



Mastering Recovery

Rooted in the Steps. Growing Through Connection

With Barry Lehman

#5.37- The Gentle Edge

March 11, 2026

What I'm Thinking

Practice After the Beginning

Last week we talked about practice.
In music that means scales and simple rhythms.
The basics.

In recovery it looks similar:

- Meetings
- Meditation
- Self-awareness
- Honesty
- Values
- Showing up

Nothing dramatic.



But practice changes as we grow.

In music, I still practice scales and long tones. They keep the embouchure steady and the tone centered. They are foundations.

But they are no longer the focus of my practice. When I'm working on a new and more difficult piece of music, something else happens.

- I discover the passage that slips.
- The awkward entrance.
- The exposed phrase.
- The fingering I can't quite get right.

What I have to practice intentionally. In music we call it woodshedding.

- You isolate the difficult part.
- Slow it down.
- Work it carefully.
- Rest.
- Return.

You don't spend all your time rehearsing the eighty percent that already works. You focus on the twenty percent that doesn't.

Right now, as I write this, I have a concert coming up this Saturday. There is one four-bar section — all sixteenth notes and rests— that I simply cannot get right.

I've woodshedded it for hours. And still my brain refuses to cooperate.

It's humbling.

Part of me wants to skip over it and play the rest of the piece — the parts that already sound fine. Let the band cover my missing notes.

But the music won't let me hide from those sixteenth notes.

That's the passage that needs my attention.

From Early to Long-Term

After a few years in recovery, growth often looks like that.

It's not about fixing everything. It's facing the part we would rather skip.

Early recovery often happens inside a protected practice room — the sober community.

- Meetings.
- Sponsors.
- Step work.
- Honest conversations.

During those early years we face truth, clean up wreckage, and build new habits. Then something shifts.

- Meetings feel familiar.
- Recovery language becomes natural.
- The obvious wreckage is behind us.

We are no longer primarily practicing inside the room. We are living in the world. And the question changes.

It's no longer:

How do I get sober?

It becomes:

How do I live recovery in something I've never faced before?

For people with several years of sobriety, these concerns often aren't dramatic. They look like:

- Subtle cynicism.
- Quiet resentment.
- Impatience.
- Emotional withdrawal.
- Overconfidence.
- Spiritual dryness.

These are not catastrophes.

They are signals.

The Heart of the Week:

Long-term recovery means catching them early and practicing something new. Not overhauling everything. Just working the difficult passage.

The foundations remain.

But growth now appears in unfamiliar places:

- Learning how to disagree without contempt.
- Learning how to age without denial.
- Learning how to lead without ego inflation.
- Learning how to grieve without withdrawing from life.
- Learning how to sit with uncertainty without trying to control it.

These are not early recovery issues. They are refinement issues.

Relapse often begins when we ignore the crack.

Refinement begins when we study it.

Instead of replaying the whole conflict in our minds, we isolate the moment.

- How did my tone shift?
- What story did I start telling myself?
- Where did I withdraw?
- What part might I own?

That is deliberate practice in recovery.

Not dramatic overhaul.

Just focused adjustment.

✨ The Recovery Move

Healthy growth includes discomfort. It's never easy to see that we might be wrong. It does not include overwhelm.

It is a kind of measured discomfort — just enough stretch to learn something, not enough to collapse.

If you have been sober several years, you are not starting over.

You are building on foundation.

What is the difficult passage in your life right now?

Not the whole symphony.

Just the measure that tightens your breath.

Slow it down.

Practice there.



✓ **We are not saints.
The point is that we are
willing to grow
along spiritual lines."**

— Bill W.

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A Closing Invitation

Next week we'll talk about something essential for that kind of practice — the importance of safe places where we can refine before life turns up the lights.

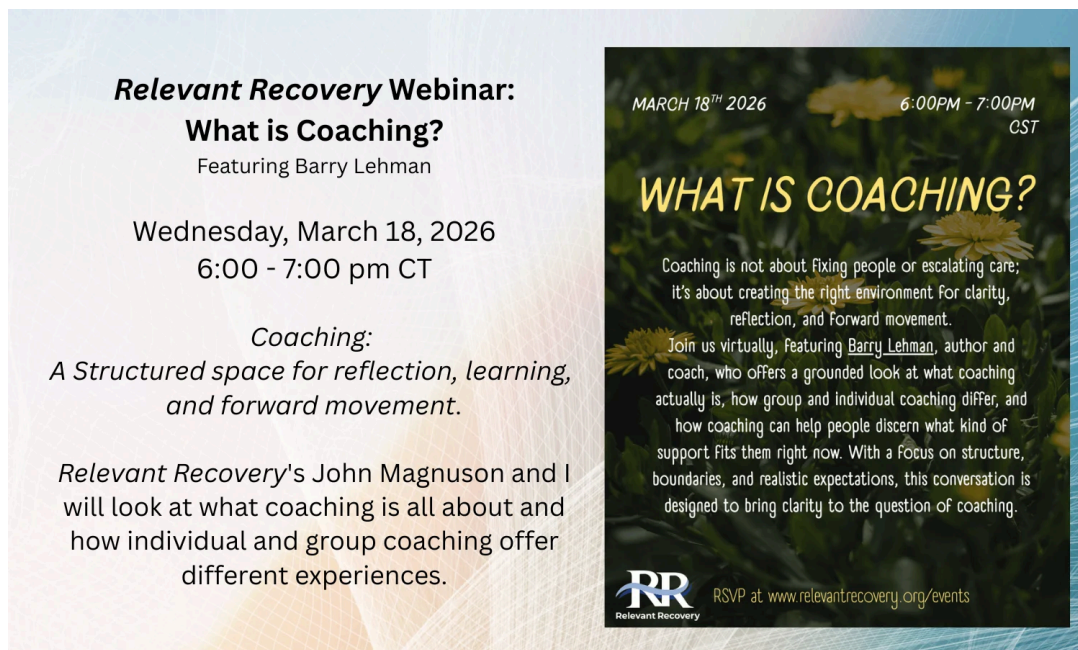
But for now:

Notice the crack.
Isolate the passage.
Practice the adjustment.

That is how long-term recovery deepens.

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**Relevant Recovery Webinar:
What is Coaching?**
Featuring Barry Lehman

Wednesday, March 18, 2026
6:00 - 7:00 pm CT

*Coaching:
A Structured space for reflection, learning,
and forward movement.*


Relevant Recovery's John Magnuson and I will look at what coaching is all about and how individual and group coaching offer different experiences.

MARCH 18TH 2026 6:00PM - 7:00PM
CST

WHAT IS COACHING?

Coaching is not about fixing people or escalating care; it's about creating the right environment for clarity, reflection, and forward movement.

Join us virtually, featuring Barry Lehman, author and coach, who offers a grounded look at what coaching actually is, how group and individual coaching differ, and how coaching can help people discern what kind of support fits them right now. With a focus on structure, boundaries, and realistic expectations, this conversation is designed to bring clarity to the question of coaching.

 RSVP at www.relevantrecovery.org/events

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Barry Lehman

2370 Lexington Ave. S

Mendota Heights, MN 55120

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