The Steps invite you not just to stay sober and clean, but to come alive.

That's what this next chapter of *Mastering Recovery* is all about.

- It's not a replacement.
- It's not a departure.
- It's a deeper walk with the same compass—toward purpose, renewal, and freedom.

- ***Because long-term recovery isn't just about staying on the path.***
- ***It's about finding the courage to keep walking when the old map runs out.***

That's why I created a new, free mini-guide:

 **How to Grow with the 12 Steps, Not Outgrow Them**

Inside, you'll find three mindset shifts to help you engage with the Steps creatively, spiritually, and personally—even after the early structure feels too familiar.

 [\[Click here to download the guide\]](#)

If you've ever wondered what recovery could look like beyond maintenance—this is a good place to start.

If it resonates, I hope you'll forward it to someone who may need the same encouragement.

Because this isn't about leaving the Steps behind. It's about walking with them—and growing as we go.

Watch the newsletter for more about this shift. I look forward to growing it with you.

Closing Prompt:

Where in your recovery are you feeling called to grow—but haven't known how to begin?



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We must be willing to let go of the life we planned so as to have the life that is waiting for us.”

— Joseph Campbell



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#4.47- June 11, 2025



What If the Plateau is Part of the Path?

What I'm Thinking



Last week, I shared why *Mastering Recovery* is shifting—moving deeper into long-term recovery, not away from the 12 Steps, but forward through them.

This week, I want to pause on a place many of us find ourselves after a few years in recovery:

- The plateau.

You've done the work. You're showing up. Life is a lot more stable than was. So things feel a little still.

Not bad. Not broken. Just quiet.

And maybe a little uncertain.

It's not what we were used to. It's part of the journey of recovery.

What the *is* the long arc of recovery?

It's the stretch of time where the urgency fades and the growth can deepen. It's where the milestones aren't always visible—but the roots are going deeper.

In the beginning, recovery is loud. It's full of firsts, breakthroughs, and hard-won clarity. Those first two years? No, I don't want to do them again!

But over time, it shifts. It becomes quieter, more interior. Less about avoiding collapse—and more about shaping a life that holds meaning.

That's where plateaus come in. They're not detours. They're resting places. They offer space to look back, breathe, and ask honest questions about what matters now.

Too often, those of us with a history of substance use still expect life to always be chaotic, dramatic, or driven by urgency- you know, like it used to be. We've learned to function in crisis. It's what we know. It fueled our substance use.

But recovery doesn't unfold that way—not in the long run. It's not all turning points and breakthroughs. It's a journey. A slow, unfolding arc. And the plateaus? They're not failures. They're where we rest, catch our breath, and begin to notice just how far we've already come.

In this pivot—this next season of *Mastering Recovery*—I want to honor those quieter stretches. The ones where the real work happens in stillness, not struggle.

Where in your recovery have you mistaken quiet for stuckness?

Could this be a season of ripening—not regression?

If you haven't yet downloaded the new mini-guide, it offers three mindset shifts that can help bring new life to familiar tools—especially during quiet seasons of growth.

How to Grow with the 12 Steps, Not Outgrow Them

Inside, you'll find three mindset shifts to help you engage with the Steps creatively, spiritually, and personally—even after the early structure feels too familiar.

 [\[Click here to download the guide\]](#)

If you've ever wondered what recovery could look like beyond the plateaus—this is a good place to start.

Remember, this isn't about leaving the Steps behind. It's about walking with them—and growing as we go.

Closing Thought:

Next week, we'll return to the foundation—not as a reset, but as a return. Not to start over—

But to start deeper.

Until then, let the plateau hold you. The next step will come.



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***The shortest distance between two points
is under construction.***

— Noah benShea



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#4.48- June 18, 2025



Why Foundation Still Matters

What I'm Thinking



I know I've spent the last few weeks circling around ideas—playing with metaphors, digging into the deeper structure of recovery, and maybe (to some of you) sounding a little too “head in the clouds.”

You may have even thought:

OK, Barry, get to the point.

And that's fair.

Well, here it is:

- The point isn't to leave the 12 Steps behind.
- It's to build on them—intentionally, creatively, and with others.

The shift in *Mastering Recovery* is about more than reflection.

It's about **readiness**.

It's about stepping into the later stages of recovery with energy and clarity—not just to deepen our own journey, but to reach outward with what we've learned.

Next week, I'll start showing you what that looks like—in real, practical terms. *Promise!*

But this week?

This week is where we stop on the plateau and say:

Before we build the next stage, we shore up the ground beneath us.

In long-term recovery, there comes a time when the basics feel... well, basic, almost natural.

They've become part of who we are because:

- We've done the Steps.
- We've heard the slogans.
- We know the drill.

That's why, over the past month, we've looked at the quieter shifts that happen once the early intensity fades.

- We've explored plateaus—not as problems, but as part of the path.
- We've asked what it means to grow *with* the Steps, *not* outgrow them.

If we're really paying attention, we realize these are the blocks of the foundation that never stop mattering. They are essential to the ongoing living in recovery.

We're now in a place where we can see it clearly enough to build on it.

And so we return—intentionally—to the foundation.

Not because we've failed.

Not because we're starting over.

But because what we build next **needs to be strong**.

When the next storm of your life hits—and it will—it's not some clever new insight that will hold you.

- It's the deep habits,
- the relationships you've invested in,
- the quiet principles that have carried you all along.



**You don't build your foundation in the middle of the storm.
You build it so you're ready for it.**

Recovery, at this stage, isn't self-protection.

It's about **readiness**—for growth, for service, for purpose.

Here then is the shift in *Mastering Recovery*:

This next season won't just be about reflecting on the past.

It will be about reaching **forward—and outward**.

It will be about exploring how the foundation prepares us to show up fully—for our lives, for others, and for what's next.

Returning to the foundation with humility isn't a step backward.

It's what allows us to move freely, creatively, and responsibly—without forgetting what holds us.

So take this time, as we prepare to move into new growth, new wonder, and new adventures in recovery.

Reflection Prompt

What part of your foundation do you need to strengthen—not because you're struggling, but because you're ready to build?

Because today is not as good as it can be.

You ain't seen nothing yet.



Next Week...

We'll preview what's ahead in Year 5 of *Mastering Recovery*—and how this solid foundation will carry us forward, together.

Until then—stand on what holds you.



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**In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities,
but in the expert's there are few.**

— Shunryu Suzuki



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#4.49- June 25, 2025



What's Next: A Recovery That Keeps Growing

What I'm Thinking



Four years ago, I started *Mastering Recovery* with a single idea:

That long-term recovery needs long-term vision.

Not just tools for staying sober—

but conversations about how we live, grow, create, and serve... for the long haul.

Now, as we begin Year 5, that vision is coming into clearer focus.

And with it, a shift—one that I've been circling around for weeks, but today, I want to say plainly.

The Heart of It

Mastering Recovery will be even more strongly rooted in the 12-Steps—
but not just as a structure to follow. As a foundation to **build on**.

In Year 5, we'll explore what it means to grow beyond maintenance—
to live recovery as a **creative, relational, and spiritual** experience.

Not just avoiding relapse... but embracing your capacity to live, love, serve, and
evolve.

Because long-term recovery isn't just about holding the ground.

It's about walking forward with it under your feet—

with intention, with joy, and with the tools that helped you get here still in your
hands.

Here's What That Looks Like

Nine years ago, I attended a trumpet workshop at the Shell Lake Arts Center in Wisconsin.

Now, I wasn't new to the trumpet—not after 50+ years of playing. I was active in multiple bands and could hold my own as a first trumpet (as long as we stayed out of the stratosphere).

But that week? Something shifted.

I wasn't there to "get better" in the usual sense. I was there to listen more deeply. To challenge old habits. To be a beginner again—even with decades behind me. It reawakened something—**curiosity, connection, joy**.

That's when I began to understand mastery:

Not as perfection or control, but as *renewed relationship*.

As returning to something I loved with humility, attention, and openness.

And *that's* what long-term recovery can be.

Not sobriety as survival,
but sobriety as a platform for becoming more fully yourself—
through creativity, spirituality, and real connection.

So What's the Shift?

You won't see a complete overhaul.

But you will notice a new rhythm and focus:

- **More storytelling** — reflections from long-term recovery journeys, including my own, and real-world moments that bring the process of growth to life.
- **More tools you can use** — practical prompts, checklists, journaling cues, and ways to apply the Steps when you're no longer just trying to stay afloat.
- **More ways to connect what's worked... with what's next** — including group opportunities, fresh conversations, and themes that bridge foundational recovery with the creative, purposeful life that follows.

And here's the thing:

Sometimes, before we know what the next chapter *is*, we already feel it stirring inside us.

It shows up as restlessness, as hunger, as a quiet knowing that something in us

is shifting—even if we don't have words for it yet.

That's not just longing.

That's life inviting us forward.

What Comes Next

July will bring a five-part series that follows the arc of mastery:

- **Connection** – how curiosity and relationship reawaken long-term recovery
- **Foundation** – what Steps 1–3 offer us, even years later
- **Flow** – how Steps 4–9 keep us moving, healing, and growing
- **Freedom** – what it means to live Steps 10–11 as a spiritual rhythm
- **Purpose** – how Step 12 reveals that mastery was never just for us alone

If you've ever asked, "What now?" or "How do I keep recovery fresh and meaningful?"

This next season is for you.

Reflection Prompt

What part of your recovery is asking to be re-engaged—not because it's broken, but because you're ready to build something more?



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The future enters into us, in order to transform us, long
before it happens.

— Rainer Maria Rilke



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