

LET'S GET PRACTICAL – A RECOVERY OVERVIEW

Getting and Staying on The Right Track

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In this journey there are several practical steps we can take to not only get on the right track, but to stay there - long term. Addiction has hi-jacked our brains to think and respond a certain way. Freedom can only happen if we learn how to re-wire our brains to think and respond the way God created them to. This morning we will look at some practical habits we can form on a daily or weekly basis that will greatly benefit us on our journey to freedom. This is certainly not an exhaustive list and there are dozens of recorded talks that take some of these to a much deeper level than we will today.

- 1. Laying the Foundation** - Getting on the right track requires some initial steps – ALL of them critical to success. If we lay a solid foundation from the start, we will have a better chance of staying on track and not veering off course at the first sign of adversity.
 - a. Counselling/Coaching** – I'm not saying this so we can line the pockets of those of us who work at DFR or other Care Centres. Understanding our addiction and how we got there is imperative to knowing how to defeat it. Those who are trained in this field can help us do that. There are proven methods to overcome sexual addiction – the resources we have available to us will guide us down that road.
 - b. Accountability Software** – Covenant Eyes (or something similar) helps us remove or block all access to pornography and other sites that can get us off track. Guardrails are important – especially early on in recovery. The reports should be sent to our Wingman (NOT your spouse – they are not responsible for policing us); our Wingman can review anything questionable and follow up with us.
 - c. Reasons Why** – Finding our motivation is crucial to our journey. Motivation can be a very strong force. On the flip side, lack of motivation can be an equally strong force in the wrong direction. What is driving us to choose this journey, to making the decision to run from our addiction and walk in freedom? Our reasons why must be significant and real! Are we considering the legacy we will leave behind? Think about your wife, your kids, your extended family, your work, your church, and friends. All these people are affected by our actions – directly or indirectly. What would our lives look like in 5 years if we don't make this decision? Conversely, think about what your life could look like if you do?! Motivation will help us find the courage to do whatever it takes to win this battle! Write them down, keep them close by so you can look at them when you are struggling or feeling like you have no hope. When we dive into WHY we want to be free, it can help us stay on track amidst struggles that we face.
 - d. Wingman/All Clear** – Within the first week or two of our journey, we will need to have found a Wingman. This person will hold us accountable to changes needed in our lives beyond sexual

addiction recovery - towards spiritual greatness as a man, husband & father. We will check in (daily) with our Wingman "All Clear – Day ___"

All Clear = no porn, no masturbation, no fantasy etc.... We will also meet weekly with our Wingman (usually 1 hour) to report face to face on our journey – victories, struggles, what we're learning and the changes we're making. Personally, this relationship has been one of the best things to come out of my recovery. It has blossomed into mutual accountability in ALL areas of life, not just recovery!

e. Wristband or Rubber Band – Dr. Doug Weiss describes this as one of the MOST effective treatments that men can use initially. Dr. Dave says, "when triggered to move in an unhealthy direction – SNAP the band to create a sting that is the momentary reminder to not follow the destructive temptation." We can use this tool in conjunction with bouncing eyes and capturing thoughts. We need to retrain the neuro pathways in our brains that have set up a reward system based on sexual thoughts and how we respond to them.

2. The 5 Commandments – Everyone should be VERY familiar with these, as we discuss them every week. But why are they so important?

a. Pray (morning) – This is foundational, prayer gets our day started on the right foot. We ask God for HIS strength for TODAY! We understand that it is only by HIS strength that we will prevail.

b. Read – Bible/Reading Plans/Recovery Books. We need to fill our minds with God's truth, learn about what our addiction is doing to us, our wives, our families. Begin reading a chapter of the Bible each day starting today.

Psalm 119:11 - I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

Psalm 119:105 - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

Romans 12: 1-2 - I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, **but be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

c. Call – MAKE PHONE CALLS!! Probably the most difficult for a lot of us. We have isolated ourselves for so many years. These calls force us to reach out, to get outside of our comfort zones. Recovery is a TEAM SPORT; we cannot do this on our own!

Hebrews 3:12-13 - Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 **But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today,"** that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

- d. **Meetings** – This is non-negotiable. I know there will be circumstances when attendance is not possible, but “I’m tired,” “I don’t like meeting online” & “I’ve had a really busy week” are NOT valid reasons. Those are EXCUSES – and what does Dr. Dave always say?? “Boys Make Excuses – Men Make Changes!”

Proverbs 27:17 – As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

James 5:16 - Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Again! Recovery is a TEAM SPORT! This group will fight with & for you! We will call each other to greatness. No more excuses!

- e. **Pray** (evening) – Thank God for recovery, for a day of freedom. If you didn’t make it through the day, repent and seek forgiveness. We have been living according to our own will for too long – we need to submit and seek God’s will in our lives. It is only by His grace and strength that we can do this.

3. **Recovery Work** – Nobody will tell you that recovery is easy (if they do, they’re lying to you). We have to commit to hard work, dedication, changing our habits - STOPPING the excuses, the justification, the blaming, the laziness, the emotional adolescence. Are we willing to DO WHATEVER IT TAKES?? Remember – BOYS MAKE EXCUSES – MEN MAKE CHANGES! So, what does that look like practically? What is this “work?”

- a. **Know/Learn Your Triggers** – H.A.L.T.S. – This stands for Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired and Stressed. We must be aware of what can and will trigger us. Some of our triggers will be something we can control, while others will be circumstances completely out of our control. Knowing our triggers allows us to put boundaries in place in order to put us in the best position to succeed.
- b. **Recovery Game Plan** – If you’ve done coaching or counselling with any one of us, you’ve probably received this document. If you’re willing to start doing the work you’ve probably filled it out. And if you’re willing to do whatever it takes, you’re probably implementing it. This is a worksheet for creating a God-honouring Purity Strategy. Together with your spouse and/or wingman, you will choose the most effective recovery steps that give you the best possible chance at overcoming your addiction. This game plan will help you determine and set the best integrity and purity boundaries for you. Knowing your triggers will be required for this step. Once these boundaries are set, you will outline healthy and effective consequences for breaking these boundaries. Why consequences?? Our brain works on a reward system. We need to change the reward dynamic. We need to diminish the object relational response – if our brain now receives “pain” where it is used to experience “reward” then we can start to re-train and re-wire the pathways. A consequence needs to fit the boundary broken – the more severe the breach, the greater the consequence. The

consequences must have “teeth” – they must be a strong enough deterrent for you to NOT cross that boundary. This game plan is to remain fluid as you move along in this journey – but ANY changes need to be discussed with your wingman and/or spouse.

- c. Podcasts/Videos** – I like to listen to at least 1 podcast per week. Again, this is all about filling our minds – being transformed by the renewing of our minds. Dr. Dave has close to 20 podcasts that apply directly to Sexual Addiction and Recovery – these need to be part of our recovery journey. There are other podcasts available as well – Pure Desire & Porn Free Radio are two that I’ve been listening to for quite some time. There are hundreds of episodes available, and I highly recommend both as a regular part of recovery. Also, there are 80 plus videos on the DFR website as well as many Dr. Doug Weiss videos available on YouTube and other platforms.
- d. 12 Step Program** – These steps can be applied to any addiction. Dr. Doug Weiss has re-worked this program to apply directly to the journey of a sex addict. Together with “The Final Freedom” book and the “101 Exercises” we will be challenged to an in-depth look into recovery and will help lay a foundation for long-term success. Steps 1-2 focus on us finally getting to the place where we admit we are powerless over this addiction. ONLY then, can we submit our lives to A POWER (GOD) that is greater than ourselves. Steps 3-8 help us learn about & understand God and who He is. At that point we can begin to face things in our lives that we may not like – creating a moral inventory that we will need to admit to God, ourselves, and our wingman. This reinforces the fact that someone can actually “know” me and still “love” me. God will then work in our heart to work through our defects – we are unable to do this on our own. If we don’t see our defects, we are likely to repeat our patterns. Once this list is created, it’s time for us to own it all. Become 100% willing to make amends. These steps are like a surgery on the soul! Steps 9-12 start with direct amends. Direct is extremely scary, apologizing for what we’ve done. We then can move toward maintaining a clean slate, promptly admitting when we’ve done wrong and asking for forgiveness. Dr. Dave likes to call it “staying current.” Prayer, meditation, seeking after God’s will and the power to carry it out are the final steps resulting in a spiritual awakening that is more than we could ever imagine. God will give us a purpose for our lives and a passion that can only come from Him! God doesn’t waste pain! He can use our greatest failures and turn them into stories of redemption and reconciliation.
- e. Relapse Report** – Our goal is to maintain “All Clear” status and walk in victory long term. While we don’t welcome a relapse, we do encourage men to learn from them. This form will take us through a series of questions designed to help us determine triggers and pinpoint cycles and patterns that we have prior to a relapse. We can learn from our failures, falling forward in order to avoid making the same mistakes in the future. This report is to be discussed with your Wingman.
- f. Short-Term Challenges** – Some of the men in our Regroup have proposed these in the past. Whether it’s a specific reading plan to go through or a challenge from another platform – these can be great kick starters for creating daily habits – Habitual practices build momentum. We also need to move past these short-term challenges to incorporate this behaviour and discipline on a daily

basis which ensures long term effect. Set achievable goals and follow through on your commitments - if you haven't done any recovery work for months, don't commit to 2 hours of recovery material/day & 12 phone calls/week – you will certainly fail in this goal and thus experience guilt, shame and may feel like giving up altogether.

- g. Fully Engage!** – This will encompass more than just the work we do on our own. We need to be involved in the Regroup discussion, interact on WhatsApp. Reach out when you're triggered, ask for prayer. Respond when others reach out, encourage, support, pray. If God is teaching you something through a reading plan – share it with the group! We love to hear what God is doing in the lives of our brothers. You will reap what you sow in this journey. If you put in the effort – whole heartedly – God will change your heart. We can't do this on our own – it's time we stop trying.

To recap:

- Foundational – Counselling/Coaching, Covenant Eyes, Reasons Why, Wingman, Wristband
- The 5 Commandments – Pray/Read/Call/Meet (Weekly)/Pray (Daily)
- Check-in (Daily)
- Work – Triggers/Recovery Game Plan (Initial/Constant)
 - Podcasts/Videos (Weekly)
 - 12 Steps (Multiple/Week)
 - Relapse Report (Hopefully Rarely)
 - Short-Term Challenges (Use to develop Habits)
 - Fully Engage (Daily)

Men, knowing this stuff is one thing. Until we actually put into practice what we're learning, until we finally stop the excuses and begin to let God make the changes, we will just be spinning our wheels. We will feel stuck in our recovery – as one of our brothers has said – If you're not moving forwards, you're going backwards. God wants so much more for us – Dr. Dave says – Put God first, life goes best! True freedom is available for all of us. God has already won the battle; the enemy is defeated! Our victory was secured the moment Jesus paid for our sins on the cross. We can't out-sin the cross. There is nothing we can do that Jesus' blood won't cover. We are never too far gone to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. Let's walk in that reality – everyday.