

# Holistic Relapse Prevention Workbook for Addiction & Alcoholism

[www.spiritualriver.com](http://www.spiritualriver.com)

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This is a relapse prevention strategy. Use it if you want to avoid using drugs and alcohol while creating an awesome new life for yourself, one that has real value and is worth living.

This is also an *holistic* recovery strategy. That means that you treat the "whole" person, rather than just one part of their disease.

There are really 2 goals for you in using this relapse prevention plan: not using drugs and alcohol, and healthier living. Why healthier living? Because **the push towards better health is inextricably tied to recovery**. If you are abstaining from drugs and alcohol, but lose your health in other ways, then this can be just as bad (or worse) than relapse.

These are the 2 things that should become your top priority in life, now and forever:

- 1) Don't use drugs or alcohol no matter what.
- 2) Live healthier.

Much of what follows is about how to live healthier in a way that supports abstinence from drugs and alcohol. But, rule number one is always the most important thing: don't use drugs or alcohol no matter what.

## Here are the sections of our relapse prevention plan:

\* **Relapse prevention: the old way versus the new way**

\* **Assess your health from an holistic standpoint**

\* **The push for holistic health and why it is important for recovery**

\* **Experiencing cumulative growth: action items for each area of your life**

\* **Action items for holistic growth:**

- Physical health
- Spirituality
- Nutrition and healthy eating
- Quitting smoking
- Emotional balance
- Finances, money, managing debt
- Career and pursuing meaningful life work
- Continuous learning
- Very early recovery

## Relapse prevention: the old way versus the new way

Traditionally, relapse prevention has been all about avoidance techniques. What many recovery programs do is to have you write out a list of all your triggers, or things that make you want to use your drug of choice. Then you are supposed to formulate strategies for avoiding those things or replacing certain high-risk activities. In other words, relapse prevention has always been about avoiding situations, people, and places that might cause you to relapse.

The new way is not about elimination, but rather it is about creation. The idea is to create positive things in your life to replace the old stuff that got you into trouble. The goal is to create healthy habits and a healthier lifestyle, such that you will not be as quick to pollute your own body. And ultimately, the big idea here is to create an awesome new life for yourself in recovery, one that is so valuable to you that you will not easily sacrifice it to a relapse.

So the new relapse prevention strategy is to **add value to your life**. If your life has very little value, then choosing to relapse is an inviting option. Why not use drugs or alcohol, how can it get any worse, right? So the new way in recovery is to build a life of value. **The foundation of this value is health**. Physical health, spiritual health, emotional health, financial health, and so on. The idea is to increase our well being, **in all areas** of our life.

The real kicker is that once we have established this foundation of good health in recovery, our next step is to extend our hand to others and make an impact on the world. If we can make part of our life's work to help others in some way, then our insurance against relapse grows tremendously. We know that if we relapse on drugs and alcohol, then we can no longer help others or be of service. That might not sound like much incentive to you right now, but once you have created this awesome new life in recovery and start using your unique gifts and talents to help others in the world, the risk of relapse will greatly diminish because **your life will have so much more value** while you are clean and sober.

In other words, the new relapse prevention strategy is to get to an awesome place in your life, such that you are no longer willing to "throw it all away on a relapse."

We know this to be a strong strategy because everyone who has achieved long term sobriety agrees that it is true. Ask anyone with several years sober and they will agree: "Yes, *my life is so much better today that I am not willing to throw it away on a relapse*." It matters not how they got clean and sober or what program of recovery they use. Once they have created this awesome new life in recovery for themselves, they continue to add value to their life and this protects them from the threat of relapse.

"But," you may protest, "How can I go about creating this great new life in recovery? How can I go about it?"

The rest of this workbook seeks to answer that question, and guide you through the process of creating an awesome new life in recovery. Because the paths to this are many, some sections will be a bit vague, but specific examples will almost always be given to help illustrate the ideas.

# First Action Item: Assess your health from an holistic standpoint.

"Holistic" just means "whole." When we talk about "holistic health," we are talking about your overall health in every aspect: emotional, physical, spiritual, financial, social, and so on. We are not just talking about your physical health and not being sick. We are talking about overall health from every possible angle.

The following exercise is borrowed from [Steve Pavlina](#). It is too powerful and too helpful not to share here. I have modified the idea to focus on recovery.

Go through and mark each category of your health with a number from 1 to 10. A 10 means that you think this area of your health is perfect, and a 1 means that you are doing terrible in that area. Go through now and write a number next to each category:

\_\_\_ Physical fitness

\_\_\_ Spirituality

\_\_\_ Nutrition and healthy eating

\_\_\_ Emotional balance

\_\_\_ Finances, money, managing debt

\_\_\_ Career and pursuing meaningful life work

\_\_\_ Continuous learning

Please put a number next to each one before continuing...this is important.

Now, after you have written down a score for each category, go back through, and every number that is not a 9 or a 10, cross the number out and replace it with a 1. So if you have sevens, eights, sixes, fives, whatever...replace those with a 1. Everything should be either a 1, a 9, or a 10.

Now go through the list and see where you stand in your life. This may seem like it is taking a negative view of things, but we are only trying to be realistic. If you did not rate something as either a 9 or a 10, then you are clearly not happy with it, and there is huge room for improvement there.

For example, right now I would rate my physical fitness as a 9. I am confident that I am doing everything that I can to be in the best shape that I can be right now. In fact I can run 13 miles or more right now and still go walk the golf course afterward. I am pushing myself hard in this area and experiencing real growth. On the other hand, I would rate my nutrition and healthy eating as a 6 or a 7. I am making some effort to eat healthier, and trying to replace soda with water, and so on....but ultimately I am not happy with where I am at in this category. So my nutrition is really a 1 using this form of health assessment.

Do not be upset or disappointed in yourself based on all of the ones on your list. Any real program of recovery is going to need some form of self assessment in order to be effective. You have to identify your problem areas if you are going to attack them and get to a place of growth in each area.

You might also ask: which of these categories are important? Which ones really matter? **They all matter.** If you stay in recovery for a long time, you will start to notice how others come to relapse. They do not just get upset one day, fly off the handle, and go use their drug of choice. A relapse happens gradually over time and can stem from any of these categories on the list.

It can all be measured in terms of self esteem, or holistic health. **What is the value that you place on your own life?** If your finances are so bad that you are devastated enough to say "screw it" and take a drink, then obviously that should prove something to you: finances are important. I have watched similar things happen to people due to emotional upset, or because of their physical health, and so on. **If one part of your life becomes bad enough, it can drag you down into a state where relapse becomes more probable.**

Holistic health is about pursuing better health *in every area of your life*. When you do this, it has a cumulative effect, and everything in your life just works better and flows more smoothly.

In fact, once you are living the holistic path in recovery, any one of these areas could suffer a major blow without it dragging you down into a relapse. Why? Because you will have built such a strong foundation in all of the other areas.

Consider those who have a very strong spiritual connection with a higher power. They can summon courage in the face of disaster and weather just about any storm, thanks to their strong spiritual background.

If you approach your life holistically like this, with a growth perspective in mind, then no single event can really knock you off of your square. **Every part of you that is strong helps to reinforce and protect the other parts.** If you have the discipline to master one area of your life, then you have the discipline to master all areas of your health. It is just a matter of taking the appropriate actions.

## The push for holistic health and why it is important for recovery

First of all, I do not want you to feel overwhelmed with all of this stuff. We are talking about pushing ourselves to grow in several different areas, and you need to understand that this will take time. For example, I am approaching ten years in recovery and I still have yet to really tackle my nutritional habits. I am still very disappointed with my life in that regard. On the other hand, I have made tremendous growth in other areas, such as with my fitness level and my spiritual growth.

So do not get overwhelmed and expect all of this growth to happen in the first week, the first year, or even the first decade. We are all a work in progress. However, do not let this become an excuse for you. You can accept yourself as you are, but you also need to be realistic and push yourself for real growth.

So the main question here is: Why focus on holistic health when all we are really trying to do is avoid drugs and alcohol? How does the pursuit of holistic health help us to prevent relapse?

In the first action item we rated ourselves in different categories of our health, such as physical health, our finances, our emotional stability, and so on. Well, one of those categories is "abstaining from drugs and alcohol." That is a health category all on its own, and it needs to be our number one priority.

Remember that we noted how strength in some areas of our health would help to protect us in others? That is one of the main ideas behind holistic health as relapse prevention: **if you build up your health in all areas, then this will help to protect the other areas of your life.**

The other main idea is that if you experience growth and build up strength in all of these areas, it will increase the value of your life so much that you will be unwilling to sacrifice that to a relapse.

The conclusion that holistic health works as relapse prevention can be learned over time as you watch many different people fail in recovery. I personally have noticed that ailing physical health can be a huge trigger for relapse. Another popular relapse mechanism is through failed relationships. None of these things directly cause a relapse directly, but in retrospect, the addict can identify them as being the main contributor.

**The longer we remain clean and sober, the more holistic health becomes our most important line of defense against relapse.** If we take action in order to strengthen each part of our health, then we can prevent a possible relapse that might attack a future weakness that we could never anticipate.

Let's say that again in another way to make sure we digest it: We can prevent relapse by strengthening our health as a whole. It is not enough to pursue spiritual growth. We must seek to grow in all areas of our life in order to be strong in our recovery.

Relapse prevention cannot be a group of elimination tactics. Instead, it must be proactive. We have to create something. We have to create with positive action in a way that builds up health, strength, and discipline. This is the path to success in recovery (and in life).

Understand the importance of holistic health in recovery. "I will be proactive about my holistic health and growth in all areas of my life." Understand that you are going to create a new life with positive action as a means to maintaining your recovery.

## Experiencing cumulative growth: action items for each area of your life

One of the big keys for me in making changes has been to make one change at a time and then sticking with it until it is a habit. Then I can see how that is working for me and then add additional changes on top of that if necessary.

But where to start? Decide which area of holistic health needs the most attention in your life right now, and plan out the next action step to tackle it within the next 24 hours. Pick a category from the list above that is marked with a "1." Remember, you do not have to fix everything at once. Start small and build from there consistently. Here are some possible actions you might take for different categories:

### Physical health

Plan to take a 40 minute walk sometime within the next 24 hours. If that goes well, plan to do it every single day. (The benefits of this effort alone are tremendous and might actually be the single best strategy in this entire workbook....seriously, it is that important).

If you cannot walk for 40 minutes continuously, then you need to build up to that level. Start small, start slow, and get fit enough to where you can walk for 40 minutes continuously.

If you are already exercising more than that, then you need to push yourself to do more. Jog or run if necessary. The goal here is to do a minimum of 40 minutes of **vigorous** exercise at least 3 times a week.

Better if you can do it every day, maybe taking one day of rest off each weekend. The benefits of vigorous exercise on a regular basis cannot be overstated. For some people in recovery, regular exercise is more important than any other recovery strategy. There are even some recovery programs that focus exclusively on exercise as a means to stay clean and sober.

How does regular, vigorous exercise help you to stay clean and sober? Many different ways, and the science of it is not important. What **is** important is that you take action and do it. If you are out of shape, then it may not be fun at first, and in fact it might be a real drag for quite some time. But if this is the case then it is absolutely critical that you stick it out and go through with it.

**Forty minutes of continuous, vigorous exercise, 3 times per week. Minimum.**

Doesn't have to be walking necessarily. But you have to do it. And it has to get your heart rate up a bit. It must be *vigorous* exercise. For some, a brisk walk or even a slow walk for 40 minutes will be enough. Others may need to jog, swim, run, do aerobics, whatever. The point is, you need vigorous exercise on a regular basis.

"But" you protest "I know dozens of people in AA who stay sober for years without doing regular exercise!"

Keep in mind that we are aiming for "an awesome life in recovery," not just mere abstinence. And I have seen at least a few people in the 12 step fellowships who passed "before their time" because they did not embrace a holistic model of health.

People have a tendency to be lazy and shun exercise as being unimportant. They rationalize that "this is a spiritual program of recovery," so really, what does exercise have to do with staying sober?

I promise you that exercise is a powerful key that is one of the most neglected tools of recovery. Those who use it have a huge advantage over people who dismiss it as being unimportant.

Again – I would suggest that you commit to a 40 minute walk, 3 times per week. The time investment is nothing compared to the huge benefits you will experience from doing this. Even if there were no direct health benefits to doing so (which there are), it would still be worth doing, simply because of the “natural high” that you will experience over the years of doing exercise.

This natural high is cumulative. It increases over the months and years that you continue to do regular, vigorous exercise. The reason it increases is because your body gets into better and better shape, and experiences less pain during exercise. Yet, your brain still releases the same level of natural dopamine in order to medicate your ailing muscles. And the effect of this can linger on for several hours, making a huge impact on your overall feelings of well being. Just look at the evidence: runners run. Do you think they are crazy? No, all they have done is broken through the painful part, and now it is easy, natural, and invigorating for them to run. If you can get to that place with your fitness, it will make recovery so much easier for you.

So you need to exercise and you need to break a sweat. Consult your doctor, of course, but do not settle for anything that does not push you in the least bit. **If it is not vigorous exercise then it is of no benefit to your recovery.**

If you are going to skip any action items in this workbook, make it any of them except this one. If you are serious about long term sobriety, then vigorous exercise should become a very strong pillar of your recovery.

Sure, you could get by without exercise, but you make it so much harder on yourself when you skip out on this important part of your health.

## Spirituality

Go to the library and get a book on your philosophy or religion of choice. I read lots of books on spirituality in early recovery and I am grateful for all of them. Though many of them overlapped a great deal, this just helped to show me that spiritual principles are universal, and that there is no one “right path.” If you have a religious background, you might try to reconnect with that as well. Or simply start meditating or praying every day.

This is another area in which you could (and probably should) ask for help. Traditional recovery programs generally focus heavily on spirituality as the main method of maintaining sobriety. So if you ask for help in the recovery community regarding spiritual growth, you are bound to get lots of advice.

Most people think that spiritual growth is all about having some secret knowledge. In fact, the exact opposite is true: **this is an area where action trumps knowledge every time.** Someone who has memorized all of the world’s religions has nothing on the person who is praying, meditating, and genuinely helping others on a daily basis. “Faith without works is dead.” Spirituality in recovery is 90 percent works, 10 percent faith.

The key is that you take action. Make a commitment to yourself that you will take the first action within 24 hours—whether that be praying, talking with a sponsor, or reading spiritual literature.

In addition to this, promise yourself that you will seek advice from someone you trust on this topic as well. You might have to ask your sponsor or anyone else you might trust what they think you should do in order to grow spiritually. If you are stuck here, ask for help!

## Nutrition and healthy eating

Suggestions for improving nutrition will vary a lot depending on the person. This is a tricky area because sometimes even the experts disagree on what is optimal, so I am not about to try and outline the perfect diet. But some things are obvious in this area, and those are the things you need to act on. For example, someone who is obese and normally drinks a case of non-diet pop every day could probably benefit tremendously from switching to water.

Changes in this area are so incredibly difficult that you might try an incremental approach, too. For example, replace your first can of soda every day with a tall glass of water instead. After that you are free to drink soda again. I do this with my breakfast and instead of having a can of Mountain Dew I eat fresh fruit and drink water. You get less of a spike of energy but the energy that you get from the fruit and water combination seems to last longer and is much smoother.

Like many of these changes, it will all depend on your unique situation and what most needs to be changed in your life. Some people may be overweight, and thus they might focus on weight loss as part of their nutritional effort. Others might just want to eat healthier. Many recovering addicts and alcoholics are hooked on a diet that is heavy with caffeine and nicotine. Hard as it may be, eliminating both of these can be an amazing experience, and can give you much smoother energy throughout the day.

Again, the key is to commit to one change at a time and stick with it until it is ingrained as a habit. Then you can add on additional healthy changes. Be careful not to take on more changes at one time than you can handle.

Once you start stacking up positive changes in your life, things start getting really good. This is personal growth, and it is awesome!

## Quitting smoking

Popular wisdom in traditional recovery programs says not to try to quit smoking in early recovery. Likewise, they also suggest not to make other major changes in order that you can better focus on recovery. Some studies disagree with this, however, and suggest improved success rates for those who try to “quit it all at once.”

Most addicts and alcoholics in early recovery tend to keep smoking cigarettes for a few years. After that they try to quit, realizing that it is the right thing (and the healthy thing) to do. Indeed, it is an awesome gift to finally give up your last crutch in recovery and start living a life that is fully drug-free.

If you do smoke, then quitting absolutely has to be part of your holistic strategy. Do not rush it. But plan on quitting eventually, within the first year or two. The number one killer of recovering alcoholics is lung cancer, believe it or not. So quitting smoking is the most important thing you can do other than staying clean and sober in recovery.

I have already written [a complete guide as to how you can best quit.](#)

# Emotional balance

I am sorry to be using a "negative" example, but honestly this was probably one of the biggest things in my recovery: eliminating toxic relationships from my life. People who are negative, who are using drugs and alcohol, or who are just no good for you...you need to eliminate them from your life.

Now actually this can be a positive thing, a creation thing, if you go about it the right way. We all only get so many hours in the day, and *who* you spend your time with is simply a matter of prioritizing. If you follow the other suggestions in this workbook, then toxic relationships will have a way of simply fading into the background. Less time to spend on negative things, because hopefully you will be taking action in so many other positive areas.

So one suggestion is to follow the holistic path of health and recovery, work hard at it, and simply be aware as your time for negative people in your life slips away. Emotional balance will be better achieved as you continue to take positive action in your life, every single day.

Another suggestion I would give for emotional balance is to simply give yourself permission to feel your feelings. We do not get to choose our feelings, so let them happen. If you feel sad, then let yourself feel sad. You don't have to struggle against your feelings. **Accept your emotions to gain control over them.**

If you truly struggle with emotional balance in your life, then you should probably seek counseling or therapy to help you better address it in recovery. **Ask for help.** Simple as that. If it is a stumbling block for you, then make sure you take action and ask for help in this area.

# Finances, money, managing debt

My number one suggestion to anyone who wants to change their life in this area is to find a hobby you enjoy that has earning potential. I have done exactly that and it has changed my life a great deal. I am bringing in a second income now and I also try very hard to be conservative with my spending. This is a very empowering position to be in during recovery, and can give great peace of mind.

Most people in early recovery are not in terrific financial shape, and that is understandable. Like anything else, this can take some time. But ultimately, anyone living in long term recovery should be enjoying financial abundance. Drug addiction and alcoholism are both expensive, so getting clean and sober gives us a huge, long term financial edge. For one individual, not spending money on drug and alcohol addiction probably saves close to a million dollars over 50 years (if you add in all the incidental stuff and indirect costs as well).

So you should plan on having and getting more money and enjoying some level of financial comfort. Now some people argue against this, saying that for them, money is a trigger to use drugs or alcohol. If this is the case then you need to work through this particular block in your life. Maybe you can ask for help and find some ways to curtail this problem until you can handle the responsibility of having expendable cash. But in the long run, anyone living the creative life of recovery is going to have to deal with this problem eventually. There is too much abundance in recovery and you will not have a need to waste money if you are following an holistic path.

Other basic financial suggestions would be to secure regular income, wipe out debt, and avoid new debt like the plague. People who have done these things almost never regret doing so.

**Spending less money is a powerful tool in recovery.** It sounds boring and most people think that they have spend money in order to feel good or to have fun. If you curtail your spending and stick with it for a while you will realize that you are not missing out on anything. Practicing frugality is a huge part of reducing stress in recovery. I suggest reading a book called "Your Money or Your Life" for further information on this. For most people, it is much easier for them to spend less than it is for them to earn more. My suggestion is that you do both. **Spend less and earn more.**

Money is another area that seems to improve greatly over time. Most people with serious financial problems are not going to find a solution overnight. But I do maintain that this is a hugely important aspect of your life, and your health, and needs to be taken seriously. Give it some time, but do not hesitate to ask for help as well.

# Career and pursuing meaningful life work

Not everyone in recovery has to go work at a drug rehab. Not everyone who quits drinking has to go become a substance abuse counselor. There is nothing wrong with doing so, but there are other paths you can take, and many of them will still have great meaning for you.

"Career" is misleading as well. I know people in recovery who have a regular day job that is not meaningful at all to them, but they have heavy involvement in the 12 step fellowship, and with sponsorship. This has become their "life's work" and they have an amazing recovery because of it.

So I am **not** suggesting that you have to find work that is recovery related. What I am suggesting is that you should be pushing yourself to learn, to grow, and to find something with meaning in your life. It does not necessarily have to be your day job that gives you this meaning and purpose (though that is nice if the two can overlap).

Recovery is a blessing in that you now have extra time (from not using your drug of choice) and you have money (from not spending it on your drug of choice). Go back to school! Pursue the job that you really want, and do not be afraid to take your time in doing so. You have time now that you are clean and sober. Use that time to better yourself. In 5 years, the time will pass by anyway, whether you are making personal advancements in your education/career or not. You may as well be making progress towards your goals during this time.

If you try to plan out this aspect of your recovery, you will probably fail. Or rather, *your plan* will fail, even though you will eventually find meaning and purpose in your life. It will just be in a way that you did not expect.

The ultimate in recovery is to **use your own unique gifts and talents to do meaningful work and help others** in some way. What is something that you are so good at, that pretty much no one else could do it as well as you, and that still benefits or helps others? Whatever that is, that should become your life's work. Not necessarily easy to pin down, but many in recovery will get there eventually, if they continue to explore the possibilities.

So strive for growth, strive for advancement, and try to find a way to use your talents to help others in a big way.

# Continuous learning

Early recovery is essentially learning how to live a new life without self medicating. Long term recovery is about experiencing continuous growth so that you do not end up relapsing. Both require continuous learning.

Personal growth always involves learning. You take action, see what works for you, then you discard the results you do not like and repeat the actions that benefit you. This is learning. It is a process.

Anyone in early recovery who says that they do not want to learn anything new is doomed to fail. They cannot possibly experience an awesome new life in recovery because they have shut themselves off from learning how to live it.

It takes courage to learn new things. It takes courage to admit to yourself that you do not know how to live. It takes real guts to admit that your best ideas about how to live your life only got you into trouble.

Once you get through early recovery and start learning how to make it through each day without self medicating, you can then push yourself to go further and learn more. Many of the other topics covered here involve learning as well. For example, learning how to exercise on a regular basis and figuring out what works best for you. Or learning how to maintain better emotional stability. Or learning how to use your talents to help others.

All of recovery is a learning process. Many will go back to school in order to further their education or start a new career. Higher education is not necessary, of course, but is a natural move for many who are experiencing growth in recovery.

Staying clean and sober over a lifetime requires continuous learning. Why? Because **our situation in life is constantly evolving and changing**. That means that we need new information in order to stay one step ahead of a relapse.

Therefore it is critical that you always be in "learning mode." Do not ever shut yourself down to learning something new. This is the level of humility that is essential for long term recovery.

Life is going to throw you a curve ball here and there. When it does, you have two choices: you can either relapse, or you can learn something. That's it. So you had better be in learning mode.

Always be in learning mode.

Staying in learning mode requires optimism. When chaos happens in your life, you can learn from it. When tragedy happens, you can learn from it. This is a choice. You have to stay optimistic enough to be able to see the lesson in everything that happens in your life.

This is not optional. You have to develop this mindset and use it to learn and to grow. If you do not stay in learning mode, then eventually a string of bad occurrences will drive you back to relapse, because instead of growing stronger from the experiences, you will let the negativity drag you down to a place where you say "screw it" and end up drinking or using.

Always be in learning mode.

## Very early recovery

Much of what you have read so far deals with long term sobriety and actually living a life of recovery. But what if a person is not yet clean and sober? What if they have not really started their journey yet into healthier living?

This section here deals with the very early part of recovery...from the moment an addict or alcoholic stops using, right through the first few months of difficult transition.

"Transition to what?" you might ask. Transition to life without drugs and alcohol. Transition into life without self medicating our emotions at every turn. Transition into actually dealing with our problems rather than masking everything through constant drug and alcohol abuse. Transition to a completely new way of life.

Before you can actually live the life you were meant to live without drugs and alcohol, you have to get detoxed, get grounded, and get adjusted to not using chemicals every day. This is the early part of recovery that is necessary before you can start living "long term recovery." Without this necessary preparation, you cannot reach "the good life" of sobriety.

So even though this early part of the process does not directly relate to long term relapse prevention, it does still lay down a foundation for future success, and so it does make sense to examine our choices at this early stage.

First of all, you have to go through detox. Rehab is great for this. I am a strong believer in drug rehabs and treatment centers because they do work. The rate of success may not be super high, but treatment does work and it did work for me (third time around that is).

Furthermore, I am a strong advocate for long term rehab and halfway houses. I think they offer the best solution for people who are serious about getting clean and sober. I also think they are even more beneficial for younger people in recovery. Long term rehab (and any kind of treatment) is not a magic bullet, of course. But it is almost always better than doing nothing. Remember, action is key.

So my number one suggestion for anyone who is still using drugs and alcohol is to get to rehab. It might not be perfect, and it might not exactly match your philosophy of recovery (which is hopefully one of holistic health) but it is better than nothing. There are tremendous benefits to staying in drug rehab for a few weeks, even if you disagree with their methodology.

Rehab is a tool, and it works. Use it.

## Summary of Action Items – This is stuff you have to do to enjoy long term recovery!

- \* **Don't use drugs or alcohol no matter what.**
- \* **Assess your health from an holistic standpoint.**
- \* **Commit to regular, vigorous exercise.**
- \* **Explore and expand spiritually.**
- \* **Eat healthier. Treat your body well.**
- \* **If you smoke, plan on quitting. Get serious about it.**
- \* **Eliminate toxic relationships. Strive for emotional stability.**
- \* **Spend less. Earn more.**
- \* **Use your unique gifts and talents to help others.**
- \* **Always be in learning mode.**
- \* **Use rehab/treatment. It works.**

You can always learn more at [www.spiritualriver.com](http://www.spiritualriver.com)

Or, download more information about holistic recovery [right here](#).

## Recommended resources

These are all books that I have read and used to great effect on my journey in recovery. If you found the information here helpful at all, then you would probably benefit from reading some of these books as well.

[Codependent No More](#) by Melody Beattie – The definitive guide to read if you are the friend, family member, or loved one of someone who is struggling with addiction or alcoholism.

[Stage II Recovery](#) by Earnie Larsen – Talks about the idea that we can continue to grow in our recovery after we have mastered the basics of staying clean and sober.

[Creative Recovery: A Complete Addiction Treatment Program That Uses Your Natural Creativity](#) by Eric Maisel – this book does not align perfectly with my own ideas about creative recovery, but it is pretty close, and offers a unique alternative to 12 step based approaches.

[The Zen of Recovery](#) by Mel Ash – Awesome book if you are the least bit intrigued by zen buddhism.

[The Tao of Sobriety: Helping You to Recover from Alcohol and Drug Addiction](#) by David Gregson – Great book if you are interested in Taoism and you are in recovery.

[Conversations With God](#) by Neale Donald Walsch – an excellent resource if you struggle with the higher power concept in any way.

[The Prayer of Jabez](#) by Bruce Wilkinson – One of the best books out there for Christians to read if they are interested in taking action and getting results. Really inspiring, short read.

[The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment](#) by Eckhart Tolle – This book introduced me to the idea that I was not my mind. Very, very powerful. A must read.

[Personal Development for Smart People: The Conscious Pursuit of Personal Growth](#) by Steve Pavlina – Extremely practical and inspiring. No fluff or filler, very actionable book.