

# Mastering Recovery

A Newsletter on Long-Term Sobriety



#1 -- July 7, 2021

## Welcome to the Newsletter

The idea of "mastering recovery" really excited me when I first became aware of the idea through Daniel Pink's book, **Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us**. It was an "Aha!" moment in which all that I had learned and experienced in many years of long-term recovery became clear. I also knew that it would give me a new way to explain how to maintain recovery long after the initial treatment ended.

In August I will publish the book **Mastering Recovery**. But there is so much more that can't be found in one book. This newsletter will be a value-add to what is in the book. I hope you find this newsletter helpful and a means of strengthening your own or someone else's recovery.

## What I'm Thinking

Each week's edition will include a blog-post-type entry on some aspect of long-term recovery. It will be based on some happenings in the news, something I've read, something I have experienced. For this week, here are a few paragraphs from the book.

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Recovery is not a destination- it is a process of change. It is about staying motivated for the journey, doing things that support the process, and developing the lifestyle and mindset of change and growth that allows recovery to continue into the future

SAMHSA, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, defines recovery as "a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential."

Recovery, then, is more than the process of staying sober. It is the all-encompassing **environment** in which the person with a Substance Use Disorder continues the improvement of their health and wellness. This

improvement begins in the first two years; it then expands and grows. Recovery is the **lifestyle** that allows a person to live a self-directed life. In the end recovery is the **mindset** that allows the person to move into a life of **meaning and purpose**.

Long-term recovery, then, is **management** of the symptoms of the disease of substance use disorder. It is the **acceptance** of the disease that allows the person in recovery to be honest and open with themselves and others. It is **maintaining** a self-care program that supports abstinence. It is a way of managing stress and anxiety, two significant triggers to the relapse of the disease. It is the way we utilize the brain's plasticity to create the new balance that rewires the brain.

Mastery is what allows us to build new skills, a new lifestyle, and habits that become intrinsic parts of who we are. As we master long-term recovery, i.e., get better at it, life gets better, recovery becomes easier, cravings lessen, purpose grows, stress reactions are reduced, and we have new skills to deal with life situations.

--from *Mastering Recovery:  
Finding a New Freedom and a New Happiness in Long-Term Sobriety.*  
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## Facing Challenges - Building Recovery

Haven't we faced enough challenges in the past year to get us through at least the next decade? Probably not, but all we have is today- and how we prepare for tomorrow. Here's an idea I picked up in primary treatment over thirty years ago that still serves me well today.

The most important task for today: **Make your bed!**

Yes, really. (Even Navy SEAL Admiral William H. McRaven wrote a speech and book about it.) One of the aspects of primary treatment has often been that you make your bed every morning. Something I had never done without some coercion, even as a teenager, unless it was unavoidable, like when my bed was also the "sofa" in my college dorm room. This idea of making my bed every morning, no exceptions, was new territory. My brain didn't like it; I was not wired that way; I'm just going to get back in it tonight, so why bother?

But I did it. Something felt better inside. There was a sense of accomplishment. The room look a little bit better organized- cleaner, neater. I kind of liked what I would see when I would walk back into the room later in the day.

Following discharge I kept doing it. My wife was surprised since she had some of the same attitudes as I had had pre-treatment. It became a daily ritual (which is far more powerful than a daily habit.) On a day when I got up and

rushed out without making the bed, I would come back later in the day and be afraid that maybe I wouldn't stay sober that day. I had blown it. So I would be reminded of my need for sobriety and make the bed. Immediately.

The reason it worked- and still works- is simple. Admiral McRaven knew why. It is a simple act of getting something done. It is an action that symbolizes keeping your world a little better organized. It is part of retraining the brain. I just made the bed before sitting down to write this. I had more energy; my life, at least at this moment, is a little neater and I can face the next challenge with a little more serenity and a sense of having done the next right thing at least once today.

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## Picture of the Week



**Sunrise or sunset?**

Which is it?

Hard to tell from just looking at the picture. If you knew the time of day it was taken or the

direction I was facing at the  
time, you would know.

That amounts to needing perspective. A very common problem in almost any decision making process. In recovery, we have to learn the skill of mindfulness in order to stay on the healthy path. Without more information, or trying very hard to pick out clues to advance a guess, the picture would be of little help if I told you to go west. But, knowing that it has to be facing east or west, if I told you to go north or south, you would know that you would have to turn to your left or right.

[The answer- it is a sunrise, looking east over the Gulf of Mexico.]

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In long-term recovery we build awareness and mindfulness to our surroundings. We learn to pay attention. The picture of the week will be to spur a deeper understanding of the beauty around us or perhaps a new way of looking at things.

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## Have You Seen This?

Here I will include links to stories I have found online that might be of interest to you. Some will be news articles while others may be opinion pieces from other sources. The goal will be to keep you informed of something you may have missed.

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### [4 Scientific Findings on the Impacts of Mindfulness and Meditation](#)

Mindfulness and meditation are commonly used ideas in treatment. They are evidence-based and important tools. This summary article leads to some good insights about the advantages of mindfulness.

... from the article: The American Psychological Association defines mindfulness as “a moment-to-moment awareness of one’s experience without judgment.” Not a trait or a practice, mindfulness is instead a state of being.

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## Quote of the Week

When recovery becomes both a **mindset** and a **lifestyle**, it is not a chore.

It is who we are.

--from *Mastering Recovery: Finding a New Freedom and a New Happiness in Long-Term Sobriety*. Copyright © 2021

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## Tools and Resources

I'm always on the lookout for new things to help strengthen recovery. These tools can be wide-ranging and as much for entertainment as for learning,

experiencing recovery, or helping get through tough times.

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The book that led me into a better understanding of how I managed to build long-term recovery is this one by Donald Pink. His overview and insights into the process of motivation was, for me, like handing me a map of where I'd been. "So that's how it worked!" was my surprised answer.

### [Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us](#)

One of my sources for news and insights is the Addiction and Recovery Bulletin. It is wide-ranging and, as they say, features news and articles from the previous week related to the world of addiction and recovery.

### [The Addiction/Recovery eBulletin.](#)

Admiral McRaven's book, mentioned above.

### [Make Your Bed: Little Things That Can Change Your Life...And Maybe the World](#)

DISCLAIMER: Some of these resources may contain affiliate links, which means that if you click on one of the product links, I'll receive a small commission. This helps support the newsletter and allows me to continue to share mastering recovery. Thank you!

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## Book Update

We keep moving along toward a publication date in late August. By next week the book should be in the hands of the formatter. I may even be able to unveil the cover within the next two weeks. I have begun the process of recording the book for an audio book version.

Watch this section of the newsletter in the next couple of weeks for information about becoming an "Early Adopter" of the book.

As a subscriber to this newsletter, you will be among the first to know about the publication. If you have any thoughts or comments, please feel free to email me.

[Email Me](#)

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