



# Mastering Recovery

*Rooted in the Steps. Growing Through Connection*

With Barry Lehman

**#5.29- *NOT My Normal Newsletter***

**January 14, 2026**

## What I'm Thinking



### **Holding Hands at the Street**

We in Minnesota have been in a tough place for the last week. Most of my newsletter readers are from Minnesota and you know what I mean.

Anxiety. Uncertainty. Fear. Disbelief that this is really happening. In our own backyards, neighborhood streets, and shopping centers.

I have been watching friends post about their concerns. Others talk about how they had to confront issues unlike any they have ever faced before. The sounds of sirens has a different feel.

A friend from out of state called and was feeling the tension. We talked about the old *Twenty-Four Hour a Day* daily reading from Hazelden and how, no matter what, *especially in times like this*, we must remember:



**Nothing in the world is as important to me as my own sobriety.  
Everything I have, my whole life depends on that one thing.**

Times like this are a challenge. They have led me and many to stop and pay attention.

Hence a newsletter unlike any in the 4 ½ years of writing it.

I was not expecting to be aiming a whole newsletter in the direction of crisis self-intervention.

It is truly living out the words John Lennon used in his lullaby song to his son, Sean, in 1980:

**Life is what happens to you while you're making other plans**

The lines before it, though, are just as important.

In the midst of Lennon's lullaby-like stream of writing in the song, he tells Sean that there is a long way to go, but in the meantime, **"Before you cross the street, take my hand."**

Connection. I'm here.

It doesn't say, *I'll cross for you.*

It doesn't even say, *I'll cross with you.*

It simply says:

*Take my hand.*

The crossing is still yours.

The movement is still yours.

The risk is still real.

But our connection remains.

That feels like an important distinction—especially in recovery, and especially at this stage of life and when life happens. Connection shows we are serious about maintaining our recovery. Connection is what makes recovery real. And alive.

Not connection as advice-giving or fixing.

But connection as presence.

In recovery, we sometimes talk about "doing it alone" as a danger—and rightly so. But mature recovery teaches something more subtle: we don't lose ourselves by walking our own path; we lose ourselves by walking it without contact.

Connection doesn't remove the crossing.

It steadies it.

And that kind of connection isn't always dramatic or intense. Often, it's quiet and ordinary and is one of the enduring gifts of the Twelve Steps. They are not a

system, but as a relational way of life. The Steps offer handholds: sponsors, friends, shared language, shared honesty.

They are how we can manage to stay with recovery plans when life seems to get in the way.

### **The Heart of the Week:**

*Which is why I am doing something different this week.* I am presenting a 7-day set of online posts on Staying Oriented- keeping recovery the most important thing. They will be posted each day around 10:00 am CST.

- [Mastering Recovery Facebook Page](#)
- [My Personal Facebook Page](#)
- [My LinkedIn Page](#)

### **How to Do This Next Week**

What I'm offering this week is not a program or a challenge.

It's a short, self-guided **self-intervention** for moments when life becomes acute and orientation starts to slip.

A few things matter as you approach it.

First, this work is grounded in one non-negotiable truth:

**no matter what else is happening, abstinence and the recovery lifestyle come first.**

In long-term recovery, risk doesn't always announce itself as craving.

More often, it shows up as disorientation—fatigue, overwhelm, narrowed thinking, or the quiet sense that “I'll just handle this.”

This self-intervention is designed to help you notice that shift **early**, before it becomes a crisis or turns into relapse-prevention territory.

Second, move through this slowly.

One day at a time is enough.

There's no need to catch up, complete it perfectly, or do it “right.”

The daily reflections are meant to help you:

- re-orient to what's actually happening
- remember what still holds
- notice what's already working
- practice one small, steadying action
- widen perspective again through lived experience

Third, this is not something to do alone if things feel like they're intensifying.

What I'm sharing this week — and in the self-intervention reflections that follow — are meant to support orientation and connection during stressful seasons.

But if things feel like they're tipping toward craving, obsession, or loss of control, this is not something to do alone.

*Reach out* — to a sponsor, a trusted recovery friend, a clinician, or a support line.

Protecting sobriety comes first.

If cravings begin to grow, thinking feels compulsive, or sobriety feels threatened in any way, **reach out immediately**—to a sponsor, a trusted recovery friend, a clinician, or a support line.

Getting help is not a failure of orientation.

It *is* orientation.

Finally, trust this:

The goal here isn't to fix your life or anyone else's.

It's to **stay aligned with the recovery life you've already built.**

That's often what protects sobriety long before relapse prevention is needed.

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**Staying Oriented:**  
**A 7-Day Self-Intervention for When Life Interrupts**

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**A Daily 3-Part Post** after 10:00 am  
Reflection on the theme of the day  
Journaling prompts  
One small anchoring action for yourself

Copy and paste text into Word or any note or journaling app.  
You can

- print it out and write on paper
- write digitally with the note app or Word
- Keep a separate notebook.

Set aside 10 minutes each day to reflect on the theme, your situation, and insights.

**Abstinence and the recovery lifestyle must always come first.**

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## ✓ Taking a Step Beyond

Companionship is the practice of being with another person without trying to fix, save, or advise.

— Parker J. Palmer

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## 🌱 A Closing Invitation

Before you rush to the next step, pause.

Notice who's nearby.

Notice where your hand could reach.

Notice where connection is already present—even quietly.

The crossing is still yours.

But you don't have to make it disconnected.

And that, too, is mastery.

[Email me.](#) I always look forward to hearing from you.



Do you like the newsletter? Forward it to a friend or colleague!

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I partner with



The Center of  
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