

Mastering Recovery

A Newsletter on Long-Term Sobriety

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#6 -- August 11, 2021

Autonomy Defined

- The ability to make our own healthy choices.
- The awareness of self-choice.
- Autonomy can empower us because, unlike when the disease was active, our life is no longer out of control.

What I'm Thinking

Powerlessness is not what we often think it is. At times powerlessness can make us feel helpless, *but* it does not need to be **hopeless**. Powerlessness can make us feel shame, after all we think we should be able to control what is in essence uncontrollable, *but* it is not beyond **change**. Powerlessness can make us feel like giving up, saying "What the hell!", *but* it is not beyond our finding **direction** and **purpose** in our lives.

Powerlessness is not the end of the story; it is only the beginning.

That's where this whole idea of mastering recovery comes into play. If we were hopeless, the whole idea of recovery itself would be impossible. But starting from an awareness of being powerless over something means that perhaps we have been trying to fight the wrong battles in the wrong way. When we begin to discover through mastery that we can now make choices, healthy choices, we can open up possibilities for the future. We are not stuck in some downward spiral of loss and fear, hopelessness and worry. With the help of others, we can learn how to live with being powerless over our substance use, but not over what we can do about it.

It doesn't happen overnight, of course, but it can happen. As we are promised in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, "our whole



Facing Challenges - Building Recovery

A Powerlessness Inventory

- **How do I know when I am powerless?**
 - What are the feelings
 - Mad, glad, sad, afraid, ashamed, hurt?
 - What are the signs?
 - Anger, brooding, depression, shopping, eating, craving?
 - Do I notice it somewhere in my body- neck shoulders, headache, lower back?
 - That can help me identify that something is happening. The body often shows it- and pays the price.
 - Does my life feel "out-of-control" or "unmanageable"?
 - Beyond my feelings, am I overwhelmed with things? Does it seem my life is flying off in pieces?
- **Which of the following things can help me when I feel that way?**
 - Taking my own inventory to find out if I truly am powerless.
 - Admitting that I can't do anything about that.
 - Praying the Serenity Prayer.
 - Getting into a bad mood and being angry. (Does that really work?)
 - Thinking of some possible ways that I can deal with the feelings:
 - Taking a walk.
 - Listening to (or playing) music.
 - Making a gratitude list.
 - Going to a meeting or calling someone and talking about it.
 - Doing some relaxing reading.
 - Mindful meditation and breathing.

I still find it amazing how simple the list can be. The non-re-trained mind that is still there from my disease wants to complicate all of it. This may be THE biggest ongoing challenge in long-term recovery.

What have you found works best for you? Keep a list of those things handy for when powerlessness happens.

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Picture of the Week



**Learn from the dolphins
(or are they porpoises?)**

Play

Have fun.

Don't take life so seriously.

Have You Seen This?

Boredom can be dangerous

This, from [*The Washington Post*](#):

In 2014, psychologists at the University of Virginia conducted [a simple experiment](#) to showcase the power of the human mind. They placed subjects in a room by themselves with no distractions for roughly 10 minutes, letting them be alone with their thoughts. Given the infinite

possibilities that our imaginations hold, it aimed to promote the sheer pleasures we can derive from just thinking.

“We thought this would be great. People are so busy that it would give them a chance to slow down, sit quietly and daydream for a few minutes,” said Erin Westgate, a young graduate student at the time. “So we started running these studies, and they were complete failures.”

It turns out that people hated it. They found the experience so unpleasant, many of them preferred physical pain over the discomfort of boredom. When given the opportunity to self-administer a mild electric shock with a button, 67 percent of men and 25 percent of women pressed it at least once to help pass the time. One particularly miserable person shocked himself an incredible 190 times.

Quote of the Week

Step One showed us an amazing paradox:
We found that we were totally unable to be rid of the alcohol obsession until we first admitted that we were powerless over it.

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (12 and 12), p.107

Tools and Resources

Keeping a journal is one of the best ways to stay in touch with your recovery. Many are available. Here is a link to a search on Amazon.

["Recovery Journal" Search](#)

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DISCLAIMER: 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 for the support!

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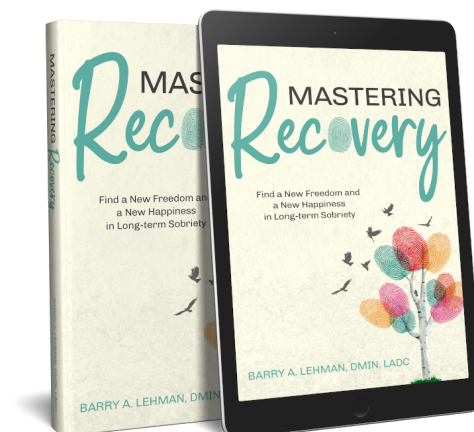
## Book Update

**Three weeks until  
September 1**

**Publication Dates:**

**Wednesday, September 1.**  
Kindle eBook version available.

(You don't need a Kindle to read it. There is a Kindle app for tablets and computers!)



**Wednesday, September 22.** Paperback available.

**Wednesday, October 6.**

Audio book available from Audible.

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