



Mastering Recovery

Rooted in the Steps. Growing Through Connection

With Barry Lehman

#5.36- Practice with Intention

March 4, 2026

What I'm Thinking

Getting to Life

As a student in college I played in Carnegie Hall.
I was able to do that because...

Our band paid the rental fee.

I thought I was thumbing my nose at the old axiom
about practice being the way to get to Carnegie Hall.

But that was just college student self-centeredness.

To be part of the band I had to learn to play trumpet and then,
yes,

practice, practice, practice.

I remember the joy of practicing in the early days in junior and senior high. I
wanted to learn and get better.



After that, practice became less emotional and more ordinary. It wasn't exciting every day. It was simply what one did if one wanted to keep growing. And that may be closer to the truth about practice than we realize.

Real practice isn't dramatic.

It isn't constant inspiration.

It is structured, repeated, chosen.

And over time, it forms us.

From Early to Long-Term

In early recovery, practice is clear: don't drink, don't use, go to meetings, tell the truth. Those habits save lives.

But in long-term recovery, those practices often become steady. They are no longer new. They are part of the rhythm.

So the question quietly shifts:

What am I practicing *now*?

Because long-term recovery is not about increasing stamina at being sober. It's about refining how we live.

Research on musicians and athletes shows that improvement doesn't come from doing more of what is easy. It comes from intentional practice — small, targeted stretches just beyond comfort.

If it's always comfortable, we're maintaining.

Maintenance isn't bad. But growth asks for a little more.

Not chaos. Not overwhelm. Just a gentle edge.

A Word About Spirituality

You may notice that I've been spending a fair amount of time talking about spirituality lately.

That isn't accidental.

Long-term recovery eventually moves beyond crisis management and into formation. And formation always touches the deeper questions: What shapes me? What steadies me? What connects me to something larger than my own reactions?

This isn't about organized religion. It isn't about doctrine or affiliation.

It's about how we stay connected to what is greater than ourselves — and how that connection quietly shapes how we live.

Which is why, before we talk about vision or purpose or living beautifully, we begin with recovery scales. Structured, disciplined, ready.

Structured daily practices make sense because:

- They are controllable.
- They are repeatable.
- They build confidence.
- They create interior stability.
- They prevent spirituality from becoming emotional weather.

And right now — especially here in Minnesota, in the middle of winter and the middle of cultural noise — what most of us need is interior stability.

Not grand vision. Not emotional hype.

Stability.

The Heart of the Week:

So for this first week of March, I want to suggest something simple. Not a program. Not a challenge. Just a daily rhythm.

Each day:

- One minute of breath (perhaps the Serenity Prayer, one line at a time).
- A two-minute pause before reacting to something.
- One short written reflection — a sentence is enough.
- Name one value you want to live today.
- Show up.

That's it. Do it. Practice. Intentionally.

Simple. Repeatable. No drama.

The Recovery Move

Before we play the spring melody,
we practice the scales of recovery that we already know.

Before music becomes expressive, it becomes stable clarity.

We'll go deeper in the coming weeks. There will be measured discomfort. There

will be relational practice. There will be integration.

I've learned over the years that when we practice faithfully at the foundations, something quiet begins to happen. The tone clears. We find a little more space between impulse and response.

That space may feel small at first. Even slightly uncomfortable. We begin to notice things we used to rush past. We hear notes that aren't quite in tune. We feel reactions we used to justify.



✓ Taking a Step Beyond

**Hope is the thing with
feathers
That perches in the soul...**

— Emily Dickenson

Hope doesn't shout. It perches.

It hangs around.

Practice is simply making room for it to stay.

🌱 A Closing Invitation

Next week, we'll talk about the gentle edge — the kind of discomfort that doesn't destabilize us, but stretches us. The move from foundation into flow.

For now, just practice.

That isn't failure.

That is growth beginning.



Back issues of the newsletter can be found at: [Newsletter Hub.](#)

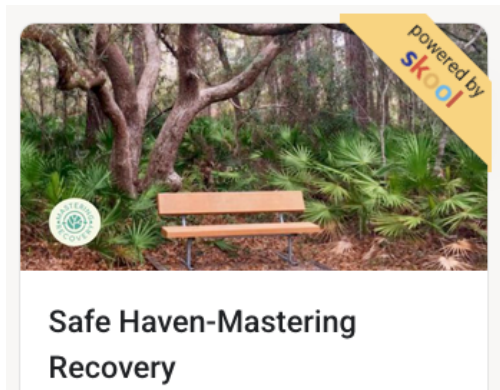
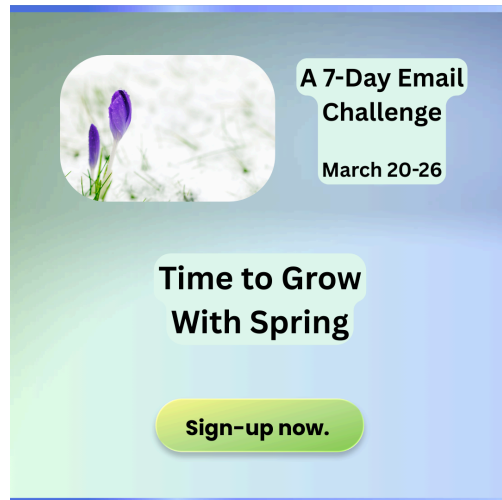
[Email me.](#) I always look forward to hearing from you.

7-Day Spring Challenge: A Gentle Re-Bloom

Spring doesn't suddenly appear.
It invites renewal.

For seven quiet days, we'll return to
small, steady practices —
the kind that warm the soil of long-
term recovery and make room for
what wants to grow.

Just a simple, daily turning toward
light.



I've opened a small, quiet online
space called **Safe Haven- a
community within Mastering
Recovery.**

It's not a program or a discussion
group. It is a quiet space for
steadiness, reflection, and room to
breathe in long-term recovery.

If you're curious, you're welcome to
step in and see if it feels like a fit.

[LINK](#)



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

I partner with



The Center of
Addiction and
Faith.



Relevant Recovery

Barry Lehman

2370 Lexington Ave. S
Mendota Heights, MN 55120

All photographs are my own.

Copyright © 2026

Spam is not part of recovery.
You may unsubscribe at any time.

[Unsubscribe](#)

