

Re-Entry

Re-entry is the transitional period when the recovering person leaves a rehabilitation center and re-enters society. It is a difficult time. One must adapt to the stresses and pressures of a “full-blown life” (which feels like ordinary life to others) after having adjusted to less pressure and stress of life in rehab.

Re-entry planning becomes very important for the long-term success of every recovering person because re-entering society to live a sober life demands difficult change from a population with a high resistance to change. We can anticipate challenges for each individual. This allows the formulation of a plan that considers the amount of time a person might need to adjust to the change of a new life. It is a life without drugs or alcohol. Considering this concept of “rate of change” is necessary.

Without such foresight, there is a temptation to rush this adjustment process which will inadvertently contribute to relapse. In addition, the recovering person is liable to be very impatient and not yet fully aware of the devastating effects of their impatience.

In developing a re-entry plan, here are some of the factors to consider:

- How old is the person?
- How many years have they been dealing with their addiction?
- How severe has their lifestyle been?
- How many times have they been in rehab?
- How many relapses have they had?
- Have they had a period where they demonstrated recovery, independence, maturity, and responsible living?

Recovery teaches adult coping skills through time and repetition.

Transitional Living

One choice for the recovering person who needs to develop more mature coping skills or who has shown an inability to maintain recovery after previous treatment attempts is some form of *transitional living*. This may be a half-way house, a sober living house, a three-quarter house, etc. This is a good choice because it gives the recovering person more time to adjust to the extra pressures of sober living and the panic of *not using alcohol or drugs to cope!* The choice of transitional living temporarily reduces the increased stresses and pressures of ordinary life a person would have to face if they returned home immediately after treatment.

Transitional living provides a partial step towards the goal of full re-entry. In this environment, a person is expected to obtain low-stress employment and pay rent but not have the pressures of a high-stress job, family, school or trying to please someone.

In transitional living there are a variety of ways to spend “free time”:

- Visiting family members
- Going to meetings
- Seeing a counselor
- Working with a sponsor
- Developing (at least five) sober friendships
- Doing fun recreational activities with sober friends on a weekly basis
- Developing spiritual practices (church, bible study, morning devotions, etc.)
- Getting used to **honesty, accountability, discipline** and **responsible** living

The recommended time for staying in transitional living usually varies from 90 days to a year or more. It depends on the individual needs of the person.

Gem to Share

I will always be here for you. The ways I help you look different now.
Prayers. Letters.
Words of encouragement.
Sharing a meal together.
Listening.
I love you. I care.

Aftercare

Aftercare is the program of recovery needed after completing the stay at the rehabilitation center. Aftercare is the most important part of any successful long-term recovery. When the goal is long-term recovery, consider how many short-term recoveries they have already had. How much time would all of them put together add up to?

Thirty days of rehab might be compared to learning to ride a bicycle. The first written after-care plan could be seen as temporary training wheels helping them learn to pedal, stay balanced and steer on their own in the difficult terrain of the outside world.

Don't Fail to Plan

Many graduates of rehab fail to remain drug-free and relapse within the first months after leaving the protective rehab environment. This happens because they **fail to follow an aftercare plan**.

Personalized aftercare alleviates the temptation of taking too much control of life too soon. Each recovering person needs a sensible plan to guide them during those first critical 12 months after rehab.

Mike says...

“Aftercare ... exponentially increases the chances of the recovering person’s long-term success. It is critical because the recovering person is learning how to live without the use of harmful substances while experiencing his or her full freedom.

*If a recovering person resists having an aftercare program, you need only ask him or her, “Do you want short-term or long-term recovery? Aftercare is an important part of **helping people practice new habits** that become part of their lives.”*

from The Four Seasons of Recovery for Parents of Alcoholics and Addicts by Mike Speakman

Here is a sample of an aftercare agreement your loved one would complete with guidance from rehab personnel prior to leaving for transitional living.

- Sign up for Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP)...By when? _____
- Enter a sober living home...By when? _____ For how long? _____
- Find a sponsor...By when? _____
- End unhealthy friendships...By when? _____
- Develop sober friendships...By when? _____
- Go to a 12-step meeting (AA, NA, CA)...How many per week? _____
- Do daily prayer or meditation (11th step).
- Do service work at meetings (volunteer clean-up, make coffee, etc.).
- Make face-to-face visits with sponsor...How many per week? _____
- Make phone calls to sponsor...How many per week? _____
- Attend aftercare group meetings...How many per week? _____
- Attend group counseling sessions...How many per week? _____
- Go to marriage counseling sessions...How many per week? _____
- Go to individual counseling sessions...How many per week? _____
- Attend worship services...How many per week? _____
- Attend Bible study...How many per week? _____
- Recreational activities with sober friends...How many per week? _____

Lesson Review

Re-entry is difficult for people in recovery due to their high **r**_____ to **c**_____.

Relapse after rehab often occurs because the recovering addict fails to **wr**_____ a plan or fails to **f**_____ the plan.

Recovery is **HARD** because it requires:
H_____
A_____
R_____ **living**
D_____