

# Mastering Recovery

*Rooted in the Steps. Growing Through Connection*

With Barry Lehman



#5.03- Flow:  
Practicing the Possible  
July 16, 2025

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## *What I'm Thinking*



*Practice these principles in all our affairs.*

That's the final instruction in Step 12  
— not a summary, but a way of life.

We are to live everything we do, have, or become based on the principles of recovery.

Everything. But how do we live that — not just say it?

**In all our affairs.**

Flow is the third element in the Arc of Mastery. It's what happens after the foundation is built, reviewed, and strengthened. Flow lives in the space where **structure becomes movement** — where what we've built starts to carry us forward.

It's that sweet spot at the edge of skill and ability where ease and challenge meet. Where we stretch — because we enjoy it, and we want to get better.

# Why the First Two Years Matter

It takes those early years in recovery to learn what the principles are — and begin applying them.

But over time, we're invited to something deeper:

## **Practice.**

It's why the old joke sticks with me:

“How do you get to Carnegie Hall?”  
Practice, practice, practice.

It's a joke because it's true.

## **Flow in Music — and in Recovery**

I've been playing trumpet for over 60 years — and I'm still growing.

Because I practice.

If I had stopped at a couple of easy scales, I would never have gone beyond *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*. I've been stretching again — I just enrolled in a jazz ensemble course on improvisation. It's not a beginner class. It's for musicians who are willing to revisit the very basics in new ways: all 12 major scales. Knowledge of those 12 scales is a prerequisite for the course.

Fortunately, I know those scales - I've practiced them for years. Not because I'm chasing perfection — but because that practice creates flow.

This is the not-so-secret level of long-term recovery.

Just as scales are the essence of music performance, the **daily, consistent practices** of recovery are what support mastery in life. We don't stop practicing because we're “done.” We keep practicing — and growing — because the stakes are high, and the rewards are deep.

Flow requires the presence of challenge- remember it's that sweet spot at the edge of skill and ability where ease and challenge meet and we stretch — because we enjoy it, and we want to get better.

**In recovery, the right challenge is not one that threatens relapse.**

**It is one that calls us to be better at what matters most.**

## **What really is flow?**

Psychologist Mihály Csíkszentmihályi first described flow in the 1970s.

It's what we often call being “in the zone” — that state where we're:

- Fully focused
- Deeply engaged
- And genuinely enjoying the process

It's not magic. It's the fruit of sustained practice — and the desire to keep growing.

To experience flow, three things help:

- **Clear goals and progress**
- **Clear and immediate feedback**
- **A balance between challenge and skill**

## **What do you need to move into flow?** **Review your foundations.**

Last week you named the important one or two foundations.

Do your two important foundations still provide

- **Clear goals and progress**
- **Clear and immediate feedback**
- **A balance between challenge and skill to help you practice?**

**Schedule** a personal inventory time this week on these foundations and your practice of recovery.

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## ✓ Taking a Step Beyond

**Be still like a mountain and flow like a great river.**

— Lao Tzu



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## Where to Go Next 🖐️

### A Closing Reflection

Mastery doesn't begin with breakthrough. It begins with returning again and again to what grounds us — even when it feels small. Then it's moves into flow.

I don't outgrow recovery. I live more deeply into it. That means practicing these principles — not once in a while, but as a lifestyle of recovery. With practice.

That's how we move into Freedom next week.

Thanks for being on the road with me. There's a lot more to come.

# Explore More

Here again is a tool to help.

## **Download the Foundations Checklist**

— a simple one-page guide to help you stay connected and grounded.

### Mastering Recovery



#### Foundations of Recovery: A Self-Check

*What grounds you in long-term recovery?*

Use this guide to reflect on what grounds you today.

What's active in your life right now? What might need fresh attention?

#### The Essentials

**Core Recovery Virtues** (These anchor your heart and spirit)

- **Honesty** – With yourself, with others, with reality
- **Openness** – Willingness to accept new truths
- **Willingness** – Courage to act, even when uncertain
- **Humility** – Letting go of ego, staying teachable
- **Forgiveness** – Releasing resentments, especially toward self
- **Grace** – Offering and receiving what can't be earned

**Grounded Mindsets** (These shape your perspective and choices)

- **Curiosity** – Replacing judgment with interest
- **Self-awareness** – Seeing patterns clearly
- **Responsibility** – Owning choices without shame
- **Patience** – Trusting time and process
- **Consistency** – Small daily actions build strength
- **Integrity** – Aligning values and actions

**Relational Anchors & Daily Practices** (These keep you connected and embodied)

- **Accountability** – Staying tethered to truth-tellers
- **Vulnerability** – Letting yourself be seen
- **Boundaries** – Protecting time, energy, and priorities
- **Service** – Giving back as a form of grounding
- **Community** – Sharing mutual support
- **Daily Rhythms** – Prayer, movement, reflection, creativity



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Wherever you are in the journey- come back to what grounds you.  
You're not alone.

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