

Mastering Recovery

A Newsletter on Long-Term Sobriety

#41 -- April 13, 2022



Links to **Mastering Recovery** on **Facebook** are in the **Tools and Resources** below. Check them out.

Why Wait Two Years?

What I'm Thinking

*The past couple weeks I have highlighted Carl Erik Fisher's book, *The Urge*. It is a concise and readable history of our human approach to addiction over the centuries. His research and writing led him to conclude that "a therapeutic response alone is not enough." He describes the "something more" that's needed as what we call "recovery." (*The Urge: Our History of Addiction*)*

Mastering Recovery as I am developing it comes from the same general understanding that Fisher lays out. But I note in my work that this is not something that can simply be added to the first two years of a person's journey of sobriety. Those first two years are where the newly sober person faces many issues that have both been the result of- or made worse by- the substance use disorder. This is what people in AA often refer to as the housecleaning. I often refer to the developmental view of abstinence to sobriety to recovery developed by Terance Gorski.

- **Transition** - Recognition of Addiction
- **Stabilization**- Recuperation
- **Early Recovery**- Changing Addictive Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviors
- **Middle Recovery**- Lifestyle Balance
- **Late Recovery**- Family of Origin Issues
- **Maintenance** - Growth and Development

Middle and late recovery do not begin to occur until toward the end of the first nine months of sobriety. Too much needs to happen before most people are ready, willing, and able to truly face the changes in life and lifestyle and address the deeper issues. It is only when we get close to the maintenance period at 18 months to two years, that we can begin to work on what I call mastery.

Going back to Dr. Fisher's book, he tells a story that illustrates this need for the longer-term outlook. A particular patient had suffered for years with significant depression leading to substance use and abuse. She heard of a newer and successful clinical intervention for depression involving brain stimulation. (Not the "shock" therapy of earlier years.)

- After the patient had electrodes implanted, she went home and waited for something like the sense of release that alcohol used to give her. The woman felt her depression diminish, but nothing more; disappointed, she returned to [her clinician] to ask if there was some further adjustment that could be made. [The clinician] replied that this was it—this was life. The procedure had only relieved the disabling depression enough for the person to work on the realities of her life. It was now her responsibility to find something to replace her depression and substance use.

— *The Urge: Our History of Addiction* by Carl Erik Fisher

While the brain treatment was successful- the depression was gone- but life hadn't changed. Just getting rid of the depression didn't suddenly make her life better. It *did* open up the possibility for better self-direction and growth *because* the depression was gone. It's now her turn to do something.

Mastering Recovery is a blueprint that moves us forward- but only after the concerns, issues, and barriers have been dealt with. The therapeutic and self-help actions of the first two years help clear the clutter. The first phase of mastery is to develop the mindset that you can do it. Sober! Life is not fixed- we can grow. That's the *Foundation* phase of mastery. And you build it on *your* experiences of the first two or more years. It is uniquely yours, with your skills being highlighted and paying attention to your needs.

That is where I am going in building and expanding the Mastering Recovery platform. For that to happen, I expect to develop:

- A series of webinars on building recovery
- A 30-Day build blueprint for getting- and staying- unstuck.
- Possible opportunities to be part of an online Mastermind group.

Stick with me. Go to Facebook and "join" the private group or "like" the *Mastering Recovery* page. I am taking my time in building this out. Join the team, watch for more information and other emails.

No matter where you are in your recovery beyond those first two years, you ain't seen nothing yet!





The stages of the blueprint of recovery are:

- Phase 1- Foundation

Growth Mindset
Awareness and Autonomy
Desires and Empowerment

- Phase 2- Flow

Make a Plan
Work the Plan
Stay Unstuck

- Phase 3- Freedom

Spirituality and Community
Values and Purpose
Gratitude and Acceptance

[Link to a copy of the Mastering Recovery Roadmap](#) to download.

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Whether you got this directly from me or had it forwarded to you- why not forward it to someone you think might be interested?

Quote and Picture of the Week

Vision is not enough. It must be combined with venture. It is not enough to stare up the steps; we must also step up the stairs.

-Vaclav Havel

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

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