



Mastering Recovery

Rooted in the Steps



Practicing the Principles

With Barry Lehman

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Integrity: Living as a Whole Person

The work of this disease is broad and destructive of many things.

Our wholeness as complete human beings is one of them.



My wife did not know I drank in unhealthy and alcoholic ways. Only once in our relationship had she ever seen me too drunk to drive.

But I insisted I wasn't and drove anyway.

That was on January 1, 1972- three months before we were married. I made sure it never happened again.

Almost 17 years later, October 1988, when told her I was an alcoholic and entered treatment, she was even more surprised than I was.

Talk about putting up barricades. In active alcoholism and addiction it is essential to build walls, close borders with others, and make sure one part of our lives isn't in contact with other parts.

After I got sober, as a pastor I heard a number of Fifth Steps. In many of them, as in my own, there was a moment when the person speaking would stop. They acted like they were finished.

But their face told a different story. There's something else. There's something that they don't want to talk about.

I gave them a silent moment or two, as the chaplain had given me. The wheels turn; the internal scenery became more transparent. That moment comes in a lot of different ways. Mostly as a question.

If I share this will the person listening to me be angry or disapproving?

If I don't share this, will I be able to stay sober.

That's Only the Beginning- Of Course!

That's why I am focusing on an event that is part of early recovery. Aren't we dealing with long-term recovery? Yes. And most of us did share those issues and concerns. We broke barriers and moved further into recovery.

And we never forget that it actually worked.

We discovered that becoming known didn't destroy us.

We had spent years believing the walls protected us. Then recovery taught us that the walls were actually keeping us divided. It sets us on the road to making us whole again.

Having to actually admit to ourselves, to a Higher Power, and to another person what was happening is where that all begins to happen.

We learned through experience that when something painful or embarrassing divides us—inner from outer, private from public—admitting it and dealing with it is essential to becoming whole.

Living Recovery

Those moments will again show up.

Ten years into sobriety.

Twenty-five years into recovery.

Forty years sober and about to retire.

New careers, retirement, relationships, aging, loss, mistakes, unexpected growth—life keeps presenting new material. There will always be other Fifth-Step moments, even when it isn't a formal Fifth Step.

We cannot escape them.

No reason to.

We've been through this before. We survived.

And things got better. We've experienced a wholeness in who we are and have accepted it.

We don't have to worry that someone else will discover what we are "really like."
We try to live without blockades to who we are and who we want to be.

The word for that is **integrity**. It is the principle of Step 5.

Early recovery: I told another person who I really was.

Long-term recovery: I keep learning how to live as that whole person.

Practicing the Principles:

Practice of the week:



A Closing Thought

Integrity does not mean admitting to myself, to my Higher Power, and to others that I am perfect.

Quite the opposite.

I am still in need of awareness, moral inventory, and the humility to admit what I discover, so that I can continue to grow and become the person recovery calls me to be.



Upcoming Conversations and Events



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