

# Mastering Recovery

A Newsletter on Long-Term Sobriety



#35 -- March 2, 2022



**Special news announcement in the Tools and Resources section below.**

## Fearing Relapse Staying "Unstuck"

### What I'm Thinking

*Relapse: Reverting to old behaviors that may potentially lead to \_\_\_\_\_!* (fill in the blank.) Obviously for those with a substance use disorder that means back to the use of our chemical of choice. We must never forget that, nor become complacent about it. Even after 30+ years it is still out there- cunning, baffling, powerful and very, very patient. Since there is no such thing with an SUD to be neutral, whatever we may end up relapsing with can be a reminder of the need for not getting stuck where we are.

*Over the past few weeks I had a reversion to old behaviors with my trumpet practice. Since I learned most of what I know about mastery from playing the trumpet, it didn't surprise me when I sat up in bed one morning and sad- "Wow! I have just had a trumpet playing relapse." I am not downplaying or minimizing the word "relapse." When I put that word to the lack of action, I got scared. For my trumpet playing and for my overall sobriety. If I could relapse so easily into not practicing, something I take seriously and with a great deal of joy, what could happen with my specific substance sobriety?*

*I remembered my own statements that there is nothing that is "recovery neutral." It all fits together. To put it another way:*

**How I do anything is how I do everything.**

*Keeping that in mind, means we have to be able to name what is going on with us. We have to learn to take honest and fearless inventory. What happened over the past three weeks was that I stopped practicing my trumpet. I practice only three times in that time. Big deal, some might say. But in the past eight years the only times I missed more than three days in a week was following surgery.*

*I found myself making excuses.* Blame was ready to be handed out to "circumstances beyond my control." It didn't take long until I found myself feeling out of sorts. Life wasn't going in the same ways it had been- and there was no reason for it not to. Day after day I would promise myself that I would get back to it. Tomorrow. Which never came.

*I was in a trumpet playing relapse.* It looked and felt like the old days before I learned the path of trumpet mastery. And the feelings and lethargy and restlessness spread into everything I was doing. Finally I took Step One. I admitted that my life was unmanageable. I was into relapse behaviors. Not (yet) with any substance, but the overall pattern of substance use disorder was clearly in play.

*How easily it happened.* And I never saw it. My life of long-term recovery was being challenged. I had to do something. I simply acknowledged it, I picked up my trumpet the next morning and I was back on the path. I was surprised (not really) that all the other stuff I had been whining about and feeling uncertain about, began to change.

*Nothing is recovery neutral.* Even decisions about practicing my trumpet. Now to stay "unstuck." More on that next week.



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## **Facing Challenges - Building Recovery**

Knowing the signs of being stuck, or heading into some type of relapse is part of a regular inventory routine. Beyond just naming the ones we often talk about (hungry, angry, lonely, tired, restless, irritable, and discontent), what does the behavior look like in real life action. Think about these:

- A major change in *any* regular routine not being caused by circumstances.
- Making *excuses* for the change and trying to *blame* other things or other people for the change.
- Finding oneself *unable to follow through* on plans and promises that you make to yourself.
- Vague and just beyond consciousness feelings that *something isn't going right*.
- *Isolating* and *withdrawing*.
- Your get up and go has got up and went. :(
- Name your own variations.

Now, admit that these are signs of some type of relapse. Don't be shy, or afraid, or too proud to be honest. It does not mean the world has ended, that your life is useless, or that you are about to drink, smoke, or ingest some other substance. That's always the place to start.

Then do some journaling, reflecting, praying, or just plain pondering about it. Don't kick yourself, don't think you are now a failure. Spend a few days writing about it. Don't over analyze. All you are doing is getting back into your path.

This is the relearning stage. There is an important lesson or direction ahead.  
Don't force it. It will be there.

Breathe.

Write or ponder.

And don't forget to be grateful.

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## **Quote and Picture of the Week**

**Whether it's in the right way or sometimes the wrong way,  
you learn about life and its lessons.**

-Amelie Mauresmo



**The key is in the learning!**

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## **Tools and Resources**

This is the ninth month of this newsletter. I have been trying some different ideas and postings. It's time now to do some expansion of this platform for long-term sobriety. This will include more outreach to others and greater opportunities for developing a place where long-term recovery is built.

***Mastering Recovery***, therefore, will be adding some new resources and programs in the next ninety days.

- **First will be a Mastering Recovery Facebook page** and a **private Facebook group**. They will both be up and live by *March 15*. The **MR page** will be a public face for *Mastering Recovery* with posts about ideas, resources, and general thoughts from me. The **MR group** will be for those who want to engage in more deeply in discussion and interactions regarding long-term sobriety and the ideas behind mastery. As a "*private group*" only those who are members, admitted by the administrator (me, for now), will be able to see and make posts.
- **Second will be a Mastering Recovery Blueprint** for getting unstuck and staying healthy. This is tentatively set to launch *May 15*. It will be a book and an online course and perhaps a webinar. The details are still being worked out. Watch the newsletter for more information as all this comes together.

**Email Me** with ideas or questions and watch for more information in the next weeks.

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