



President's Letter

What we can learn from the Big Book

Alcoholics Anonymous, the book (usually referred to as “the Big Book”), is the primary document of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), the organization. Originally written in the late 1930’s, the Big Book suggested many ideas about addictive behavior that research and/or clinical experience has subsequently supported. In this column I will review some of these ideas. You may discover that SMART Recovery® and AA have more in common than you had realized.

The Big Book is now in its 4th edition, but the first 164 pages have remained unchanged since the original edition. What changes edition to edition are the recovery stories that make up the bulk of the book. I’ll

start with ideas from the first 164 pages, then focus on the remainder of the book and the organization itself.

As noted throughout the text, there are alcohol problems that are less than the problems of the “real alcoholic.” These problems might benefit from an abstinence or moderation approach: “Moderate drinkers have little trouble in giving up liquor entirely if they have a good reason for it. They can take it or leave it alone. Then we have a certain type of hard drinker...this man can also stop or moderate, although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention” (pp. 20-21).

In Chapter 8, “To Wives,” and throughout the book, it is suggested that people want to try moderation before abstinence, and that it’s best not to push them into a premature abstinence decision. Better to let them make this decision on their own, in their own time: “Patience and good temper are most necessary. Our next thought is that you should never tell him what he must do about his drinking” (p. 111). “Drinkers like to help other drinkers. Your husband may be willing to talk to one of them...If you act upon these

principles, your husband may stop or moderate” (p. 112).

Our own thoughts about an individual’s problems are not very important, as compared with the individual’s thoughts: “We do not like to pronounce any individual an alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself” (p. 31). This idea is consistent with the principles of motivational interviewing.

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The SMART Recovery® 4-Point ProgramSM

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

Our efforts are based on scientific knowledge and evolve as scientific knowledge evolves.

The program offers specific tools and techniques for each of the program points:

- Point #1:** Enhancing and maintaining motivation to abstain
- Point #2:** Coping with urges
- Point #3:** Managing thoughts, feelings and behavior (problem-solving)
- Point #4:** Balancing momentary and enduring satisfactions (lifestyle balance)

Efforts at cooperation with “the alcoholic” are encouraged, and confrontation discouraged. In Chapter 7, “Working with Others,” it states that “if he does not want to stop drinking, don’t waste your time trying to persuade him. You may spoil a later opportunity...if he does not want to see you, never force yourself upon him” (p. 90). “Be careful not to brand him as an alcoholic. Let him draw his own conclusion” (p. 92). “Make it clear that he is not under pressure, that he needn’t see you again if he doesn’t want to. You should not be offended if he wants to call it off” (p. 94). Research suggests that confrontation with the drinker often does more harm than good.

As to AA (or any approach) being the only way to recover, the Foreword to the 2nd edition states that “upon therapy for the alcoholic himself, we surely have no monopoly” (p. xxi). On page 95 it states that “if he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience. We have no monopoly on God; we merely have an approach that worked with us.” On page 164 it states that “our book is meant to be suggestive. We realize we know only a little.”

There is recognition of progress over time: “Assuming we are spiritually fit, we can do all sorts of things alcoholics are not supposed to do. People have said we must not go where liquor is served; we must not have it in our homes; we must shun friends who drink; we must avoid moving pictures which show drinking scenes; we must not go into bars; our friends must hide their bottles if we go to their houses; we mustn’t think or be reminded about alcohol at all. Our experience shows that this is not necessarily so. We meet these conditions every day” (pp. 100-101).

A diverse set of recovery stories begins on page 165. I interpret the presence of these stories as indicating AA’s implicit recogni-

tion of the diversity of alcohol problems, and, given the updating of these stories edition to edition, how the changing nature of current culture also can have an impact on drinking and its consequences. As a psychopharmacologist would emphasize, a substance experience is based not only on the substance itself, but also the (mind) set of the individual consuming it, and the setting in which the experience is occurring: Not just substance, but also set and setting. Is a particular substance experience bad? It depends. All substance experiences have their risks, but also their benefits. Of course, the recovery stories in the Big Book are those in which the benefits of alcohol use are far outweighed by the costs, but even to recognize that the individuality of each cost-benefit analysis helps us to stay aware from generalizations that could do more harm than good.

AA requests that those investigating it keep an open mind. Appendix II (of the 3rd edition, p. 570) ends with a quotation from Herbert Spencer: “There is a principle which is a bar against all information, which is proof against all arguments and which cannot fail to keep a man in everlasting ignorance—that principle is contempt prior to investigation.” Surely every approach to recovery would appreciate a similar stance by anyone investigating it.

AA has been the most successful support group ever. Its enormous success has had the unintended consequence of making it difficult for new approaches such as SMART Recovery® to emerge. Consequently at times we may have adopted a confrontive stance toward AA and other 12-step organizations. This confrontive stance is merited if we and other alternatives are not granted a right to exist. However, assuming the recognition of this right, and a willingness by professionals and 12-step members to inform those seeking recovery about ALL support groups (not just

the 12-step ones), then in fact SMART Recovery® has a number of similarities with AA, as described in the Big Book. Recognition of these similarities may help us build bridges more easily to the AA community.

Editor’s Note: Great column! Many of the original writings of Bill W. and others in AA express PREFERENCES. Disease Theory-Minnesota Model-based treatment turned those preferences into MUSTS.

Tom Howath



SMART Recovery® Online Community (SOL) Update

by Don S., Chairman, Internet Committee

SMART Recovery® Online continues to expand! Since the last issue of the *News & Views*, the online community has added two new meetings in LivVe. They are on Mondays 5:00 p.m. EDT and Fridays at 8:00 p.m. EDT, for a total of 18 weekly online meetings! And, there are now over 4,200 registered Message Board participants. We encourage you to join us online – meetings and the message board are just a click away via the website at www.smartrecovery.org. We look forward to seeing you there!

Published by the Alcohol & Drug Abuse Self-Help Network, Inc. D.B.A. SMART Recovery®

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Join us for the 2005 SMART Recovery® Training Program!

Have you registered to attend the Fall Training Program? If not, don't delay, as we're looking forward to the largest ever gathering of volunteers and locals! The grid below outlines the various programs being offered this year. We look forward to seeing you in Chicago at the Wyndham O'Hare Hotel!

Workshop on Promoting Self-Change Through Motivational Interviewing

Friday, October 21st

Friday, October 21

8:00 – 9:00 Registration & Continental Breakfast

9:00 – 4:30 Program

12:00 – 1:00 Lunch

Presented by Dr. Linda Sobell

Audience: Health care providers who deal with difficult and unmotivated clients

CE Credits: 6

Price: \$99

NOTE: Limited to 60 participants

Networking Reception

Friday, October 21st

Friday, October 21

7:30 – 9:30 p.m.

Please join us for a welcoming night of magic with local comedy magician and "SMARTie" *Jeffery the Great*.



Price: Free to all. (Snacks and sodas will be served.)

SMART Recovery® Training Program

Sat., Oct. 22nd, 7:30–5:00

AND

Sun. Oct. 23rd, 8 – 12:15

Saturday, Oct. 22 – Day 1

7:30 – 8:30 Registration & Continental Breakfast

8:30 – 5:00 Program

12:00 – 1:15 Lunch (Featuring an update on SMART Recovery® on-line activities)

Presented by SMART Recovery® Board Members

Sunday, Oct. 23 – Day 2

8:00 – 9:00 Continental Breakfast

9:00 – 12:15 Program

Presented by Dr. Emmett Velten and Jonathan von Breton

Audience: New facilitators, individuals wishing to start a meeting, persons wishing to learn more about the program

CE Credits: 10 (attendance required both days for CE credits)

Price: \$99 (Free to SMART Recovery® Facilitators & Advisors)

SMART Recovery® Facilitation Therapy Training

Saturday, October 22nd 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
(Sunday Program Optional & Free)

Saturday, Oct. 22 – Day 1

7:30–8:30 Registration & Continental Breakfast

8:30 – 5:00 Program

12:00 – 1:15 Lunch

(Featuring an update on SMART Recovery® on-line activities)

Sunday, Oct. 23 - Optional FREE program

8:00 – 9:00 Continental Breakfast

9:00 – 12:15 Program

Presented by Dr. Michler Bishop, and Fraser Ross on Saturday; Dr. Emmett Velten and Jonathan von Breton on Sunday.

Audience: Licensed or certified health professionals, or interns

CE Credits: 7

Price: \$99 (Free to SMART Recovery® Facilitators & Advisors who are licensed or certified health professionals)

Repeat Training Program Participants

Saturday, October 22nd 7:30 a.m. – 5:00 pm.

Saturday, Oct. 22

7:30 – 8:30 Registration & Continental Breakfast

8:30 – 5:00 Program

12:00 – 1:15 Lunch (Featuring an update on SMART Recovery® on-line activities)

Presented by Dr. Tom Horvath and Dr. Richard Bozian

Audience: Repeat training participants

Price: Free to Repeat Training Program SMART Recovery® Facilitators & Advisors

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Research Notes

by Don Phillips

I'm devoting this column to women and alcohol. Several studies have come out recently that address gender differences and women haven't fared well. From NATTC Eye on the Field - June:

Neuroimaging Confirms the Greater Vulnerability of Women's Brains to Alcohol

Women appear to be more vulnerable to chronic drinking than men are. New research uses computed tomography to examine alcohol's effects on the brains of alcoholic men and women. Results show that women develop alcohol-related brain damage more readily than men.

Women appear to be more vulnerable to chronic drinking than men are. Yet few studies have looked at gender differences in alcohol's effects on the brain. A study in the May issue of *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research* addresses this gap in research, using computed tomography (CT) to examine brain atrophy in the brains of alcoholic men and women. The findings support and build upon a prior hypothesis that women develop alcohol-related brain damage more readily than men.

For the balance of the article go to: <http://www.nattc.org/asmc/details.asp?ID=0506a>

Drinking May Hurt Liver of Female Drinker More (From Join Together - 5-20-05)

Female drinkers may suffer more liver damage than men because they metabolize alcohol differently, animal studies suggest.

HealthDay News reported May 18 that researcher Patricia Eagon of the Pittsburgh School of Medicine and Pittsburgh Veterans Affairs Medical Center found that female rats given alcohol and a high-fat diet suffered far greater liver damage, as well as other problems,

than male rats given the same dose of alcohol and diet. The rats were divided into alcohol and no-alcohol groups, with some fed a low-fat diet and others fed a high-fat diet.

While animal studies do not automatically translate to humans, Eagon said, "Our research suggests that women should be cautious about the amount of alcohol they consume, since they're highly susceptible to more severe liver injury than men, and thus to potentially serious complications."

For the complete *HealthDay News* article go to: <http://www.forbes.com/lifestyle/health/feeds/hscout/2005/05/18/hscout525777.html>

Neurogenesis and the Brain

Submitted by Don Phillips

Excerpts from a press release from the National Institute on Mental Health, dated February 2, 2005, titled "New Neurons Born in Adult Rat Cortex." Complete press release at: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/press/prcor-texneurogenesis.cfm>

When I began to learn about alcohol and what I'd been doing to myself all those years, one of the first things I heard was that alcohol destroyed brain cells and brain cells didn't reproduce. We know more about the brain these days and the news is far more encouraging. Let me quote from a write-up describing some recent research.

NIMH's Drs. Heather Cameron, Alexandre Dayer, and colleagues, report on their findings in the January 31, 2005 *Journal of Cell Biology*:

"Recent evidence suggesting that antidepressants may act by triggering the birth of new neurons in the adult hippocampus, the brain's memory hub, has heightened interest in such adult neurogenesis and raised the question: Could new neurons also be sprouting up in the parts of the adult brain involved in the thinking and mood disturbances of depression and anxiety?"

"Now, scientists at the National Institute of Health's (NIH) National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) have found newly born neurons that communicate via the chemical messenger GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid) in adult rat cortex, seat of higher order "executive" functions, and in the striatum, site of habits, reward and motor skill learning. In the cortex, the new neurons appear to arise from previously unknown precursor cells native to the area, rather than from cells migrating in from another area.

"Their discovery adds to the scientific debate over adult neurogenesis, which has potential implications for understanding a variety of brain disorders, possibly including Alzheimer's and schizophrenia. While most researchers agree that new neurons are generated in the adult hippocampus and olfactory bulb, the existence of adult neurogenesis in other brain regions remains controversial."

I ran the press release past Dick Bozian, MD, and member of the SMART Recovery® Board of Directors, and he thought it touched on some very significant things. Quoting Dick:

"There is no question that there can be neurogenesis in adult central nervous system cells. It had been believed that it was possible only in newborns but that has been refuted. There has been evidence for a long time about the correction of damage to neural cells in the brain in children and adults. With time and particularly with practice, adjacent normal cells can set up connections and restore function to a significant degree—not necessarily 100%. One can see this in stroke patients as they recover from the insult of cerebral infarction. In addition to the neighboring cells taking over function, now one can assume that new cells may be developing and contributing to the return of function. The role of neighboring cells migrating and assuming new function has been well established for years at the University of Chicago. The only discouraging part of that

has been that the neuronal cells seem to “wear out” prematurely with age. This appears to be the case with polio where a syndrome of weakness appears many years later.

“This information is encouraging and should give hope to people who have damaged their brain cells over years of abuse. There can be regeneration and regain of function even though there has been organic damage. The ‘practice, practice, practice’ mantra of REBT’s rational thinking may help restore ‘executive functioning’ in a damaged brain.”

Dick Bozian

I’m feeling better already.

Don Phillips

The Second UK/European Symposium on Addictive Disorders Conference (UKSAD)

by Fraser Ross

Member, SMART Recovery® Board of Directors

I brought the UKSAD event to the notice of SMART Recovery® board of directors.

They asked me to attend and set up a table on behalf of SMART Recovery®, which I agreed to do. I felt that this would be a good event to get out the word about SMART Recovery® to the UK and Europe.

The conference was to take place from the Thursday through Saturday, May 19-21, 2005. The week leading up to the conference I was working late and wondering why I had volunteered to take a vacation and go away to a conference. My journey began the day before with a flight from Inverness to London Gatwick. On arrival, I had to find a train to London Waterloo Station to try to find the hotel. In my haste, I had forgotten to take the directions with me. Oops. To make my journey even more difficult, I made the decision to take my laptop and all the SMART Recovery® recommended reading

materials, videos, etc., along with my luggage to save carriage costs. Jodi had mailed a package with more paperwork from Central Office to the house outside London where I was staying. I made my second good decision—the first was agreeing to go but I had not realized that yet—to get off the train at the station before Waterloo. I correctly remembered that the hotel appeared to be closer to this station. I was enjoying a pleasurable amble along the south bank of the River Thames, dragging all my baggage with me, when I asked someone for directions. To my luck and amazement, the hotel was one block away from where I had detrained. I went up to the exhibition room to find that the space allocated to us was in a corner with no tables or anything. Because the conference organizers were 12-steppers, I assumed this was no accident. I quickly sprung into action, and without asking I borrowed a couple of tables and covered them with a tablecloth. I left the materials that I had been carrying in a box under the table safe in



Dr. Carlo DiClemente, Member of the SMART Recovery® International Advisory Council (left) with Fraser Ross, Member, SMART Recovery® Board of Directors

the thought that 12-steppers would not be seen dead stealing them! To add to my pleasure, I became a London commuter and then travelled out to Bracknell to stay with friends on a packed train. I was so tired I would have slept in a razor wire bed, and I

was not looking forward to getting up at six in the morning to rejoin the commuters.

Day one of the conference got off to a good start with several folk asking questions and information. I had set up a rolling presentation on the laptop explaining about SMART Recovery® and even played Albert Ellis’s birthday message several times. The highlight of the day was Dr. Carlo DiClemente, who is a member of our International Advisory Council, going out of his way to find me, introduce himself, and offer support. This turned quite a few heads in the room and gave credibility to our organization. I have thanked Dr. DiClemente for this genuine gesture and updated him on the outcome of the conference. I discovered on day one that having the laptop was a burden. I did not trust leaving it unattended on the table. The main reason is after sixteen years working in a prison you come to expect the worst and take precautions. I spent most of the first day waiting for people to

approach me. The funniest moment was when a gentleman, obviously a stepper, picked up the “Addiction is a Choice” book and read the back cover. He dropped it in horror and ran away. I thought oh oh there may be trouble ahead. He returned with five mates to show them the back cover, saying to them, “Do you believe that rubbish about it being a choice?” I said to him, “Excuse me sir are you interested in our program?” To which he replied, “No, I would choose to recover using AA

before your program.” I quickly replied, “So it is a choice!” All his friends saw the funny side and he just went away wondering whether it was a choice. He did not come back after reflection to raise another issue with me; so perhaps he has more insight. On the way home with my new commuter

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friends who only talk to cell phones, I decided to change my tack.

On the second day of the conference, I confirmed my approach with the commuters on the train ignoring me using their cell phones. Judging from their conversations, loud enough to be heard several cars away, I think I had enough material for twenty-five consecutive meetings. I quickly abandoned the idea of offering a SMART Recovery® meeting on the way home with them. The plan was to leave my precious laptop and go out and about to promote SMART Recovery®. This worked well, and I was able to explain what we were about and who we were. Little did I know that the previous day some people had thought we were a local organization called SMART Recovery®, which offers treatment for addictions.

The biggest break came when one of the online members, known to all as Afrita, offered to help. She was a *godasweunderstandHimsend*, and she came along on the Friday afternoon; we competed to see who was the most enthusiastic about SMART Recovery®. At the same time I met Chahid Fourali, and we got together to discuss how to roll out SMART Recovery® in the UK and Europe. Chahid is the head of marketing and sales standard setting, and he works for an organization just outside London. He also has a diploma in psychology and was a student of Windy Dryden's, the foremost proponent of REBT other than Ellis himself, and author or editor of almost eighty books. Chahid had taken a course in REBT. At last I had in place the contacts and a team to take forward SMART Recovery® in the UK and across Europe. Until now, we had been

some groups struggling in isolation and doing the best they could. Another excellent contact was Professor David Clark, an eminent researcher and practitioner of cognitive behavioral therapy, from an organization called Wired, whose motto is "empowering people." The website address for those interested is www.wiredinitiative.com. David has a huge distribution network for his Daily Dose email and Drink and Drug news magazine. I believe he distributes to more than thirty thousand contacts across Europe. David loves SMART Recovery® and wants to work with us to use his organization to raise the profile of SMART Recovery®. Afrita saw how tired I was and offered to staff the table for me on the Saturday. I gratefully accepted this offer, and left it in capable hands. On the third day of the conference, she built on our contacts and passed their details on to me, including two women from Ayrshire in Scotland, Lisa and Ann Marie.

If you had asked me on the Wednesday if I thought the trip was going to be worth it, self-doubt would have riddled me. Ask me now! I believe it resulted in one of the biggest opportunities to coordinate and support a network of SMART Recovery® groups in Europe. I would like to thank the people I met at the confer-

ence for their support, enthusiasm, and offers of help. Afrita even has ideas about how we can presence at next year's conference!

My initial email to the board has resulted in my being asked to work with Shari to set up a training event in London, for all the members who cannot afford to travel across the Atlantic. People are excited and enthusiastic that we can do even more for SMART Recovery®. I am confident, as always, that this will be a huge success for SMART Recovery® and the start of something big.

UK Government Commissioned Review Highlights the Importance of Alternative Programs

With Duncan Raistrick and Christine Godfrey, I have just completed a review of the effectiveness of treatment for alcohol problems commissioned by the UK government. One of the conclusions of this review was that the availability of mutual-aid groups was an essential part of the effort to reduce alcohol-related harm but that AA needs to be supplemented by non-12-Step groups if all those suffering from alcohol problems are to be offered appro-

SMART Recovery® Program Tools & Techniques

The SMART Recovery® 4-Point ProgramSM 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 (**D**estructive **I**mages **S**elf-talk **A**wareness and **R**efusal **M**ethod)
- 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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priate and acceptable help. Since CBT approaches to treatment are the best supported in the research evidence-base, SMART Recovery® (in combination with MM for those problem drinkers suited to a moderation goal) should be increased in profile in the UK. Following a sabbatical visit here by Keith Humphreys, we are exploring the possibility of obtaining a research grant to look at ways in which SMART Recovery® and MM can be better established in the UK.

Nick Heather PhD
Emeritus Professor of Alcohol & Other Drug Studies
Northumbria University
Member, SMART Recovery® International Advisory Council

SMART Ideas



“I Am Not A Banana”

by Hank Robb, PhD, ABPP

Make yourself have this thought, “I am a banana.” My guess is you weren’t BELIEVING that thought. This is a good exercise for seeing the difference between “thoughts” and “beliefs.” We can have lots of thoughts such as, “I MUST have my favorite food and if I don’t it’s AWFUL and I CAN’T STAND it,” and still not BELIEVE those thoughts just as you can have the thought, “I am a banana” and not BELIEVE it either.

However, on closer look, there is something else going on here that you might not have noticed. My guess is that the way you went about not believing “I am a banana” was to compare yourself to a yellow, elliptical fruit and

then take notice of the fact that YOU are not the same as a yellow, elliptical fruit. Yet, no yellow, elliptical fruit was ever actually present for you to make your comparison. What was present was a bunch of letters on a page. Certainly, YOU are not a bunch of letters on a page either. The point I want to make clear is that instead of noticing what was actually “there,” namely a bunch of letters on a page, what was “there” served to bring up a picture of a yellow, elliptical fruit. And, it did so with such swiftness that you never even noticed that the letters that make up the word “banana” were just a bunch of letters.

Words often have this “bringing up” function. So, the words “tall glass of cold beer” may suddenly make pictures and sensations show up inside of us. We hardly notice that no tall glass of cold beer is any place to be found. All that is really present is a bunch of words to which we respond with a bunch of pictures and sensations.

Now it is true that pictures and sensations are only that, a bunch of pictures and sensations. They don’t control our hands, arms, feet, and mouth. However, it is also true that the words “tall glass of cold beer” are JUST A BUNCH OF WORDS. And, just a bunch of words can’t control our hands, arms, feet, and mouth either. If we said those words to someone who spoke only Japanese, they would be nothing more than just a bunch of sounds that didn’t “mean” anything. In other words, no pictures or sensations would show up when the person heard those sounds. Because those words “mean something” to us, we easily get lost in the sensations and pictures which show up when we see or hear such words and forget what is right in front of us—namely JUST A BUNCH OF WORDS.

SMART Recovery® participants can make use of this information and practice noticing words for what they are rather than what they seem to be. “You really need a drink.” Well, of course you don’t really NEED a drink,” though you might actually want one. However, on top of that, “You really need a drink” is just a bunch of words. Repeat the words several times concentrating carefully on the sounds coming

out of your mouth and you may really begin to notice that “You really need a drink” is, in fact, nothing more than just a bunch of words.

The more we practice hearing words as only what they are – just words – the more we can choose to act on them or not. Then we may be better able to use words for our own purposes instead of being used by them.

People Power



10 Things

as posted to the SMART Recovery® Message Board

This original post appeared on the Message Board and was posted by a Message Board volunteer:

I have been thinking. I have trouble with Unconditional Self Acceptance (USA) and I think I am not the only one. I am hoping that you all, and maybe others, will contribute to this thread. Here is my list of ten things I like about me, for you all, but mostly for myself.

1. I have a huge capacity to love
2. I am intelligent
3. I write well
4. I laugh with abandon
5. I am generous
6. I am creative
7. I am determined
8. I appreciate beauty of all kinds
9. I am brave
10. I believe in the possibility of change and growth.

Subsequent reply posts from other Message Board participants:

You missed something!

11. I am excellent at helping people in trouble.
12. I am always polite
13. I am a good temp
14. I have a great sense of humor
15. I am not a quitter
16. I am an asset to Smart Recovery®

Then...

17. I don't require others to laugh at my jokes or to be amused (haaa...).

(Another reply consisted of a volunteer referring to the thoughtfulness of the original poster who sent her a birthday package comprised of a variety of hand-made items, and notes: "It is priceless. Not priceless funny, but priceless because it is from my loving and creative friend.")

And another continued...

18. I am compassionate, accepting and forgiving of all the qualities it takes to be human.

Followed by:

19. I'm honest and strive to be authentic always.
20. I'm affectionate.
21. I like to laugh and not take myself too seriously.
22. I make a mean red beans and rice.
23. I work hard at things I take on.
24. I'm generous with money; not very materialistic.
25. I play when kids do.
26. I value diversity in people's thoughts, beliefs and experiences.
27. I am sober.
28. I am going to be sober tomorrow.

Followed by:

29. My brownies rock
30. I have been accepted by Bermas, despite not having an afro.
31. I am a highly skilled ninja.
32. No one posts links as fast as I do.

33. I have an amazing collection of books.
34. I have started a new trend in STOP THOUGHT!

Followed by:

35. I am observant, so I remember when people have something to celebrate

Then by:

36. I post awesome pictures to celebrate successes - like the Good witch of the East from Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz.
37. Helpful to me in private chats when I need a question answered.
38. Helped me understand what happened to a friend who had a tough experience in Smart.
39. Makes me laugh with the ninja and eye lips eye icons in parachat.
40. Seems to be one interesting character with a sense of independence I admire.
41. Never appears "smulchy" in your posts.
42. Quickly says hello to people who arrive to parachat late.
43. Offers answers to questions or comments in parachat when a person poses a question and it is not answered quickly.
44. Observant and responsive to the needs of others in parachat.

Then by:

45. I am very caring and I make people feel good about themselves

Then by:

46. I (you) have a deep passion for the things that I do and for the people around me
47. I go out of my way to make people feel welcome and a part of things.

Then by:

48. Loyal
49. Empathic
50. Forgiving

And then, the person placing the original post shares: "Thank you all for being so lovely to me. Now, doesn't one more person have ten nice things to say about himself or herself?"

How about you?

Member Story

In April, SMART Recovery® hosted an essay contest, asking participants to share their experiences with the program. Melissa, the Essay Contest winner wrote:

When I heard the knock on the door, I had no idea my life was about to change.

"You're the worst of all of them. You're the mother, you should know better."

That's what the detective who came to my house that day said to me. I can still see him standing in front of me, judging me. As I sat on my couch, the other detectives searched through my house and found pipes, dope and forged documents. I was in utter shock and denial. My little girl was clueless as to what was going on, but she felt something was up. My oldest was at school and to this day I am grateful for that.

I lost my home, my kids, my job, my friends, and basically my life to that drug. It had reached inside and taken over, and I had allowed that to happen. I mean, I've used some substance or another since I was about 15, unless you count the things my mom gave to me when I was younger. I suppose you could say that the only way I knew how to cope with anything was by taking one mind altering substance or another.

Needless to say, I found myself at a place that I'd never been before. The only way I knew how to cope was to use the skills that had gotten me in that predicament in the first place. It was obvious by the previous fifteen years of drug use that I had no clue on how to cope with my environment in a manner that did not include some form of mind altering substance or maladaptive behavior. I'm telling you this because I want you to have a good idea as to where I was when I first found SMART Recovery®.

I found the SOL community by doing an Internet search, and I decided to try it out

because it made sense to me. There was this huge emphasis on self-empowerment, and for myself, the thought of not having control over my behaviors seemed hopeless. I figured that if I had gotten myself into this mess, then I best learn how to get myself out.

I began to attend meetings and post on the message board, and the replies that I received were encouraging and heartfelt. I made myself a home on the boards those first few months, and let out every thought that crossed my mind. I have no doubt that had it not been for the amount of time I spent posting and in the chat room, I would have slipped far more times than I did those first few months. With each slip came a new recognition, and with each of my recognitions came a newfound strength. For each step back I took two steps forward. I learned the tools and how to apply them, and with some trial and error I began to really get it.

In the meantime, I was doing everything that was asked of me to get my kids back. There was a few times when I became upset with the situation I was in, as though I had not caused it or it should not be happening to me. Again I found the tools to be my foundation for changing those beliefs. My family could see the difference, as I did not react to them as they were accustomed to. The girls began to show an improvement, not only in their behavior, but also in their appearance as I learned how to balance the things required of me and the things I felt were important.

The courts wouldn't recognize SMART Recovery® as a valid recovery program for me, since the only way I could participate was online, so I managed to get myself into an intensive outpatient treatment program for mothers with children. I found myself resentful of the fact that I had to take my kids with me, while my husband only had to worry about himself. Also, I had to go to group four

days a week compared to his one. I began to feel like the words that detective said to me were true, I was the worst out of all of them. I didn't understand why I was in the most intensive program out of all the people there that day. It didn't seem fair to me.

This belief was enforced around August when I learned that charges had been filed against me for the forged documents they found in my apartment. They charged me with four felony forgeries and one misdemeanor theft by deception. I felt devastated, and again thought it completely unfair. I saw myself awfulizing, over generalizing, and "shoulding" all over myself once again. But that was the key point, I SAW myself. I had somehow managed to come to a point in which I slowed down my thoughts enough to recognize what was going on. Instead of seeing it as something I had to deal with, I changed my perception to that of choosing to deal with it. I was choosing to accept the consequences for my past behavior, and not coping out by blaming others.

Had it not been for the SMART Recovery® community, I would have found myself panicked and lost among my thoughts and triggers. I received such a showing of support from the members here, that I was truly touched. Even after all the things I had done, I was truly accepted for being myself. At the time I didn't realize it, but when I look back today, I can see that acceptance was all around me. I received letters of recommendation to take to court with me, pats on the back for successes, and an honest approach to helping me apply the tools.

When the day came for me to stand in front of the judge and be sentenced, I was much calmer than I ever expected to be. I knew that I had done absolutely everything that I could do, and that I could not control anything except myself. I was actually in awe of the judge that day in court, as I watched

him deal with those before me, and when my turn came to stand in front of him, I believed that he would hand down the best sentence for the situation.

Shortly after the sentencing, I was awarded full custody of my girls, and the case against me with the Department of Child and Family Services was closed. I had gone from losing everything to a brand new start in a matter of 9 months. If someone had told me that I would come so far in such a short period of time, I would not have believed him or her. Yet, somehow, I had done just that. I have recently started college full-time, and remain an active volunteer within the SMART Recovery® community.

Not too long ago I had what might be referred to as an AHA moment. When I look back, however, I see it as a moment in which I accepted. From the first time that I set a new boundary, to the CBA I used to decide what to do with my marriage, SMART Recovery® has shown me how to empower myself to make the changes that were in my better interest. If I had not taken the tools and applied them, I have no idea where I would be today. My children are happier, my marriage is stronger, and I now have the knowledge and tools to be able to maintain my sobriety today.

There have been many times when I wanted to give up, or just let go of the fight, and those are the times when SMART Recovery® was the most useful to me. I would show up in the chat room late at night, and there would be a listening ear available. No judgments were ever made regarding what I was saying, and there was not a single moment in which I did not feel as though I were a member of this community.

SMART Recovery® is not the only recovery process I have in my life, but I can say that it is the one that has given me the tools to make the most life changes.



Prison Outreach

From Beyond the Walls Quintessential Management

by Barry A. Grant

When it comes to rendering concepts that are likely to be helpful in the short run and beneficial to long-term transformation, those of us in the field of community re-integration have a special obligation to manage ourselves with added awareness. While this contention can be considered fundamentally essential insofar as recovery and relapse prevention are concerned, the quality of what we as clinicians and facilitators exemplify is as crucial as the information we convey.

Often the potency of communicating to a group of clients, inmates or residents, can be diluted by personal issues that may tend to corrupt the integrity of clear disputation on the participant's behalf. The facilitator's outward actions and responses (or reactions) can reinforce positive beliefs just as easily as they can contribute to irrationalities and distorted ones.

Working with people who are in such a critical stage of change and adjustments with regard to so many societal dynamics, requires a great deal of prudence as well as patience, in addition to impartiality. In spite of this, I believe that alertness, especially when it comes to individual preconceptions, can establish and fortify a milieu more conducive to healing and true self renewal.

Just as people who are transitioning back to the community may weave their tapestries of irrationalities, the same thing can happen to us when our level of aware-

ness (self-check) decreases. This can lead to distorted thinking becoming the rudimentary fabric of meetings because it seems most comfortable for group's leader. Of course, a moment's reflection can prevent one from any such personal concession that might in turn lead to unhealthy therapeutic boundaries and/or alliances.

The process of recovery is much more than the term suggests and when relapse prevention is added to the equation, members of this particular population seem to be more wrapped up into their issues of societal entitlement and economic expectations than engaging in the recovery of their quintessential state of existence. To that end, it is the responsibility of those who are charged as guiding beacons to commit to mindful, healthy and authentic self-management. After all, you cannot work it in anyone else unless you're working it in yourself...

Positively Speaking:

When a conscious choice is made to elevate oneself on behalf of humanity without condition, the well-being of our global plateau reaches new heights.



News From the Courts

Pennsylvania Inmate's Establishment Clause Claim Denied Due To Availability of Alternate Program

by Steve McCullough, Certified Legal Assistant

In January 1999, Francis Bobko ("Bobko") was granted a parole from his sentence of fourteen to twenty-eight years within the Pennsylvania

State Prison system. In 2002, Bobko was recommitted to prison as a "technical parole violator." The published decision in this case makes no statement as to what constitutes a "technical parole violation" within the Pennsylvania penal system. Be that as it may, Bobko's maximum incarceration date was re-computed to October 15, 2011. He was further informed that, in order to be eligible for a new parole, he had to "participate in drug and alcohol counseling."

The Pennsylvania State Department of Corrections has apparently established a standardized method of 'delivering' what they refer to as Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse "treatment" programs to inmates identified as alcohol or other drug abusers. The published decision in this case makes no reference as to how an inmate is identified as an "alcohol or other drug abuser." These standardized methods and procedures address the operations of "Therapeutic" Communities ("T.C.s") within the State of Pennsylvania's correctional institutions. According to legal briefs filed by Pennsylvania State prison officials in this case, T.C.s are separate units within the prison system, and they are "voluntary," "high intensity" "inpatient" programs.

Author's Note: The T.C.s are undoubtedly "voluntary" only insofar as the inmate has the option to suffer many more years of incarceration in lieu of participation. In addition, the description of the T.C.s given by the Pennsylvania State prison officials does not address how an inmate is immediately transformed into a "patient" upon his admission to the T.C.s.

The Pennsylvania State prison officials involved in this case further describe the T.C.s as follows:

"[T]here are three (3) phases to T.C.s: Phase I — Orientation Phase, Phase II — Primary Treatment Phase, and Phase III — Reentry. As part of the T.C., the community participates in group therapy, encounter groups, community meetings, education groups, and self-help groups. T.C. is not affiliated with any religion and is not based upon

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religious concepts. T.C. seeks to have participants commit to 'right living.' Depending upon the particular direction in which a community develops, certain concepts, akin to surrendering to a Higher Power, may be incorporated into the experience."

But, the Pennsylvania State prison officials go on to proclaim that "[N]o participant is forced to participate or subscribe to religious/spiritual activities or beliefs as part of T.C. If religious/spiritual concepts are explored by the community and a participant is not comfortable with these concepts, a wholly secular model is available. This secular model is S.O.S. (Secular Organizations for Sobriety and/or Save Our Selves)."

Bobko was admitted into a T.C. on February 25, 2003. Whatever pressure did exist for participants to subscribe to religious/spiritual activities or beliefs was apparently sufficient for Bobko to refuse to participate in the program the next day. In an "inmate request to staff member" Bobko objected to the religious nature of the T.C. In response to Bobko's request, Defendant Prison Official Stachelak informed Bobko that he need not profess any belief in God or a "Higher Power" in order to participate in the program. Bobko, somehow in dissent, then filed an official grievance. Defendant Prison Official Yescavage replied to Bobko's official grievance by explaining to Bobko that an alternative program entitled S.O.S. was available to Bobko as an alternative to affirmation of a belief in God or a "Higher Power."

As a consequence of the expression of his above recited self-will, Bobko was removed from the T.C. This lawsuit ensued.

In the published decision in this case, the Court incorporates the memorandum of the defendant prison officials into its holding. Specifically, the Court's decision recites the following description of S.O.S.:

"[S.] O.S. is a self-empowerment approach to recovery. S.O.S. provides an alternative framework for those uncomfortable with the spiritual content of widely available 12-step programs. S.O.S. takes a secular approach to recovery and maintains that sobriety is a separate issue from religion or spirituality. S.O.S. credits the individual for achieving and maintaining his or her own sobriety, without reliance on any "Higher Power." Key components of S.O.S. are emphasis on sobriety through abstinence, encouragement of scientific study of alcoholism and addiction, and reliance upon the wisdom and support of fellow recoverers as part of a support group. The S.O.S. framework is available to T.C. participants."

Author's Note: There is no reference in the published decision as to how many inmates within the T.C.s actually opt to participate in the alternative, S.O.S. "model."

In the case of *Francis Bobko v. Thomas Lavan, et al.*, Civil No. 1:CV-04-0158, United States District Court, M.D. Pennsylvania (May 31, 2005), the Court held as follows:

"[T]he First Amendment guarantees that the "government may not coerce anyone to support or participate in religion or its exercise." *Lee v. Weisman*, 505 U.S. 577, 587 (1992). The government coerces a prisoner to participate in religion in violation of the First Amendment when it requires a prisoner to participate in a drug or alcohol rehabilitation program that invokes God or a Higher Power as a source of strength for recovery, or else face penalties such as an unfavorable recommendation for parole. See *Warner v. Orange County Dept. Of Probation*, 115 F.3d 1068, 1076-77 (2nd Cir. 1996); see also, *Kerr v. Farrey*, 95 F.3d 472, 479 (7th Cir. 1996). However, a prisoner is not unconstitutionally coerced to participate in religion if he may meet a rehabilitation requirement in an alternative secular program. See *id.*; See also, *In re Pers. Restraint of Garcia*, 34 P.3d 1091, 1096 (Wash.Ct.App. 2001), and *Cf. Freedom from Religion Foundation, Inc. V. McCallum*, 324 F.3d 880 (7th Cir. 2003).

"[A]s noted above, Bobko requested permission to participate in the T.C. program. However, within a day of his placement in the program, he objected to the program on First Amendment grounds. Defendants have presented (credible) evidence that, based upon his objections on First Amendment grounds, Bobko was given the choice of participating in a secular alternative to T.C., namely, Secular Organizations for Sobriety and/or Save Our Selves (SOS), to satisfy his rehabilitation requirement. Consequently, Bobko's First Amendment rights were not violated. Summary judgment will be entered in favor of the Defendants and against Bobko."

Please note: It is extremely important for the reader to understand that this column is not intended to impart any kind of legal advice. Anyone contemplating decisions or actions based in whole or in part upon perception of his or her legal position is strongly urged to seek and follow the advice of a competent and experienced attorney.

Editor's Note: *Now's the time for us to get SMART Recovery® into the Pennsylvania correctional system.*

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3-Minute REBT

Eliminating Irrational Beliefs

by Philip Tate, PhD

Author of *Alcohol: How To Give It Up and Be Glad You Did*, 1996, See Sharp Press, Tucson, AZ.

The essence of REBT is the undoing of absolutistic thinking. REBT helps us discover them and poke holes in them. Sometimes we may eliminate them altogether. When we do, we can do more of what we want.

Here are some major irrational Beliefs:

1. You *must* treat me nicely and kindly, and in just the way I want. If you don't, you're *no good*.
2. I *must* do perfectly well and gain approval of everyone who is important to me. If I don't, I'm *no good*. I *must* be right in everything that I think and do. If I am ever wrong, I *am unworthy* and I *should* be damned.
3. The world *must* make it easy for me to get what I want, or else it's a lousy, *no good*. I *shouldn't* have to work hard to get what I want, because I'm *special* and the world should recognize how deserving I am just for being me.

If you live according to absolutistic thinking, you will easily do worse at looking out for yourself; you will do more hating of yourself and others,

and you will do more of being overly fearful and anxious. You may know that you're disturbing yourself, and you may hate yourself for it.

Key to change is eliminating your absolutistic thinking and doing more of what you want. Let's say you are upset at the fact that you make yourself disturbed. Do the ABCs of REBT and discover the thinking that creates your emotional disturbances.

Let's first get to the A, the Activating Event. Ask yourself the Disputing question, what is the event about which I am upset?

A: The event that I am upset about is my making myself depressed, fearful, and angry. Now, let's get to the C, the Consequent emotional and behavioral reactions. Disputing Question: How am I feeling and acting when I notice that I am disturbed?

C: More depressed, self hating, and anxious. More putting myself down and withdrawing from social activities.

Next, get to the B, the absolutistic Beliefs. What am I telling myself that leads me to become upset about my irrational thinking?

Absolutistic Beliefs: I *must* not be so irrational. My thinking *must* be sane. I'm *no good* for thinking so irrationally. It *should* be easier for me to think straight.

To eliminate these beliefs, try disputing them by asking questions such as: Is there any evidence my belief is true? Can I prove that I *must* not be disturbed? Is there any evidence that I am *no good*?

No. I have not found any evidence to support these beliefs. I see no indication that I *have to* be sane, that others *have to* act sensibly, and that the world *must* allow me to live well without working for it.

By disputing your irrational Beliefs many times, you can gradually eliminate your irrational thinking, accept yourself as a fallible human being, and work more at taking better care of yourself.

Featured Quote of this Issue

"So it is a choice!"

This quote is the response from Fraser Ross in response to a question he posed to a gentleman unfamiliar with the SMART Recovery® program: "Excuse me sir are you interested in our program?" To which the gentleman replied, "No, I would choose to recover using AA before your program."

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