

Inspirations



Two Years Ago by Rob_MA235

It's been some time since I last posted on the SMART Recovery® message boards, but I felt the need to return if only to share with everyone that last week marked two years since I began my life without alcohol. I thought about it last night during the Super Bowl because that's when I had my last drink, ending a decade's long period of "self-medicating" with alcohol. Today I don't miss it at all and count myself blessed that my road to recovery went so well. I no longer get anxious going to a social occasion without several drinks to fortify me. I no longer down a few as soon as I come

home as a way to "unwind." I no longer drink when I'm alone and bored. Today I'm happy I made the choice I did to quit. At the time I did it out of necessity. I was sick and knew I was in trouble. I regret the impact/damage it inflicted on me and those around me, who worried in silence, knowing something was wrong. I openly admit that I no longer drink and do so without reservation or hesitation. It's part of who I am today.

I've steered a few people to this SMART Recovery® website and online activities over the past two years. I hope it's been as helpful for them as it was for me when I was getting started. I shall forever be grateful for the encouragement and support I found here when I was so confused and scared. The message boards and the early morning "chats" kept me feeling that I could do this and that all the physical signs that come from quitting were to be expected. A huge thank you to the community that is SMART Recovery®. You helped me change my life for the better. Be well, everyone.

5 Years in 2 Hours

by a7u, Chat Volunteer

Here's a little happy story about my Thursday evening.

I have been sober just over 5 years. Fitness became my Vital Absorbing Creative Interest (VACI), which led me back to alpine mountaineering (I live in

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The SMART Recovery® 4-Point Program®

The SMART Recovery® (Self-Management And Recovery Training) program helps individuals gain independence from addictive behavior.

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- Point #2:** Coping with urges
- Point #3:** Managing thoughts, feelings and behavior (problem-solving)
- Point #4:** Balancing momentary and enduring satisfactions (lifestyle balance)

the Pacific Northwest). I didn't climb in 2010 because of an injury. I need to spend time in climbing gyms starting now to be tuned up when the outdoor season starts in May.

To do this, I need to meet other climbers and find some regular partners. There are many ways to accomplish this. Last night I met a climbing group through meetup.com and had a great time. My post is about some thoughts I had about the "great time."

First, I wasn't a perfectionist coward that evening. Yet against all odds I didn't explode, nor was I laughed at. Who knew?! I climbed a route that is two grades harder than I usually climb. I jumped on it without thinking, which is good because usually I'm a perfectionist coward so if I thought about it, I wouldn't have tried. Instead I got on it, stayed relaxed in my mind, and topped out. I didn't do it perfectly but no one ever does when they try to climb a harder grade for the first time. The unique thing is, I accept that. I was OK that I wasn't perfect—making the hard moves and topping out was a pleasure that shut out what would have been my usual humiliation at not doing it in perfect flawless form. If I wait until I am perfectly prepared I will never do anything.

Second, I very much enjoyed meeting these strangers and spending 2 hours climbing with them. We had some laughs and got to know each other a little and talked about climbing. It was fun in a way that was totally alien to me when drinking. I don't mean I could not have imagined it when drinking, I mean that back in the bad old days it would have been like a foreign language I had never heard, utterly meaningless.

I didn't have an agenda or expectations—not for me or about me nor for or

about the others I would meet. I was relaxed, but as a **result** of not having an agenda—I never thought "I have to relax" or "I better be relaxed."

Being relaxed, I was open: open to meeting the others halfway, on common ground, accepting them for who they are. The flip side is, I acted like myself without imposing imaginary postures between me and them. Being relaxed, I had no anxieties about my behavior or performance—my climbing is OK, neither bad nor superior; I am not a beginner nor am I advanced. I'd like to be better and am working on improving; either way, my climbing is what it is. I accepted that others would be better and perhaps others would be below my level. Either would be OK, as would be any reactions they might have to me. It didn't affect me.

But I want to emphasize, I thought about none of this, I didn't work on these thoughts ahead of time, I didn't consciously select to have these attitudes. It just happened without reflection. The event unfolded in a series of "nows," action and rest and talking and listening occurring in a flow but without direction. Every iteration was good because I wasn't measuring any of it against a laundry list of irrational demands and expectations.

Third, I tried something new and liked it. If I get into something new, the reason is that it fits into one of my many private secret agendas for world domination and heroic glory. I never try anything "just because," and I sure don't try anything another person suggests unless it fits into one of those agendas. There's a sub-sport in climbing called bouldering. I've never done it. I don't know anything about it. Last night after we had climbed a few routes some of the others went to the bouldering area and

asked if I wanted to come along. One guy volunteered to give me a primer. I did a couple easy routes. It was a lot of fun. I fell off twice and slammed oof! into the padded floor but it was OK. The moves are highly athletic, combining explosiveness, strength, and accuracy—really fun given the weightlifting and speed athletics I have trained on since getting sober. I let a stranger talk me into something new at which I might be humiliated. Yet, I didn't think of that, and it didn't end that way or in a storm of insane inane weirdness and bad feelings. Drinking sure wasn't like that!

I still remember my early days after I stopped drinking. I was terrified of the future. What would become of me? It was all a huge unknown. All I knew was drinking and loneliness. Take away alcohol and I was a void. It was very difficult to bear but I was more scared of what would happen to me if I went back so I went forward into the unknown. I never imagined how great things could turn out. In a way, I feel sorry for newbies because they are in all the usual misery from stopping, but still don't have sight of the payoff. It's the same for all of us.

The first months you're sober, sleep improves, you get a healthy appetite, you're more relaxed—this is all good, it shows how badly your body was polluted by alcohol. But as months of sobriety turn to years, those things are insufficient to maintain sobriety. You then owe it to yourself to exploit what beginning sobriety has given you: the capacity to mend the torn parts inside and reunite the fragments into a whole person who is happy to face life straight up. Not just enduring it, grumpily accepting that you can't have a drink to deal with the kids or the spouse or the boss, but actually welcoming the experience of living life the way you were put together. For me,

mending and happiness and sadness and challenge and success and above all, fresh learning with new eyes have all become the same thing. I'm not sure what to call it. Is it sobriety? Is it life?

So I will end with a question mark.

Motorcycles and the Art of Annie Maintenance—a Tale of One Year

by AnnieMG, SMART Recovery® Message Board volunteer

It's been a long time coming, this year of mine. One whole year sober—it seemed an impossible mountain to climb at one stage. Now that I'm here, it feels like time has just flown.

I've been trying to decide what to say in my one-year post. I could talk about how I managed to get my addiction under control, but that is only part of my story. For the first 4 or 5 months I worked hard at quitting, coming online here several times a day and posting regularly, attending meetings, working the tools, and reading whatever I could lay my hands on. I put a lot of work and effort into staying sober. Once I got “in the groove,” however, not drinking became more of a default than an effort. That's not to say that there were no times when I felt close to picking up—there have been many of those, and I mean many! The crucial point is that I have not had anything to drink for a

whole year. Apart from this having given me a new life, I feel a sense of pride that I have been able to do this.

What quitting has seriously given me is the ability to focus on being the person I have wanted to be. I had been drinking for more than 30 years and trying with little success to quit for the last ten until I found SMART Recovery® a couple of years ago. I always felt that drinking was holding me back from so many things, but mostly it held me back from having the confidence to go out and grab life by the neck and truly embrace it. I had things that I wanted to do but didn't believe that I could, or more important, that I deserved to. While my dog might have thought I was the bee's knees, I didn't necessarily share her opinion.

In the first few months, I took up various activities and I believe that this made a big difference to my success. Having a focus each week and something to look forward to, rather than just an endless stretch of days, gave rhythm to my existence. I attended a writers' course and joined a book club. I became a SMART Recovery® message board volunteer and then a meeting facilitator, which was a *big* step: I never thought I'd have the confidence or the skills to run meetings. Now I run a weekly online meeting and do face-to-face meetings whenever the regular facilitators here in

my hometown can't make it. For someone who was once socially phobic, this has been major progress.

One of the biggest deals for me over the last year, however, has been how my motorcycling has progressed. I first got my license four years ago at 48, and as an “old lady rider,” progressed from a scooter to a 750cc cruiser to an 800cc sports tourer. I am not an “out there” kind of person—I'm not particularly physical or sporty, I have more of an artistic bent than anything else, and I don't have any tattoos (yet)! However, since I first started riding, I have found it an incredibly exhilarating experience, in a very scary kind of way, if that makes sense!

I'm not a natural rider—I have to work at it and never just hop on like people who do so without a moment's thought before they twist the throttle and roar off into the distance. But, I was determined to get better and faced many opportunities to quit when things got difficult or frightening. What it taught me, though, was to “feel the fear and do it anyway.” The adrenaline rush and sense of accomplishment afterwards is tremendous. I now understand why people jump out of airplanes!

When I was drinking, I used to have to plan my rides very carefully. I had found quite early on that drinking the night before, even if I wasn't over the

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limit, impaired my thought processes and reaction times enough to be dangerous. I only needed one or two near crashes to realize that drinking and motorcycling did not go together, even with a 12-hour interval. This meant that impromptu rides were virtually out of the question. I could not just “get up and go” if someone suggested a ride because I knew I’d be putting myself in danger if I’d been drinking the night before. I know I missed a lot of riding, and therefore a lot of pleasure.

About four months into quitting alcohol, I decided to do something I’d wanted to do for a while, but had never had the confidence to do: take my motorbike out on the racetrack. I enrolled in a course that focused on riding techniques and spent a day out at the track, gradually increasing my confidence and improving my ability by a huge margin. I don’t remember ever having been so scared in the minutes counting up to my first time out on the track: lining up with 25 other bikes, engines roaring, my foot shaking on the peg, not knowing what to expect. Fortunately, the fun outweighed the fear by just enough to get me out there again, and I have since been back over half a dozen times. Having to book a place two months ahead means that I always have something to look forward to. Again, I think this has been significant.

Recently, I did the next level of the riding course and some of the stuff was amazing. When I learned how to lean the bike right over and drop my knee just like a “real racer,” I really felt that I had accomplished something monumental. It was the coolest thing I have ever done. The feeling was of total exhilaration and I remember coming home that day on a high that lasted for over a week. That was the highlight of my first

non-drinking year. To do something so totally cool and sensational like that and to handle the bike confidently and hold my own in a bunch of bikers was a big deal for me. I still get a real blast just thinking about it!

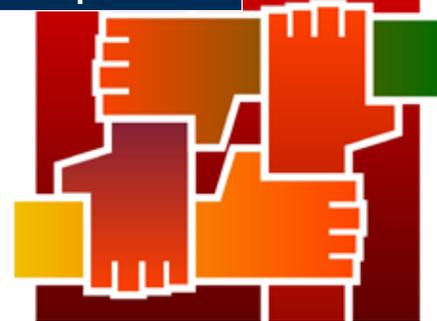
As a kind of a one-year present, or maybe a Christmas present, I have recently become the proud owner of a lovely sports bike, which I bought specifically for the track. It is the most gorgeous bike with lots of horses in its superbike engine. I’ve been pleasantly surprised to find how quickly I adapted to it as it has a very dramatic riding position, perfect for the track, but very different to what I’ve been used to. It’s the kind of bike I’d been looking at for a long time, but had thought was not for me. Too tall, too much power, too difficult to ride, too much of a professional’s bike—totally out of my reach. Well, it just goes to show how far I’ve come—it is a sensational riding experience, and I’m so proud that it’s mine!

What not drinking has meant for me is allowing me to follow through without holding back except when reason and common sense tell me to. My motorcycling this year is an extreme example of how I’ve done that. I still feel the fear every time I go out on the racetrack, whenever I try something new—facilitating, for instance—but I’m no longer so afraid to face the fear. The discomfort that comes with wanting a drink and not having one is similar, and I am no longer afraid to feel uncomfortable. It’s just uncomfortable for a while, and then it’s OK. Like facing a scary corner and getting through it by basic technique, learning how to quit drinking is the same: approach it step by step using the tools and concentrate on the “how to,” not the discomfort.

Thanks must go to my lovely SMART Recovery® friends online here. Thank you for your help and encouragement both this year and previous years. I’m not sure I could have done it without you. Thank you to the volunteers and facilitators who helped me on my way and to the Central Office staff who give up so much of their time.

Whew—what a ride it’s been!

People Power



My Volunteering

by ohansen, Online Facilitator

I wanted to take some time right now to get this out on paper, or “Cyber Parchment,” as you might call it.

My time at SMART Recovery® Online has been an incredible journey for me, and one I wouldn’t trade for anything. The chance to finally turn my life around, and not just stop there.

The chance to volunteer and facilitate these online meetings is truly a blessing. I think about my own experiences, and the brutal costs of my drinking. If I can mitigate or eliminate that cost for even a single person, then my time spent here is paid for in full and the reward immeasurable.

So many days and nights I spent in the familiar stupor that alcohol brought to me. Living as an addicted robot, and

the program was always the same. Consume and abort....Consume and abort!! The insanity of it was myself delusion that I was enriching my experience by drowning in alcohol. That somehow that elixir of pain and regret was the fuel I needed to just handle life.

Looking back, it was the biggest lie I've ever let myself believe. I traded a lot of mindful, beautiful moments for the stark obscurity of alcoholism. So if I cause just ONE person to soberly kiss their child....to soberly walk their dog.... to fully and completely BE in their life and feel what that is. Then if I have done that....I feel like I've treaded a path that surely isn't far from heaven.

So thanks to all at SMART Recovery® Online for both putting up with me when I wasn't so sober, and allowing me the chance to pass on the beauty of it when I am.

My sincerest appreciation and affection goes out to all that frequent SMART Recovery® Online, and I am immensely proud to be a part of it.

Why I Am a SMART Recovery® Facilitator

by Dr. BS of Boston (with help from Loretta from Lynn)

SMART Recovery® is in a growth phase. The number of face-to-face meetings is rapidly increasing and that is a very good thing. There are number of things that can impede this progress, one of which is not enough facilitators. I have been a SMART Recovery® facilitator for about 3 1/2 years and have found it extremely rewarding and fulfilling. As an encouragement to others to step up to the plate, I'm writing this article.

I would have to admit that I do have the time to do this in that I am retired from my professional career. On the

other hand, once one has made a commitment and received the necessary training, it becomes a commitment of only about two hours a week. Often a facilitator can find a second person in a group who wants to learn and is willing to share some of the responsibility when the original facilitator is unavailable. In addition, meetings that have been in existence for a while will usually have people who are experienced enough to be able to handle facilitation. This is firsthand experience speaking.

I'm a facilitator for a number of good reasons and hope that people who read this will come to appreciate the tremendous benefits that one can receive by this kind of volunteer work.

So here are the reasons:

1. Facilitating makes sense because SMART makes sense. Almost four years ago when I first became sober, I was in a balanced inpatient rehabilitation program. It was balanced in that it exposed us to both 12 step and secular recovery group programs. This is where I encountered SMART Recovery® and attended my very first meeting (luckily facilitated by Joe Gerstein), and I had a wow reaction. By that, I mean I said *wow, does this ever make sense!* If you will pardon the expression, I was hooked.

Yes SMART Recovery® makes sense in that the science and theory make sense. It is logical and rational and thereby appeals to the mind. It becomes an easy step to want to learn more about it. It was clear to me almost from the beginning that becoming a facilitator would be a good way to learn more about it.

2. Facilitating helped with my own recovery. I probably do not need to continue to go to SMART Recovery® meetings any longer and could be doing

other things on my "SMART" evenings. Nevertheless, getting myself out is good, and by being a facilitator, I remain involved in the recovery meeting process. This can only enhance my continued sobriety (alcohol was my issue). Teaching other people how to use specific tools enhances my own use of the tools. I'm convinced that I learned them more quickly because I used them as a facilitator in the meetings. Though I consider myself recovered after nearly four years facilitating, illustrating the tools in meetings is a continuing reminder that I did have a problem and it was a bad one. It also reminds me that I am vulnerable and helps keep me vigilant. Finally, I can easily now use the tools in other aspects of my life that have nothing to do with abstinence or sobriety.

3. Facilitating allows me to express gratitude. How can one feel gratitude to an amorphous thing? Well I do. I feel grateful, and being a facilitator allows me to express it. Over the course of my own recovery, I found that the SMART meetings and the SMART tools were of extraordinary help to me in achieving my goal, which was abstinence and recovery. I probably could have become and remained abstinent on my own, but I am also quite sure that being involved with the SMART Recovery® program enhanced my recovery and made my own recovery as successful as it has been (fortunately no slips).

Had I not found SMART Recovery®, I would still be battling the concepts of being recovering forever, being powerless, being an alcoholic forever, having to attend meetings forever, and if I took a drink, I would sink back into the depths. Well, I'm sure you get my drift. On the other hand, I think one of the best parts of the whole SMART

Recovery[®] program is that I unashamedly view myself as having recovered. Using the stages of change model, I was in maintenance for a long time and then finally “terminated” the change process, which I think would be better termed “achievement” or “accomplishment.” Anyhow, SMART was so instrumental in achieving my present day serenity that gratitude is a natural consequence. I am extremely grateful for what I learned with SMART’s help. It seems a bit corny to feel grateful, but that’s how I feel. It helped motivate me to become a facilitator and to continue with no plans of stopping.

4. Facilitating is very satisfying on a personal level. There can be great personal satisfaction from participating in a mutual support group meant to help individuals with addictive behaviors. However, facilitating goes one level further: yes, it feels good to be in recovery or recovered. However, it feels even better to see others tackling problems and feeling good about it. I love to see people gain sufficient recovery that they feel comfortable with the idea that they do not need to attend meetings anymore. Although it’s also a bit sad to see someone with whom one develops rapport not come anymore, knowing that they’re going off into a better world for themselves is very gratifying. I believe there is a basic human element that enjoys being helpful to others. This element is probably better developed in some people than others, but I suspect that the majority of people have it. If one really enjoys being helpful to others, being a facilitator is a marvelous way to do it.

There is one other thing to add here in terms of what I find satisfying about SMART, and that is the Help for Family and Friends support aspect of the program. There is no local equiva-

lent of Al-Anon in SMART, although there is a Family and Friends meeting online. Family members of attendees, or even non attendees (that is, the person with the problem does not attend), can learn about what we do in SMART and can learn more about their loved ones’ experiences with the problem and the battle to recover. Furthermore, they learn just how supportive they can be as a family member or friend. It very much adds to one’s satisfaction to witness the experience of these individuals.

5. Facilitating appeals to my intellectual curiosity. Although this may be more of a factor with me specifically, I suspect many others would share this. The SMART program itself is very interesting. It uses principles that can engage your curiosity and intellect. If you consider the SMART principles with any degree of depth, you can learn a little about how the mind works. This might not be for everybody, but this program provides the opportunity for facilitators to learn more about human psychology. Of course, you can learn about these things elsewhere, but in my case being a facilitator is a motivation to look more deeply into some of the concepts and issues surrounding the psychology of recovery from an addictive behavior.

6. Facilitating is a Vital Absorbing Creative Interest (VACI). VACI is a SMART Recovery[®] tool directly from REBT. Facilitating can be a vital absorbing creative interest. As one develops experience, one might find that there are interesting variations in the way some of the tools are used. These variations can be stimulating and can add to a tool’s effectiveness for both the facilitator and the group.

7. Facilitating helps my Lifestyle Balance. Having a great interest in SMART facilitating helps me with this, the fourth point of the SMART Recovery[®] program called Lifestyle Balance. Many members have trouble with this point beyond the concept of differentiating between the short-term and long-term aspects of life’s pleasures. To me, it’s about learning to live life on life’s terms in a new way without the old behavior and by learning new and more constructive habits. There is a lot in this concept, and the framers wisely added this to the four points. It’s sort of the *piece de resistance*, the good stuff, at the end as you move from Action stage to Maintenance stage. Facilitating can help get you there.

8. Facilitating makes sense using the Cost Benefit Analysis. To finish this piece, I will employ one of our own tools to summarize the above points: the cost-benefit analysis or CBA. I tend to use this tool more as a motivational grid wherein on the vertical axis (y axis), short-term versus long-term benefits are listed, while on the horizontal (x axis), benefits versus the costs are listed. It is relatively easy to see both the short-term costs and the long-term benefits. My friend Fred describes it well here: *Yes, there are short-term costs, such as the time commitment, that take from other activities, such as family and so forth. And, yes, there are some financial costs involved with transportation, parking, and things like that...but at least for me there are no real long-term costs. Therefore, looking at the balance between benefits and costs, the analysis overwhelmingly tips to the benefit side.* I couldn’t say it any better.

In conclusion, I’m sure it’s evident that I am a very enthusiastic proponent of being a facilitator. It has been a wonderful

experience for me. I hope some of what I've said will make sense to you and motivate you to consider taking on this highly fulfilling and satisfying activity.



SMART Ideas

The Importance of Exercise/ Physical Activity when Recovering from an Addiction

by Kacie Best, specialist in mind-body fitness and older adult exercise; SMART 12i Facilitator

Jack LaLanne, generally considered the father of modern fitness, died recently at the age of 96. News accounts indicated he looked as fit in his later years as in his prime, although the body-builder's massive muscularity was gone. I can believe it, as I had the wonderful privilege of seeing and hearing him address a fitness conference in Boston about 11 years ago. He was wearing his well-known, form-fitting elasticized jumpsuit, and there was truly no visible sign of fat or sag. He was a surprisingly small man, almost elf-like, which had not been obvious on my family's black-and-white TV all those years ago. He moved with the grace and ease of a cat and his enthusiasm electrified everyone in the room.

We should all be so fortunate as we age. Many of us can be quite vigorous if we remember the truth of the corny phrase, "Use it or lose it." Physical activity is especially critical when recov-

ering from an addiction. Giving up an addictive substance or behavior is difficult, we all know. In addition to the many obvious negative effects from years of abuse, there is often a less obvious but equally devastating impact on overall health. Many abusers substitute their drug of choice for a nutritious diet, so vitamin and mineral deficiencies are common. These deficiencies, increasingly, are being directly linked with cancer, spine and hip fractures, and other accelerated, degenerative, or body wasting illnesses.

It is also common to gain weight after overcoming an addiction. The older we are, the more likely it is that muscle has been lost while fat has been gained, even if the reading on the scale does not change. Why? After age 25 or thereabouts, unless people remain active, as much as half a pound of muscle is lost every year, along with half a percentage in the metabolic rate as a result. The only comprehensive solution is regular, rigorous exercise. Such activity also helps to combat the stress, anxiety, and depression often associated with substance abuse and that sometimes increase after initiating recovery. Exercise can provide a healthy distraction from recovery urges, and generates the neurochemicals that help improve and stabilize mood. When substance dependence is eliminated, some people theorize that it can take several years for the neural pathways to regenerate sufficiently to limit cravings at a relapse-prevention level. Exercise plays a critical role in assisting these pathways. Natural production of dopamine (among these neurochemicals) has a lesser-known effect, too: Studies are suggesting that exercise reduces the dopamine receptors in the brain. If so, that would imply that exercise reduces the pleasure experienced from certain drugs, such as cocaine. Besides the restoration of the brain's production of dopamine (which is all about reward), regular physical activity can enhance sense of well-being, presumably through increasing GABA (anxiety

reduction), norepinephrine (related to depression), enkephalins (related to craving), and serotonin (related to sleep).

Another lesser-known but vital impact of exercise, especially the aerobic or cardio-vascular type (such as running, jogging, and "rebounding" on a personal trampoline), is that it provides the lymphatic system with a detoxifying boost. The lymphatic system is the body's janitorial service: it helps dispose of the toxins, dead or cancerous cells, unhealthy bacteria and viruses, and many cellular waste products. However, the service only works when there is activity to pump the "gunk" and cleanse the lymph fluid. Unlike the circulatory system's pump (the heart), the lymph system depends on gravity and one-way valves. Activities that include sustained motion, even if simply walking, can make a huge difference in the body's ability to flush itself clean.

Exercising doesn't have to be solitary drudgery or formal workouts; fun activities such as dancing, bicycling, roller skating, even playing ping pong, can burn lots of calories while putting us in touch with other people having fun in same way. Regular, vigorous exercise provides many benefits, even to those who are already relatively fit and healthy.

The benefits to those in the process of recovery are especially vital:

- Muscle is built which burns more calories than does fat, and muscle stress on the skeletal structure builds new bone;
- Endorphins, the "feel good" hormones, are generated, and that helps balance moods;
- Feeling stronger physically usually leads to feeling stronger mentally;
- There is a sense of accomplishment and empowerment;
- Sleep, memory, and energy can all improve; and
- There can be benefits to various chronic conditions, including diabetes and high blood pressure.

The most important thing about starting an exercise program is to start slowly, to avoid pain, injury, and burnout. If you are over age 40 and/or have an ongoing health concern, the recommendation is to discuss your plans with a physician. When online with SMART Recovery®, check out the forum threads dedicated to exercise, and you can find motivation and encouragement from people just like you ... people who got up, got out, and got moving.

A Dispute for All Occasions

by Hank Robb, PhD, ABPP

Psychological research has shown that trying not to think a thought or feel a feeling (which is just a straightforward way of saying that you are trying to suppress your thinking or feeling) tends to make whatever you avoid come back stronger and more frequently. It's the same old story so frequently found in life: what works in the short run may not

work in the long run. For this reason, the traditional "Stop Thought" technique may tend to backfire. Simply interrupting your focus by saying or thinking "STOP" is one thing. That part will probably work well. Very likely, for a moment, your thoughts will be disrupted. The problem arises when this technique is not used just to disrupt certain thoughts, feelings, or patters of thinking, but when it is meant to, "Make the thought, or feeling, not be there." Because we are looking for techniques that work in the long run and not just the short run, here's a way to use "STOP" as the opening move in what we might call, "A Dispute for All Occasions." You can use it with either thoughts or feelings and with any thoughts or feelings because the dispute aims not at your thoughts and feelings but what you BELIEVE about them. "STOP" just gives you a chance to refocus and begin your dispute. When

you recognize that you are thinking about actions that won't be helpful in the Big Picture of your life or feeling like acting in ways that won't be helpful in the Big Picture of your life, which, of course, includes your addictive behavior, then say out loud or loudly in your head, "STOP! (This will work better if you say it aloud, but that is not always convenient). Now you can begin your dispute. "Right now

I'm having this thought or feeling. Do I HAVE TO do what the thought says or what I *feel* like doing? NO I DON'T! Circumstances, both past and present, are giving me this thought or feeling right now. However, I am more than just my thoughts and feelings. No matter what thoughts I think or feelings I feel, I still get to PICK how I act. What action can I take right now that fits with the Big Picture I want for my life? I am going to do that, and keep doing that, even if this thought or feeling hangs around for awhile!" Used this way, the "STOP Thought" technique won't turn into an effort to just suppress your thoughts or feelings, which has a good chance of backfiring over time. Instead, "STOP" disrupts what you are thinking or feeling long enough to get going on some effective disputing. Namely, no matter my thoughts or feelings, I still get to PICK what I do with my hands, arms, feet, and mouth. Of course, there is one final and very important step. You have to ACT in that more effective way rather than just THINK about doing so!

The Anatomy of Emotions

We are thrilled to announce that Edward Garcia, MA, CSW, has agreed to host a live, online workshop in SMART Recovery's online voice chat room on **April 14, 2011 from 8:30 – 9:30 pm, EDT**, titled *The Anatomy of Emotions*. Some of you are familiar with Ed from his participation in the Job Search Support Series, which took place in December and January and was a tremendous resource!

If well-received and there is the type of interest we anticipate, Mr. Garcia has graciously offered to host an additional series of interactive workshops that will address the thoughts and beliefs that trigger



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specific and common emotions including Anger, Fear, Guilt, and Situational Depression. The Anatomy of Emotions workshop will be invaluable in setting the stage for these planned future events.

Mark this on your calendar and look for additional information to be posted on the SMART Recovery® website and SMART Recovery® Online's Message Boards.



SMART Progress

A Road Trip to Wilton Manors, FL

by Chris Scales-Sullivan aka ChrisPtown

In 2010 while in southern Florida, my partner (Desul) and I decided to check out a F2F meeting in Wilton Manors (Ft. Lauderdale area) Florida. The meeting is facilitated by Bob Scardino. As newly graduated facilitators of the Distance Training Program, we were excited to see a “live” meeting in progress. What a treat! We ended up going back one more time before we left the area.

Shortly after that, I was invited and joined the FAST Distance Training Team that trains new F2F and online facilitators and SMART Recovery® online volunteers.

On a return trip to Florida this year, we decided to head south and catch this “favorite” meeting of ours in Wilton Manors. This time we planned to meet

one of the recent grads from the FAST Training program, KacieB, and accompany her to her first F2F meeting. What a surprise for us to get to the meeting and find out that yet another recent grad, Ben Galloso, was filling in for Bob Scardino and would be facilitating the meeting. There were 12 attendees, five of whom were facilitators! One person seemed to be under the influence of something. I held my breath when the meeting began, crossing my fingers and silently wishing Ben good luck.

All too often, in SMART Recovery® in meetings online, at F2F meetings, in the chat room, message boards or in a training course, we meet people and then they are gone out of our lives, and we wonder how they are doing. How nice was it to meet KacieB and to see Ben in action facilitating a meeting of 12! I told Ben and the group that I couldn't wait to get back and tell the rest of the FAST Distance Training Team what an awesome job he did. Ben did a truly a magnificent job facilitating the meeting, keeping his cool, and presenting SMART Recovery® as a top-notch recovery group.

So, not only did I come back and tell everyone, I wanted to tell all of you too!

And a special thanks to Bob Scardino for sending such remarkable soon-to-be facilitators up to the FAST Distance Training course!

Did You Know?

by Jim (GJBXVI) Braastad, Volunteer Distance Training Program Coordinator

In 2010, we had 166 people participate in and complete the “Get SMART FAST” Distance Training Program. As of December 31, 2010, this has resulted in 47 new face-to-face meetings! (This number is likely to have increased since then.)

The training participants represented 11 different countries from around the world, gathering not only from across the United

States and Canada, but from Australia, Brazil, Ireland, New Zealand, Poland, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom!

While we truly appreciate ALL our training participants for their individual efforts to further expand the reach of SMART Recovery®, my hat comes off to the international participants who stayed up late or got up early to join in and participate in our training meetings. That's dedication! THANK YOU!!!

For the final “homework” question of the training, we ask the participants, “If you were to have only one meeting with a group, what tool or concept of SMART Recovery® would you want to send participants home with? Why?” I'm compiling the answers for an upcoming article, so stay tuned for those results.

What would YOUR answer be? We'd like to know! Feel free to email me your “answer” at GJBXVI@q.com.

Addendum: Passing the Hat and Getting Something in it

by Dr. Bill, Facilitator

This is a follow-up to the article on passing the hat published in the winter 2011 *News and Views*.

Upon thinking further about the subject of passing the hat, it occurred to me that I have initiated a change process (Stages of change: Contemplation> Preparation> Action> Maintenance) in meetings. Certainly there is an initial inertia in a meeting about giving, but explaining the need for contributions can alleviate that. Further, the mindset about the amount is likely geared toward AA, which traditionally is a dollar a person.

Remember, unlike AA, we do not have thousands of treatment programs ordering and paying us for our literature! Therefore, in our meetings we need contributions to be as generous as possible. Hence, it can help to suggest a

five-dollar (or other) amount. Pointing out the value of an hour and a half of SMART Recovery® versus other things can be beneficial, as well.

However, using the change process model might make the giving of the suggested amount more the norm. Then it becomes less of an effort for both facilitator and meeting participants. It can help establish a new group habit. I merely mention this as it may have contributed to the success I have experienced.

A Humanistic Approach to SMART Recovery®

by Scott Smith, Facilitator

I am a SMART Recovery® volunteer facilitator in LaGrange, GA, as well as a graduate student of Humanistic Psychology at the University of West Georgia in Carrollton, GA. Humanistic psychology became popular in the 1960s as a reaction to psychoanalysis and behaviorism. Of course, we humans struggle with the animalistic drives described by Freud, and, like laboratory animals, we are subject to the behavioral conditioning described by

Skinner. However, we also have free will and conscious motivation. Humanistic psychology is interested in that which makes us uniquely human. Although the field has been largely overshadowed by the cognitive revolution, humanistic psychology revolves around our conscious ability to direct our own destiny and thus offers many valuable insights that harmonize with the SMART Recovery® program.

As a founder of the humanistic psychology movement, Abraham Maslow is famous for his hierarchy of needs, commonly shown as a pyramid built on a base of physiological needs (air, food, water), followed by safety needs (security, shelter, resources), love needs (friends, family, romance), esteem needs (confidence, achievement, respect), and finally self-actualization. As needs are fulfilled at one level, one may move up the pyramid to focus on higher levels. This model has been criticized for being simplistic and ethnocentric; however, like the stages of change model, it can be used as a visual tool to help individuals think about change and potential. In my experience, this model resonates among SMART

Recovery® members and illustrates the possibility of development beyond the self-centered ego. According to Maslow, self-actualization represents one's full potential. Self-actualized individuals have been described as self-aware, self-accepting, autonomous, authentic, and problem-centered rather than ego-centered.

Addictive behavior may drag individuals down the pyramid, so to speak; it may lead to the loss self-esteem, loving relationships, material resources, and physiological health. However, with conscious motivation, individuals may regain their footing and climb toward self-actualization, as Maslow said, "To become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming."¹

Carl Rogers is another famous founder of humanistic psychology. Rogers developed person-centered counseling, which is based on unconditional positive regard for the person, empathic understanding of

¹ Maslow, A. H. (1943). *A theory of human motivation*, *Psychological Review*: 50, 370-96.

SMART Recovery® Program Tools & Techniques

The SMART Recovery® 4-Point Program® employs a variety of tools and techniques to help individuals gain independence from addictive behavior.

**These
tools
include:**

- Change Plan Worksheet
- Cost/Benefit Analysis
- ABCs of REBT (Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy) for Urge Coping
- ABCs of REBT for Emotional Upsets
- DISARM (Destructive Images Self-talk Awareness and Refusal Method)
- Brainstorming
- Role-playing and Rehearsing

Participants are encouraged to learn how to use each tool and to practice the tools and techniques as they progress toward Point 4 of the program—achieving lifestyle balance and leading a fulfilling and healthy life.

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the person, and congruence, or genuineness, on the part of the counselor. Over time, Rogers reasoned, if the counselor is consistently caring, attentive, and genuine, then the person may begin to relate to himself or herself in the same way.

When I first began facilitating SMART Recovery® meetings over a year ago, I did most of the talking. I spent a lot of time at the dry-erase board, trying to teach members about cost/benefit analysis, REBT, and other SMART Recovery® tools. The environment felt like a classroom; I was the teacher, and attendees played the role of bored students who rarely had anything to add. When individuals shared with the group, I darted back to the board and tried to apply a SMART Recovery® tool to the situation, and I often shared similar experiences from my own life. However, in doing so, I inadvertently shifted focus away from their problems and feelings, blocking possibilities for deeper sharing and cross-talk.

When I began to integrate a humanistic, person-centered approach, the classroom environment lifted like a fog. I resisted the temptation to share my personal experiences at every opportunity. Instead, I focused on the experiences and feelings of others. I listened care-

fully instead of thinking about the most applicable tool. I stopped asking so many questions and started using more reflective statements that focused on people's expressed or implied feelings. People opened up and began to share on a deeper level, and I developed into a facilitator rather than an instructor. I still write on the dry-erase board when it is called for, and sometimes I share my own experiences, but I don't jump at the chance. I encourage people to tell their stories, and I listen attentively. After all, it's their meeting.

Editor's Notes: I have some points to add to this fine article. First, while humanistic psychology helped one facilitator move from a lecture to a discussion, there are other pathways to that result, such as the regular REBT-informed SMART Recovery® meeting format taught in our Distance Training courses and elsewhere. Don't forget that hundreds of facilitators conduct great meetings and never heard of humanistic psychology! Second, the American Humanist Association awarded Albert Ellis the Humanist of the Year award in the early 1970s.² Ellis was friendly with both Rogers and Maslow and had some correspondence with them showing them the errors of their ways (as well as where he thought they were on the right track). I had the good fortune of having lunch with Ellis and Rogers when the two got together when Al was doing training in San Diego at which I did some of

² Ellis, A. (1975). *Humanistic psychotherapy*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

the supervision. They mainly were gabbing about their old days together in New York State when they were part of getting psychology on the map as an organized, licensed profession.

Annual Conference – Destination Baltimore!

Mark your calendars and plan to join us on October 7–9 for the 2011 Annual Conference to be hosted at the DoubleTree Baltimore-Washington International Airport Hotel.

“My experience was immensely powerful and transformative. I came home with renewed enthusiasm for the program and immediately began incorporating the new information I learned.”

It's a wonderful opportunity to meet other volunteers and SMART Recovery® participants, and we have a terrific lineup of speakers this year! And a big thanks to the local cadre of Maryland and DC area volunteers, who have been helping with the optional

tour, hotel selection, and speakers.

Don't miss out! As Jamie and Jeff reported in the January issue of the *News & Views* following last year's conference in San Diego, “My experience was immensely powerful and transformative. I came home with renewed enthusiasm for the program and immediately began incorporating the new information I learned.” And, “By the time the Annual Gathering wrapped up at noon on Sunday, I was energized by the passion and experiences that my fellow SMART volunteers had shared with me. I couldn't wait to get back home so I could try out some of the great ideas I had learned for spreading the word about SMART Recovery® and getting others engaged in the effort.”

We look forward to your participation!

Articles are Welcome!

If you have a story or information you would like to see published in the *News & Views*, please feel free to submit a copy to Emmett Velten, Editor, via e-mail: ev.verb@gmail.com. Unsolicited material is most welcome!

AGENDA

SMART Recovery® Annual Conference ■ October 7–9, 2011 ■ DoubleTree Hotel BWI, Baltimore, MD

(Agenda subject to change)

Friday, Oct. 7

2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. **Optional Tour of the Inner Harbor** – (Meet in hotel lobby at 1:50 PM for a prompt 2 PM departure) – We will be bused to Baltimore’s Inner Harbor, where you will have a choice of visiting the Aquarium, the USS Constellation, or wandering about the Inner Harbor. Bus will return to the hotel promptly at 5:30 p.m., returning to the hotel at 6 PM. Pricing based on your choice of location to visit.

7:00 – 9:00 p.m. **Meet & Greet Welcoming Dinner/Icebreaker** – An opportunity to meet other SMART Recovery® volunteers and participants.

Saturday, Oct. 8

7:45 – 8:30 a.m. **Continental Breakfast & Registration**

8:30 – 8:45 a.m. **Welcome and Opening Remarks** – Dr. Peter Cohen, Medical Director of the Administration, State of Maryland Alcohol & Drug Abuse Office

Organizational Updates

8:45 – 9:15 a.m. **Overview of SMART Recovery® Growth & Activities in DC and Maryland** – Led by Hugh Delaney

9:15 – 9:45 a.m. **SMART Recovery® Online and Website Update** – Led by Hammer and online volunteers and participants

9:45 – 10:45 a.m. **Volunteers Make a Difference** – Update on Committee Activities - Led by Tom Horvath with presentations from Committee Chairs/Volunteer

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| – Regional Coordinators | – Annual Conference Program Team | – Website Revision Team |
| – Online Activities | – More Meetings Team | – Fundraising Team |
| – Community Relations Committee | – Distance Training Team | – Survey Team |
| | – Materials Review Committee | |

10:45 – 11:15 a.m. **Break**

Recovery Month Update

11:15 -11:45 a.m. **Recovery Month** – Ivette Torres, MEd. MSc., Associate Director for Consumer Affairs Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration/US DHHS

11:45 – 12:45 p.m. **Lunch**

Advancements in the Field

12:45 – 2:00 p.m. **Brief Overview of Advancements including: Self control** – emotional self regulation, behavioral self control, self control as a “depletable” resource; neurobiology of addictive behavior- reward circuitry, dopamine, neuroplasticity, etc., in layman’s terms; dual-diagnosis- common co-occurring conditions, integrated treatment approaches, effects of mental health on addiction and vice versa; DBT- applying DBT methods such as “what” skills, distress tolerance skills, “how” skills, emotion regulation skills, chain analysis – Dr. David Saenz

2:00 – 3:00 p.m. **The 3 Spheres of Health: Implications for Recovery** – Dr. Joseph Gagliardi

3:00 – 3:30 p.m. **Break**

How to Present the Organization and Tools

3:30 – 4:15 p.m. **How Facilitators might Best Approach Treatment Programs and other Referral Resources** – Dr. George Kolodner

4:15 – 5:00 p.m. **Presenting SMART Recovery® to Treatment Facilities and Professionals** – Michael Abbate, SMART Recovery® Facilitator and Regional Coordinator

6:00 – 8:30 p.m. **Dinner** – followed by a fun game of SMART Jeopardy!

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Sunday, Oct. 9

8:00 – 9:00 a.m.

Continental Breakfast

Tool Time & Role Play

9:00 – 10:30 a.m.

Tool Time – a review of the SMART Recovery® Tools in action. Led by Jonathan von Breton (Audience to pose the toughest situation for each tool that they've had to address)

- Change Plan Worksheet
- Cost/Benefit Analysis
- ABCs of REBT for Urge Coping
- Hierarchy of Values
- DISARM (Destructive Images Self-talk Awareness and Refusal Method)
- ABCs of REBT for Emotional Upsets
- Brainstorming
- Role-playing and Rehearsals

10:30 – 10:45 a.m.

Break

10:45 a.m.–12:00 noon

Breakout Role Play Groups – Participants will break into smaller groups to practice role playing a SMART Recovery® meeting

12:00 noon

Collection of Evaluation Forms & Departure

SMART Recovery® On-Line Update

by Jonathan von Breton, Director, SMART Recovery® Online

Well, a lot has happened since I last wrote. Two events stood out.

As we all know, the economy has been bad and the jobless rate high. Many people have lost jobs who never thought they would. Add trying to recover from addiction to that and you have set the stage for a possible relapse. Bill Knaus, PhD, a long time friend of SMART Recovery® and a longer-term, prolific practitioner of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), volunteered to do a series of free online workshops for SMART people looking for work. The title was, “**Are you out of work—seeking a job?**” There were six one-hour sessions from December 6 to January 10. It took place Mondays at noon because, let’s face it, everyone who attended was out of work.

Bill brought along two colleagues to help with this workshop. Ed Garcia, MA, and Ron Parker, PhD, alternated with Bill in giving brief presentations each week. The focus was the

psychology of a job search. Topics included: Perspective \ weathering the storm, Choices, Interpretations, Mental Karate, Building Emotional Muscle, and How to Keep Going When The Going Gets Tough. Each presentation featured questions and discussion.

Participants were encouraged to post their personal job search questions on the Message Board. The presenters took turns answering these questions.

Nancy Knaus took notes for every session. She posted those notes on the Message Board. If you want to read some excellent job search material, that thread is still there. Look for: “**Are you out of work—seeking a job?**” in the Discussions Forum.

Bill Knaus has written several books. His two most recent are *Fearless Job Hunting* and *End Procrastination Now*. If you buy these books, don’t forget to go through the Amazon.com gateway at the SMART Recovery® website. It’s on the dropdown menu under Bookstore.

We had our annual New Year’s Around the World party again this year.

We, meaning Hammer and I, started at 6:00 AM EST-US. We greeted the New Year starting in Kiribati and worked our way hour by hour through New Zealand, Russia, Australia, and all around the world. Many online members hosted an hour in the text or voice chat meeting room. At the appropriate time, someone would announce that it was the New Year in thus and such location. Bill Knaus even donated an hour to talk about his all time favorite subject, overcoming procrastination. (Note to self: send thank you note to Bill.)

The New Year’s Around the World party included a fundraising component that was highly successful. We raised over \$3,000.00! That included a very generous \$500.00 matching challenge from Bill A. (mabb).

Editor’s Note: Bill Knaus is one of the greats in Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy. His many books are worthwhile, readable, and up to date, and he was one of Ellis’s long-time friends and supporters.

Speaking Out & Being Heard are Two Different Things

by Mary Lou Cruz

I was a little surprised when Eric McDaniel, program assistant for Faces and Voices of Recovery (FaVoR), the national advocacy organization, asked me to speak at the community forum in Boca Raton, FL, on March 5. The event was to address “Barriers to Sustained Addiction Recovery.” I didn’t think I had anything to say about discriminatory policies and I’ve grown past the point of continuing to focus on other people’s negative attitudes. Then, he pointed out that they also needed people to speak about programs that have had a positive impact on their sustained recovery, so I thought: *I can do that.*

This was the third such event this year. Similar forums took place in Austin, Texas in January; and in Portland, Oregon in February. The mission was to gather information and feedback at the grassroots level to take back to Washington, DC, and prepare an arsenal of topics FaVoR can use to lobby on behalf of the needs of the recovery community at-large. Director of programs, Tom Hill, MSW, and McDaniel coordinated the events.

I had been receiving emails from FaVoR for years but this was my first time participating in person, so I was unsure what to expect. Seating in the Marriott ballroom was set up as a seminar but the function had the feel of a town-hall meeting format. Speakers were preselected from a list of volunteers who registered to attend the free event. The listening panel consisted of three people there to hear stories from local “experts” in the field to gain insight into specific issues that people in recovery face.

The following composed the listening panel: Peter Gaumont, MA, Director, Recovery Branch, White House Office of

National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP); Patricia Taylor, Executive Director, Faces & Voices of Recovery; and Mark P. Fontaine, MSW, Executive Director, Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

For three hours, about two dozen speakers from the community stood at the podium and related in their own words as best they could within the five-minute allotted time-span. Topics included everything from healthcare budget cuts; inadequate housing and homelessness; unemployment and employment challenges for felons; to re-entry programs from criminal justice; family reunification and education, plus the resistance often encountered when dealing with business and community leaders, elected officials, policy makers, and bureaucratic hypocrisy.

Several men related personal anecdotes of how after being clean and sober for decades and working in the recovery field successfully as certified counselors, recent changes in DCF (Department of Children & Families) policies caused them not only to lose their jobs but also made it nearly impossible to get work elsewhere. “Even though job applications only ask you if you have been convicted of a felony in the past 10 years,” one man said, “they now go back 15 or 20 years in your past and if there’s paper on you anywhere in the system, they fire you and tell you that you didn’t pass the background check.”

Other speakers addressed the issue of Florida’s onerous moniker “Painkiller Paradise” of the United States. Ken Pomerance, cofounder of InTheRooms.com, and others emphasized how the state now has more than 900 pain clinics and that Broward County alone has more pain clinics than McDonalds has restaurants. Another concern focused on Gov. Rick Scott’s proposal to repeal Florida’s prescription drug-tracking database system before it even gets started.

Yet, amid all the frustration over local policies and legislative practices, I felt impressed by all of the well-informed, articulate speakers on the myriad topics relating to recovery. My husband, Gilbert, director of Pathways to Freedom, a transitional living facility, spoke about the difficulties of dealing with local zoning regulations imposed on group homes and recovery houses even though such dwellings are by law protected under the Fair Housing and the Americans with Disabilities Acts.

When it came my turn at the podium, I got nervous and forgot to say half the things I had prepared in my notes. Therefore, I spoke from my heart and explained that while my recovery process began in a 12-step program, what really became my “Aha!” moment was when a sponsee invited me to a SMART Recovery® meeting for the first time. That day, another chapter of my recovery began. It began when I found yet another avenue to explore—one that resonated with my eagerness to learn more as I continue to grow and evolve as a uniquely aware individual who is making a conscious effort daily to live a happy, healthy life. I explained that the program not only has taught me how to become aware of my patterns, how to unravel my emotions, and how to manage my thoughts, but also how a simple formula like the ABCs applies to every area of my life. I said about SMART: “It didn’t tell me *what* to think, it taught me *how* to think!”

It was a little surreal hearing myself talk in front of almost 100 people from all walks of life who had come together to share their experiences and to suggest solutions. I felt truly humbled by the event, especially after hearing feedback from the listening panel. Gaumont commented that out of all of the forums,

he had not heard such specific issues stated so succinctly as he heard from this group in Florida. Moreover, all of the panel members stressed to the audience that if we do not know who our state and national representatives and senators are, we should find out. And after we find out who they are, we should contact them by phone or email and let them know, as constituents, how we feel and where we stand on these important issues.

The forum was sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and supported by several local organizations that made the event possible. Following a networking lunch, a few people approached me to find out more about SMART, saying they had never heard of it, so I gave them printed flyers I took with the website address and some basic information. I felt grateful for the opportunity to be heard and pleased that people were actually listening! *For more information on FaVoR, visit www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org*



President's Letter

Correcting Misstatements about SMART Recovery®

Misstatement #1: SMART Recovery® is a moderation organization.

Accurate statement: SMART Recovery® supports individuals who are abstaining, or considering abstinence.

Explanation: Like any support group, SMART Recovery® cannot control its participants, only its meeting discussions. Because our meetings have check-ins and check-outs, participants are free at these times to say what they actually think—and they often do! Many participants come to meetings hoping that they will be able to moderate rather than abstain. They may come firmly intending to use SMART Recovery® tools to moderate. Indeed the tools would have some value for that purpose. Surely, participants in other support groups also have a moderation goal, even if the meeting format discourages their speaking about it. Should we reject or remove such participants, or censure them if they share “wrong thoughts”? Our position has been that we control our discussions, and not even attempt to control our participants. If they are considering moderation, they are likely considering abstinence also. By observing and learning how to maintain abstinence, abstinence may not seem so difficult. If they end up moderating, it is not a problem for us.

We unconditionally accept people and their choices, even if they differ from SMART Recovery®. If they choose abstinence, they are well prepared to move forward with it.

Misstatement #2: SMART Recovery® facilitators are mental health professionals.

Accurate statement: A SMART Recovery® facilitator may be a mental health professional, but most are not.

Explanation: Because our non-professional facilitators are so effective, it is understandable that they are regularly mistaken for professionals! The training and ongoing support that SMART Recovery® provides to facilitators, combined with their diligence and talent, has

created an incredibly effective community of about 700 volunteers. However, unless a volunteer is also a licensed behavioral health professional, that volunteer should not be held to professional standards. Recently an organization was willing to host a SMART Recovery® meeting, but insisted that the facilitator would need to be “credentialed.” Credentialing is the process of collecting and reviewing a prospective staff member’s professional qualifications, including their education, training, licenses, and certifications. If you have ever been operated on by a surgeon at a hospital, that surgeon was credentialed (or “obtained privileges”) at that hospital before being allowed to operate there. I asked whether the organization credentialed the leaders of other support group meetings. I have yet to hear the answer (but of course they do not).

As to professionals who volunteer as facilitators, they have exactly the same status in SMART Recovery® as any other volunteers and they follow exactly the same format as any other volunteers. That much said, we’re delighted that their additional expertise is available to assist individuals seeking self-empowering recovery.

Misstatement #3: SMART Recovery® is anti-AA.

Accurate statement: SMART Recovery® has discernible, important differences from AA. By its very existence, SMART Recovery® provides and supports choice in recovery, including AA for individuals who choose to attend it.

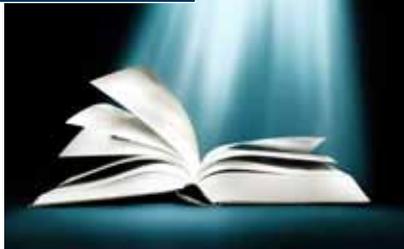
Explanation: SMART Recovery® recognizes that there are many approaches to recovery. We support the choices individuals in recovery freely make about how to pursue recovery. Although on occasion a meeting participant may make nega-

tive comments about AA, it is the facilitator's responsibility to re-direct the discussion toward how SMART Recovery® can help this individual. Unfortunately, some AA members do not maintain the organization's traditions about respecting other approaches to recovery ("upon therapy for the alcoholic, we surely have no monopoly"), having no opinions on outside issues (Tradition #10), and maintaining anonymity as the spiritual foundation of all their traditions (Tradition #12).

Also unfortunate is the fact that, despite decisions in five federal circuit courts of appeal, correctional systems throughout the country continue to require that individuals attend 12 step groups or treatment specifically, rather than requiring support group or treatment attendance of the individual's choice. It is crucial that SMART Recovery® continue to offer itself as an option, but not assert that only our approach can be successful.

Tom Howath

Book Review



Stay tuned for a review of Dr. Albert Ellis' Autobiography in the summer issue.



International Development

SMART Recovery Australia®

by Jim Villamor

Greetings from Australia! We at SMART AU hope that the start of 2011 has been a good one. On this side of the world, we are enjoying the summer months and taking advantage of some down time to relax, reflect, and plan for the coming months ahead.

Josette and Jim are already booking facilitator training dates for Brisbane, Melbourne, and Perth. The interest in SMART Recovery® continues to grow, and we continue to focus on facilitator trainings and in-services to organisations across the country to teach the key principles of the SMART Recovery® program. This promotes SMART Recovery® and allows us to discuss options for future opportunities for using it.

Josette traveled to Orange, NSW, at the beginning of March to conduct further facilitation training in that region for new and current SMART facilitators. Later in March, she attended a Doctors Convention in Melbourne to network with physicians on referral options for SMART and to provide information and training options.

The monthly in-house facilitator trainings are booked until May. We have found "on-site" trainings have been quite popular and plan to continue them on the first Friday of every month throughout 2011.

Juvenile Justice will begin training on SMART Recovery® in May, and it plans to roll out Teen/Youth SMART in their centres over the coming months. This partnership will allow further exposure and expansion of SMART Recovery® in NSW.

The Be SMART Family and Carer's Program began an eight-week session in March. Currently the Departments of Corrective Services and Juvenile Justice are interested in introducing the program for the family and carers of detainees who had a drug or alcohol related offence.

SMART Recovery UK® Update

by Richard Phillips and Carol Hammond

SMART Recovery® continues to make gains in the UK. The momentum built up over the last year has increased because of a new government drugs strategy that puts more emphasis on "Recovery." This is nudging treatment providers to work more closely with mutual aid organizations, and because most treatment in the UK is not 12 step, SMART Recovery® is well placed. We still think our excitement at the possibility of dramatic growth here is rational, though of course things take longer than we expected and the lack of money has been a real problem (though we hope that we have now turned the corner on that issue).

Our new online training package went live in December and since then we have had over 300 applications, with 220 of them now enrolled on the course. This is self-directed learning and some people are moving only slowly through the material. However, 40 have now completed the first half of and 10 the whole course. The feedback has been very positive.

We now have 66 meetings, which is three times the picture a year ago. The target we have set for ourselves is to double every six months, with higher

standards of facilitator training and support than has ever been available in the UK.

We are still running a successful online meeting once per week and recently introduced informal “getting to know each other” sessions on the Chat system.

Another new meeting using Chat is our monthly “peer supervision” meetings. These are for facilitators to share problems and find solutions to challenges that arise in their meetings. We run these using the SMART Recovery® meeting structure and methods; the only difference is that the focus is on how to run meetings rather than on how to attain abstinence.

The next few months will be very exciting for SMART Recovery® in the UK. We are incredibly grateful for all the support we have received from the US over the last year to help us get this far—tip of the hat to Shari Allwood and Joe Gerstein in particular.

SMART Recovery Alberta® Update

by Curtis Boudreau, President – SMART Recovery Alberta®

Hello from Alberta!

Wonderful things are going on in Alberta! I talked to Tim up in Edmonton, and he let me know things are going great. I wish him continued success in growing SMART Recovery® in his city, and bringing SMART Recovery® to Central Alberta.

Here in Calgary we continue to grow at a feverish pace. About a month ago, we had just an incredible week for attendance. Monday had 31 people and Wednesday had 34 people. What was amazing was the fact that 20 of the attendees were first timers! I guess all of the work that I am doing to get the word out about SMART is paying off! We probably average around 20 people at our

Mon/Wed meetings, with the low at around 14 people, and the maximum about 35. The Saturday meeting is thriving, with about 20 people attending the meeting, most of whom are longer-term members of SMART Recovery® who continue to support us.

Six years ago I had a dream that SMART Recovery® would have an office in Western Canada, and I could do what I do for a living. As some might know, I was severely injured in a car accident back in 1995, with a broken neck and a brain injury. I was never supposed to work again, let alone have the ability to be an entrepreneur, which was my life-long dream. What is amazing is that I have cleared medicals and got the thumbs-up to be my own boss, and my caseworker with North Dakota WSI has finally approved SMART Recovery® as a valid, long-term career path! I get to do what I do for a living, and the office is in my home.

What’s next for SMART Recovery Alberta®?

Wonderful news is that a member of SMART Recovery® is a lawyer, and has stepped up to help me incorporate SMART Recovery® in Alberta. I will also obtain a charitable donation number so I can start knocking on doors for funding from the private and public sectors. This is not a long, drawn-out process as it is in the US. It seems straightforward, and I can hope to have this completed in calendar 2011.

Some have said the highest aspiration of the human heart is to be of service, and to help others. Well, today I can honestly say that I’m “living the dream”!

Stay tuned for more awesome news from up here in Alberta, Canada.

SMART Recovery® in the Republic of South Africa

by Mohamed Majid



I am very pleased with the progress in South Africa. We are in our 17th week after kicking off this programme and we have about 35 people who are attending. The figure grows each week, so I think this is positive. From the figure above, we have about eight people using the SMART Recovery® program, and the rest are people and parents that are supporting the eight. We run the programme weekly on a Tuesday night in Vereeniging.



Dr. Joe Gerstein, Founding President of SMART Recovery®, was the guest speaker at the November 2010 gatherings, which included a session for Health Professionals, Support Groups, and Rehab Facilities; a second session was with Teachers and the Department of Education; and a third session was for the general public.

On Saturday evening we have been asked by one of our participants to address “affected” people and parents in Heidelberg.

I have also addressed the patients at the Crescent Of Hope Rehab in Magaliesburg. Rafiq Mayet runs this clinic and Joe Gerstein met with him during his recent visit to South Africa. We are encouraging them to use the programme and hopefully we will meet with Social Workers who attend our sessions and have smaller group sessions with their patients shortly.

I also have visited and gave a talk at Enochs Walk and left some SMART reading material with them. I look forward to keeping readers posted with events as they unfold!



From Beyond the Walls

Coming Home SMART

by Barry A. Grant

If there is one thing I learn from working with those who are getting ready to reenter society, especially after incarceration and treatment, it is how

important it is to them to want to “fix” things right away with and for those they hurt. Perhaps they see this as a means of self-redemption or even a way to get back to the good life they left long ago. Working with the men, I often mention to them that it is unlikely that you can put an “S” on your chest, say “baby I’m back,” and everything is going to be all right. The person you left has changed, and in the past, you probably were not even emotionally present.

Furthermore, in all probability you did not know who you were—so how can you expect someone else to know?

What’s done is done. What’s been said is said. We cannot undo the mistakes of yesterday. And occasionally they create the barriers blocking us today. However, we can make sure that our behavior today does not contribute to unnecessary problems for tomorrow. This is where being a keen observer of an Activating Event comes into play. A self-defeating, negative attitude towards other people and towards life’s circumstances has a way of becoming habitual. Fortunately, a constructive attitude does as well. The choice rests with us to respond in ways congruent with our preferred attitudes.

How much easier most situations would probably be when we approach them with respect, hope, and genuine interest. Likewise, the trivial matter can become a major catastrophe when we struggle unnecessarily and with a carping ego. Overall, we make the world we find, at home, at work, and

at play. When we attempt to “fix” things over which we have no control, this is a major component in addictive behaviors and a cognitive distortion. The doomed effort to control others produces the distorted perception of losing control of them, but in truth it is control of oneself being lost. And once again, a “quick fix” is sought.

Past cruelties can remain powerful in our lives if we let them. To take personal possession of one’s history means to free oneself from the bondage to past events. Nothing can ever change them. If we are to make the future good, we will learn what the past can teach us and see it as a frame of reference and not a place to stay. Genuine freedom requires us to make choices based upon the needs of the present and not the past, while allowing others their due process, too.

Positively Speaking: When we discover pleasure in each other’s company, we kindle a spark of joy that illuminates far more than the moment.

Quote of the Month

“SMART Recovery®
didn’t tell me *what*
to think, it taught me
how to think!”

SMART Recovery® relies on volunteer labor and donations. Please be generous with your time and money!

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