

#4.42- May 7, 2025



Mastery as Relationship- Redefining the Journey

What I'm Thinking



When I talk about *mastery* in recovery, I don't mean perfection or control. I mean getting better at something that matters—over time, with intention. Mastery isn't something we grip or manipulate. It's something we participate in.

In the *Mastering Recovery* model, we move through three evolving phases: **Foundation**, **Flow**, and **Freedom**. These aren't steps we "complete." Like with the 12-Steps we ever finish growing with. They're patterns we return to, deepen, and grow with. They show us how to stay in relationship with our recovery—because recovery itself is not a task; it's a living process.

What if mastery isn't about getting everything right, perfect, being "in charge" but about staying in relationship with what matters? That changes how we relate to recovery. It's no longer about compliance or performance—it becomes a conversation:

- With your **recovery practices**: How are they changing with time?
- With your **values and purpose**: Are they evolving?
- With your **self**: What's your self-talk like? Your self-trust? Your capacity for growth?

Recovery isn't a checklist.

It's a living relationship—something you engage with, tend to, and grow

alongside. It's not about arriving at a fixed place. It's about showing up again and again, in different seasons of life, and listening for what's needed now.

But what does it mean to have a relationship with something like recovery? Isn't that just me, alone in my head?

Not quite. A real relationship needs curiosity, honesty, and interaction. Think about your connection to music, or a meaningful craft or spiritual path. You're not just performing tasks—you're being shaped by it, challenged by it, supported by it.

Recovery is the same way.

Some days feel connected and clear. Others feel stale or distant. Both are part of the rhythm. When we relate to recovery as something alive, we stop asking, "*Am I doing this right?*" and start asking, "*What's shifting? Where am I stuck? What's needed? Where am I growing?*"

This is where *Mastering Recovery Volume 2* is headed—not just doing recovery "right," but living recovery *real*. Mastery, then, is not about arriving, but about remaining in relationship. Not about control, but connection.

You've seen this in your own life—from early clarity to long-term nuance.

Mastering something—whether music, recovery, or life—means being *present* with it, not *in charge* of it.

Reflection Prompt:

Where in your recovery do you feel most alive, curious, or evolving today?

Coming Next Week:

Most recovery systems teach us how to survive the early storms—but what about after that? Join me as we explore how to bridge early sobriety into meaningful long-term growth.



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Quote of the Week

**The important thing is not to stop questioning.
Curiosity has its own reason for existing.**

—Albert Einstein



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Barry Lehman

4903 16th Ave. NW
Rochester, MN. 55901
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#4.43- May 14, 2025



Mastery in Recovery- Bridging From Survival to Living

What I'm Thinking



In early recovery, we focus on surviving:

- don't use,
- go to meetings,
- call your sponsor
- find stability.

And rightly so. That early structure is essential—it's the lifeline. But long-term recovery asks for something more. It invites us to move from survival into growth, meaning, and depth.

The process that I call mastery helps build the bridge between those two realities. If we stay anchored *only* in survival thinking, we risk getting stuck—emotionally, spiritually, and relationally. The challenge is real: many people in long-term recovery find themselves drifting, doubting, or even disconnecting. That's not failure. It's a signal: *growth* is calling.

- Early recovery teaches us how to stay alive.
- Long-term recovery asks us to learn how to truly *live*.

But this shift doesn't happen on its own. Without active attention and renewal, recovery can flatten out—leading to feelings of stagnation or even “learned

helplessness.” When every day feels like a repeat of the last, it's easy to wonder, *Is this all there is?*

That's where mastery comes in—not as a new set of tasks, but as a renewed relationship with your life. Mastery invites us to grow forward: deepening purpose, rekindling gratitude, re-engaging our connection to self and others.

It's not about abandoning early recovery tools—it's about evolving them.

In the beginning, our **Foundation** is everything. We need structure, clarity, and safety. The basics matter:

- meetings,
- commitments,
- daily routines.

These tools help stabilize us when everything feels uncertain. They are the anchors that keep us from drifting.

But mastery doesn't stop at Foundation. As time passes, we're invited into **Flow**—the phase where recovery starts to move with us rather than feel like it's controlling us. Flow is where we begin to personalize the tools, make choices based on internal motivation rather than external obligation. Instead of asking, *“Did I do it right?”* we begin to ask, *“What works for me now?”*

This is the beginning of the bridge.

We don't discard the tools—we bring them along and rework them.

- A daily reading becomes a deeper meditation.
- A meeting becomes a place for service, not just survival.
- Step work or other aspects of your program become a lens for ongoing self-reflection, not just something to complete.

As we walk this bridge,

- **Connection** matures. It's no longer about avoiding loneliness—it's about cultivating mutuality, depth, and presence.
- **Purpose** shifts with seasons. What gave meaning in year one might evolve in year five. That's not a detour—it's growth.
- **Gratitude** becomes less about forcing positivity and more about seeing life with clear, grounded eyes. It roots us, even as we reach forward.

What worked at six months may not serve you the same way at six years. That's not failure—it's development.

Foundation gives us the footing. Flow moves us forward. Freedom is where we begin to own our path.

The bridge isn't a break from recovery. It *is* recovery—maturing.

Reflection Prompt:

Where in your life is recovery pointing you toward something new—even if it feels uncertain or unfamiliar?

Coming Next Week:

What happens as you cross the bridge and find your old tools don't quite fit anymore? Next week, we'll explore how to let your recovery evolve *with* you—so it stays alive and aligned with who you're becoming.



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Quote of the Week

The greatest thing in this world is not so much where we stand as in what direction we are moving.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes



#4.44- May 21, 2025



Letting Recovery Evolve With You

What I'm Thinking



🌀 Recovery, like life, doesn't stand still. What helped us stay grounded in year one may not be what we need in year five. And yet, many of us feel a quiet pressure to “stick with what works” without reviewing and revising it—even if it no longer feels alive, connected, or meaningful.

Letting recovery evolve isn't a betrayal of your foundation. It's a deepening of it. It recognizes what works and looks for what to do to bring it new life. Just like any long-term relationship, recovery needs to be refreshed, renewed, and responsive. This is where the process of mastery shows up—not in holding on tightly, but in knowing when to adjust, renew, and grow.

Core Message:

In the early stages, we often follow recovery with urgency and clarity. The path is mapped. The rules are known. The steps are lifesaving. We absolutely needed that because the old habits and thoughts were strong enough to derail us. But later on, that same path can begin to feel too narrow—or just no longer alive in the same way.

This can be confusing. Am I losing my recovery? Am I doing something wrong? Is this all there is.

Nope.

What you're sensing might be the *call to evolve*—an invitation to move into a new season of relationship with your recovery.

Mastery teaches us that we're not meant to repeat the same practices endlessly. We're meant to respond to our lives.

- You may find that journaling gives you more than rigid checklists.
- You may need new community—not because the old one failed, but because you've changed.
- You may seek purpose in ways that once seemed “extra,” but now feel essential.

Our recent move from the familiar of the last 17 years to a new “home” in the Twin Cities left me without the community that had surrounded me. I found myself needing to evolve and see what path to follow. So I started with the **Foundation**. For my life these past 36 years that meant the 12-Steps. It also meant discovering what was available for community. Putting the two together, that meant finding new meetings and renewing old connections and making new ones. So I found meetings to go to.

These new meetings to attend were different than I was used to, but they were good. They had the characteristics of healthy meetings and they included a range of sobriety, experiences, and strength. I reminded myself that I am not trying to recreate the meetings in Rochester, the meetings I used to attend, or my image of a perfect meeting. I went in with openness and the hope of learning.

It didn't take much. The familiar things were still there, but now I was aware I wasn't the same person. I found a home meeting and paid attention. I went to an open meeting and paid attention. I went with a friend to his home meeting and paid attention. I was told of another good meeting with a somewhat unique format; I went and paid attention.

These were what I need at this point. They felt familiar with the basics and applied that to where I am today. My recovery is evolving and adapting to my new reality.

This is **Flow** in action—the second phase of mastery. Flow doesn't mean “ease.” It means responsiveness. It's the space between discipline and freedom, where you listen inward and respond outward with intention.

- Letting recovery evolve with you means choosing growth over performance. Staying engaged without pretending everything still fits.
- Living honestly—without fear that needing change means you've lost your way.

- You haven't. You're finding your next one.

Reflection Prompt:

What has shifted in you lately that your recovery might need to catch up with?

Coming Next Week:

We'll close the series with a long view—how to stay rooted in your recovery while reaching toward your next chapter. A recovery that lasts is one that grows with you, not just through you.



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Quote of the Week

**If you always do what you've always done,
you'll always get what you've always got.**

—Attributed to Henry Ford or Jessie Potter (widely quoted)



#4.45- May 28, 2025



Freedom: Building Recovery That Lasts

What I'm Thinking



🌀 Recovery isn't something you graduate from—it's something you grow with.

This month we've explored what it means to be in *relationship* with recovery—not just following a plan, but engaging with a process that grows with you.

We've crossed the bridge from early recovery into long-term growth. We've explored how tools and beliefs can evolve. Now we ask: what does it look like to live recovery that lasts? One that stays rooted, but keeps reaching?

Sustainable recovery is never static. But neither is it chaotic. What lasts is what grows—and what grows well is both grounded and alive.

This is the third phase of Mastery: **Freedom**. Not freedom *from* recovery, but freedom *within* it. Freedom to integrate. Freedom to renew. Freedom to live with purpose, not just follow rules.

To build recovery that lasts, we must:

- **Stay rooted** in what matters—connection, gratitude, honesty, and humility.
- **Keep reaching** toward what's emerging—new purpose, new insights, new contributions.
- **Let go** of rigidity without losing structure.

Like a tree, our growth happens in both directions: down into our foundation, and up into new possibility.

This is the rhythm of long-term mastery:

- **Foundation** gave you footing.
- **Flow** gave you movement.
- **Freedom** gives you depth, range, and direction.

Your recovery doesn't have to look the same year after year. In fact, if it does, it may be time to ask where growth is waiting to happen. What worked in the beginning is what got you here—but what will help you thrive in the next season?

That's what **Mastering Recovery** is here to support.

Reflection Prompt:

Where do you want to grow next—in your recovery, your relationships, or your life?

What's Next:

In the weeks ahead, I'll be sharing more about how **Mastering Recovery** is expanding and evolving. I will be looking to partner with local recovery community organizations, offering deeper support for long-term recovery, developing my coaching program for long-term recovery. I am looking to be part of building a community of people who aren't just staying sober, but *growing whole*.

This isn't the end of the conversation—it's the beginning of a new rhythm. I hope you'll keep walking with me.



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Quote of the Week

A tree with strong roots laughs at storms.

—Malay Proverb



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Barry Lehman

2370 Lexington Ave. S
Mendota Heights, MN 55120
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