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### President's Letter

## Rising Above Victimhood

SMART Recovery® holds several perspectives for many of us. One is the meaning it holds for us as an organization and a social movement. Another perspective is what it means to us as individuals, as a source of effective self-management and recovery training. The latter perspectives are particularly likely to differ among themselves, because we are a diverse organization of diverse individuals. We gather from our involvement what we need. Who we are shapes what we perceive in our experiences with SMART Recovery®, and those individual experiences further shape what we need and see

and gather from SMART Recovery®. In this column, I will speak more from my perspective as an individual who has used much of what SMART Recovery® offers, and who has his understanding of many SMART Recovery® “stories” from our participants and especially from our facilitators.

What are the ultimate gains one might obtain by using the SMART Recovery 4-Point Program® tools? I suggest that one crucial gain is a sense of control of one’s life, a sense that I am not just a victim. We may have been abused or neglected by those who were supposed to have supported us. We may have been born physically susceptible to the pleasures of one or more substances or activities. Addicted parents may have raised us, and this may have happened in the midst of extended family or neighborhood cultures of dependence. If so, we learned up close how to rely on addictive behavior as a coping method. Although we all are victimized to various degrees, through

SMART Recovery® we realize the possibility of rising above victimhood.

Let’s start with abuse and neglect. I suspect that many of the world’s emotional ills would be eliminated if the golden rule (treat others as you would be treated) were universally applied. Unfortunately, the abuse of power is a continuous human theme.

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## The SMART Recovery® 4-Point Program<sup>SM</sup>

**T**he 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)

You did not deserve mistreatment, but if you got it anyway and created understandable but self-defeating emotions and behavior, how do you rise above them?

Using Albert Ellis's ABC method, you can consider that Activating Events do not necessarily lead to emotional Consequences. Instead, we first interpret Activating Events through our Beliefs, both irrational and rational. The idea that we can influence and change our Beliefs, and thus our reactions to Activating Events, will not alter the fact that mistreatment has happened, is happening, or will happen in the future. However, it will allow us the possibility of accepting mistreatment and rising above it for our own sake and the sake of others.

Our initial Irrational Beliefs might include ideas such as, "I did not deserve this," or, "This is unfair," or, "This was so horrible I cannot even bear to think about it." In time, with patient work and the support and encouragement of others, we might continue with rational versions of our initial Beliefs. This means we still feel sad, regretful, thoroughly displeased about acts of victimization, but become able to place them in a broader, more constructive context: "I have a cause I want to devote myself to," "It's over, I survived, I'm actually stronger in some ways for it," or "I know what it is like to feel awful; I will spend my time feeling good and helping others to do so."

What if we are born genetically predisposed to enjoy one or more

substances or activities? What if when we do substance X we have a "chemical glimpse of paradise"? Is it fair to have to give this up? As we point out repeatedly in SMART Recovery®, no one has to change. The question is, do I want to change? Given both the short-term benefits of the addictive behavior, and the long-term costs, what do I choose? I can continue to see myself as a victim of my cravings and desired pleasure, or I can rise above cravings or habitual behavior to live a life that expresses my highest values.

One imaginary situation that clarifies for me how to understand addictive behavior is "being executed tomorrow." Imagine that you are in prison, to be executed tomorrow. Your warden decides to bring you substance X, for your enjoyment on your last night. Whether you use ("why not?") or abstain ("I want to go out with a perfect record") is your decision, but would you be irrational for using? Would you blame someone for using? The case against using is not very strong here. The situation is different when you are using substance X every night for years (and waking up wishing you would be executed). Whether you decide that night to act in accordance with your long-term values, daily serious addictive behavior is not an expression of those values. SMART Recovery® reminds us that we can choose to act on our values, and that in time the choice gets easier as the cravings subside, and more enjoyable as we see the benefits we are creating in the world.

What if we grew up in an addicted household? What if we learned that using is the primary way to cope in the world? I think there is no better place than SMART Recovery® to learn about how to cope and live in the world without relying on substances or activities. One need not be a victim of one's early learning. You can continue to learn new, constructive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.

It is important to remember that SMART Recovery® is powerful because its basis is results of scientific research, as well as moral and philosophical perspectives that go back to antiquity. Ellis, Beck, and others, who have built the foundations of current evidence-based addiction treatment, emphasize the philosophical foundations of their work. Thus, SMART Recovery® is not the only place one might learn to rise above victimhood. For someone desiring recovery, however, SMART Recovery® may provide a more accessible path to self-empowerment than studying journal articles, reading Epictetus, or becoming a Buddhist monk.

Because we each have some level of addictive behavior, the 4 Points and the tools are relevant to anyone. In my own life, they support the belief I can, with effort and patience, live a life of enduring satisfactions, and not solely be the victim of my thoughts, emotions, history, or biology.

*Tom Howarth*



## SMART Progress

### SMART Recovery® Online Update

#### Reasons to Volunteer

by Jonathan von Breton, Director, SMART Recovery® Online

Right now, we have a large number of volunteers graduating at SMART On-Line (SOL). This is a good thing.

These people came to SOL to recover from their alcohol and other drug addictions. They succeeded at that. Then, they remained active as members and volunteers. They stayed around for several reasons. Some stayed because they were grateful and wanted to give something back. Others stayed because volunteering allowed them to work on, add to, and refine the life skills they had acquired. Still other continued because they liked the people and the social support. Most stayed on for all of those reasons. Now, they have reached a time in their lives when they feel ready to move on.

As I said, that is good and it is what SMART Recovery® is about. It also means we need new volunteers. We need Message Board Volunteers. We need Chat Volunteers. We desperately need Online Meeting Facilitators. More and more individuals are finding SMART Online, and we need volunteers to help be responsive to their needs.

I have put together several major benefits of volunteering at SOL.

#### Reasons to Volunteer at SOL:

1. We pay twice as much! Face-to-face SMART Recovery® Volunteers only get \$0.0/hr for a stipend. SOL volunteer stipends are \$00.00/hr. See, that's twice as much.
2. You save on commuting expenses! You perform your volunteer duties from your home, place of work, or anywhere you can get to a computer with Internet access.
3. We don't have a dress code! You can wear whatever you want, or nothing at all. The choice is yours. Think of all the money you save on clothes. However, we do ask that if you choose the "nothing at all" option, you keep that information to yourself and refrain from using a webcam.
4. It's fun, it's helpful to others and to oneself, and the people are great.

Before you volunteer, and I know you have already decided to do so, there are some things for you to do:

1. Check out the volunteer job descriptions and application: <http://smartrecovery.org/vol/volunteerdesc.htm>. SOL is a little more formal than face-to-face in that we have job descriptions, an application, and a screening process.
2. Register for SOL on the Message Board. Explore the Message Board and post. Spend some time in the chat room. Attend a few on-line meetings. I assure you, they are very different from face-to-face ones. This would provide you with a good idea as to where you would be most comfortable and helpful as a volunteer. This gives our members and our volunteers a chance to know each other before you commit yourself to

volunteering. And you and the members of the community will know one another before you begin your volunteer activities.

Whether you volunteer or not, we invite you to register and spend some time with us. If you have any questions, contact the Central Office and they will put you in touch with me.

We'd enjoy seeing you around SOL!

### Happy Anniversary—To Us!

by Peter Cusack, Treasurer, SMART Recovery® NYC

In December seven years ago, on a Thursday evening, SMART/NYC held its first meeting at Albert Ellis Institute, facilitated by Michler Bishop, with nine attendees (including me).

Hundreds of meetings and thousands of attendees later, we have come a long way toward our goal of establishing a viable alternative recovery program in NYC. However, as we start our eighth year with tonight's meeting in Greenpoint, let's remember that we still have a long way to go.

Happy anniversary to all current Facilitators and Board members!

### SMART Recovery® Teen Listserv

by Julie Meyers, SMART Recovery® Teen Meeting Facilitator

So here I am, into the second year of my teen SMART Recovery® group. There are four of us now running teen SMART Recovery® groups. Now, that may not seem like a lot, but every group we add brings us one step closer to creating a firm foundation for leading teen meetings. While I would love to be able to say that it was because of my brilliance and insight that my group has been successful, it was because of a cooperative high school that mandates

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the teens to come, luck, and A LOT of input from others in the SMART Recovery® family.

The best part of leading a teen meeting (besides the kids!) is being able to share ideas with others who work with teens. Luckily, we now have a new SMART Recovery® listserv (hurray to Shari for setting this up) to help us share our questions, concerns, and successes. Just last week, our discussion about peer pressure helped me to make great progress with the teens in my group.

There are about ten people on the listserv now, including those who lead teen groups, train teens, and are just plain interested in teens. Personally, I would love to have more of our SMART Recovery® facilitators as part of this forum to offer suggestions, redirection, and encouragement. If you are interested in joining this discussion, contact Shari Allwood at [sallwood@smartrecovery.org](mailto:sallwood@smartrecovery.org). Hope to see you on the list!



### International Development

## SMART Recovery® Australia Update

by Josette Freeman and Jim Villamor

Josette and Jim both had leave over Christmas and the New Year's period. Both headed up the coast to different locations hoping for sun and surf—both were rained out!! Now back to the work of setting up more SMART Recovery® groups in New South Wales and also taking the program interstate.

Late in 2007 we had 2 trips—to Casino and Bourke. Both trips involved liaising with the Department of Corrective Services in setting up SMART Recovery® in their new “open” prisons and also in the nearby

communities. Bourke is a mostly indigenous population and they intend having a SMART Recovery® group around a campfire where aboriginal people would be more likely to attend.

This month we are off to Canberra to do an information/training session. We will go via Cowra where we have been asked by an indigenous rehabilitation centre to help them set up the SMART Recovery® program.

Also on our agenda for the next couple of months are trips to Melbourne and Tasmania.

In early February we met with Lesley Sampson, who has taken over from Geoff Wilkinson at Corrections. We have planned to meet on a monthly basis so we can share ideas and training. We were sorry to see Geoff leave this position, but he is now doing more work with training in Corrections, so ultimately this will also be of benefit to the SMART Recovery® program. He has been of much help to us.

We hope to do a big media drive in the very near future so that more and more people will become aware of SMART Recovery®.

The SMART Recovery® Australian Board of Directors has been appointed. Both Joe Gerstein and Sue Henry-Edwards (Alcohol and other Drugs Principal Advisor at the Department of Corrective Services) have accepted to be on the Board, so that

## SMART Recovery® Program Tools & Techniques

The SMART Recovery® 4-Point Program<sup>SM</sup> 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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is very good news! The first Board meeting is being planned for late February.

*Editor's Note: The reference to indigenous people reminded me of something I long asserted about REBT: it serves individuals within their own frames of reference, rather than imposing a specific cultural belief system. I'd like to know more about SMART Recovery® meetings among indigenous people in Australia. Are they different from "our" SMART Recovery® meetings?*

## SMART Recovery® UK Update

by Fraser Ross

Things have been very busy over here. SMART Recovery® UK is just 15 months old and we have got 28 new meetings started. Not bad for a country our size! Many more new meetings are in the pipeline, and they start as fast as I can get out and visit the people.

I found that it is very easy to get a meeting up and running in a treatment facility, but community self-run meetings present a different challenge. I think that sometimes we send out a message that it is difficult to lead a SMART Recovery® meeting, or you have to be a professional. This is definitely not the case. Some of the best facilitators have come through our meetings.

Margaret Ritchie from Fraserburgh on the east coast of Scotland is showing us how to do it. She has been actively working on her meeting, and she is doing so in the community. This is paying dividends and her meetings

are full every time. By going out to people and treatment services and speaking to them, she has gained the respect of everyone. I wish we had a Margaret in every town. On reflection, we do, but we just need to empower them and show them how she did it.

Recovery is the buzzword in Scotland now. The government wants to shift the emphasis from treatment to recovery. Treatment has its place but they recognize that without adequate recovery collateral it is a waste of money. The Government runs two seminars on promoting the recovery agenda, and they invited me to speak at two seminars. The feedback was very good. As a result, I presented a workshop at a national conference "Building Momentum towards Recovery in Scotland". My material showed how recovery fits into a stepped model of care. For too long, treatment and recovery have existed in separate subcultures and bureaucracies. It's time to move them together in Scotland. If that happens, it will boost everyone's recovery efforts.

*Editor's Note: The success in establishing meetings in treatment facilities, but not in the community is a frustration in the US, too. Our SMART Recovery® meeting capital, Tucson, Arizona, has 15 meetings. Only one was organized by someone in the community. The rest are in treatment and correctional facilities. Of course, that's a lot better than a poke in the eye with a sharp stick.*

## Sprechen Sie Deutsch?

SMART Recovery® is pleased to announce the release of the SMART Recovery® Handbook in German! The

German translation is available based on the kindness of Sophie, a translator and psychology student. Thank you Sophie! And thanks also to Tez, a SMART Recovery® Online volunteer, who put her Microsoft Word talents to use to format the Handbook!



Stay tuned...Spanish and Portuguese versions of the Handbook will also be available soon!



## SMART Ideas

## A SMART Recovery® Stance on Higher Powers & Addiction as a Disease

by Hank Robb, PhD, ABPP

Recently, I again found myself listening to the "Higher Power" and addiction-as-a-disease arguments with regard to SMART Recovery®. While I do not proclaim the "official policy" on these issues, I put forward what I consider a helpful way to view them within SMART Recovery® meetings.

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Many individuals who find their way to SMART Recovery® meetings found themselves in some sort of 12-step meeting before they got to SMART Recovery®. One of the things that was very likely a problem for such individuals were claims they were powerless over their addictive problems and, as a result, needed to turn their lives over to a “Higher Power,” which was taking an interest in them, having listened to their searching and fearless moral inventories, admissions to Him of the exact nature of their wrongs, and humble requests for Him to remove their shortcomings; and if they were entirely ready, could restore them to sanity and remove all their defects of character, assuming they continued to seek through prayer and meditation to improve their conscious contact with Him, which included their prayers for knowledge of His will and the power to carry it out. If claims such as those truly fit for those people, they likely would not have gone looking for something else and would still be attending only 12-step meetings.

Clearly SMART Recovery® is not going to endorse the notion that any of us are powerless over our problems, especially when those problems are what we do with our hands, arms, feet, and mouth. As tens of thousands of individuals have learned in SMART Recovery® meetings, even when we are powerless to change circumstances we still have power to determine how we relate to those circumstances. Difficult circumstances do not **HAVE TO** lead to disturbed responses.

But, what about the Higher Power? Well, what about it? Suppose you do believe in a Higher Power; if so, then the SMART Recovery® program can work for you. Suppose you do not believe in a Higher Power; if so, then the SMART Recovery® program can work for you. Suppose you do not know if you believe in a Higher Power or believe only somewhat one way or another; if so, then the SMART Recovery® program can work for you.

The basis of SMART Recovery®’s program is not what you do or do not believe about Higher Powers, God, or any other supernatural interested parties, entities, concepts, or practices. Its basis is the well-known four points. Building and maintaining motivation to abstain—whether you do or do not believe in a Higher Power. Coping with urges—whether you do or do not believe in a Higher Power. Dealing with emotional and behavioral problems—whether you do or do not believe in a Higher Power. And building a lifestyle balanced between long and short-term enjoyments—whether you do or do not believe in a Higher Power. In other words, believing or not believing in a Higher Power is not right or wrong according to SMART Recovery®—it’s just not relevant to the SMART Recovery® process.

SMART Recovery® can work for you **REGARDLESS** of your stance on this issue—be it “yes,” “no,” or “maybe so.”

Addiction as a disease? Well, what about it? Suppose you believe addic-

tive behavior is a disease; if so, then the SMART Recovery® program can work for you. Suppose you don’t believe addictive behavior is a disease; if so, then the SMART Recovery® program can work for you. Suppose you don’t know if you believe addictive behavior is a disease or believe it only somewhat; if so, then the SMART Recovery® program can work for you.

The basis of the SMART Recovery® program is not what you believe or do not believe about addictive behavior as a disease. As before, it is based on the four well-known points. Building and maintaining motivation to abstain—whether you believe or don’t believe addictive behavior is a disease. Coping with urges—whether you believe or do not believe addictive behavior is a disease. Dealing with emotional and behavioral problems—whether you believe or do not believe addictive behavior is a disease. And building a lifestyle balanced between long and short-term enjoyments—whether you believe or do not believe addictive behavior is a disease.

In other words, believing or not believing in addictive behavior is, or is not, a disease is not right or wrong according to SMART Recovery®—it is just not relevant to the SMART Recovery® process. As before, SMART Recovery® can work for you **REGARDLESS** of your stance on this issue as well—whether that answer is “yes,” “no,” or “maybe so.”

Can it be entertaining and informative to argue for and against the

existence of Higher Powers? Sometimes. Can it be entertaining and informative to argue for and against addictive behavior as a disease? Sometimes. However, having, or settling (good luck on that!), these arguments are not what SMART Recovery® meetings are about. Instead, they are about implementing the four SMART Recovery® points in your life. Whether or not Higher Powers exist and are taking an interest in you. Whether or not addictive behavior is a disease. You can live a more fulfilling, satisfying and enjoyable life. Putting the SMART Recovery® program to work for you can help. My suggestion—get busy!

## **A Funny and a Great Parable about How People Can Rationalize**

An Irishman walks into a bar in Dublin, orders three pints of Guinness, and sits in the back of the room, drinking a sip out of each one in turn. When he finished all three, he comes back to the bar and orders three more.

The bartender says to him, “You know, a pint goes flat after I draw it; it would taste better if you bought one at a time.”

The Irishman replies, “Well, you see, I have two brothers. One is in America, the other in Australia, and I’m here in Dublin. When we all left home, we promised that we’d drink this way to remember the days we all drank together.”

The bartender admits that this is a nice custom, and leaves it there.

The Irishman becomes a regular in the bar and always drinks the same way: he orders three pints and drinks the three pints by taking drinks from each of them in turn. One day, he comes in and orders two pints. All the other regulars in the bar notice and fall silent.

When he comes back to the bar for the second round, the bartender says, “I don’t want to intrude on your grief, but I wanted to offer my condolences on your great loss.”

The Irishman looks confused for a moment, then the light dawns in his eye and he laughs. “Oh, no,” he says, “Everyone is fine. It’s me.....I’ve quit drinking!”

## **Why Bother To Change Things? (After all, they got this way all by themselves)** by Stan Colburn (Reprinted from the July 2000 *News & Views*)

The hardest thing in ending addiction is overcoming the natural resistance to change. By definition, if you are “hooked” you keep acting against your silent better judgment. When you keep doing things that cause you grief, you have not been looking out for your own best interest. And if you keep going back and back to that familiar but degrading habit of self-indulgence, you are making things worse.

When we do that, we have lost sight of our own value. In some cases, perhaps we never have genuinely cared for ourselves. Otherwise, we would not want to go against our better judgment and best interest! But

the negative habit wants to keep it that way. It’s a habit, ain’t it? And our real self-interest is not strong enough to make our better judgment rule. Something to think about. Our critics may say that when we are hooked, we are self-indulgent and callous about hurting others, etc. But the real problem lies in not being selfish enough for our true best interest and common sense to overrule our runaway appetites.

Now to repeat. Being addicted means turning over some self-control to a bad habit. To end it we have to take back control. To take back control, we have to put our real self-interest first. We have temporarily forgotten how great our self-worth and self-interest is. In other words, it is our sense of worth that has been the underdog.

So what can a person do?

You can start by just accepting yourself unconditionally. Believe it or not, all your perceived shortcomings or past mistakes do not diminish your worth in any way! That does not say that they are good for you or that you might not do well to correct some things. But you always have a basic worth just as a human being, and no one else is perfect either! All things have worth, but as far as anyone knows we humans on this planet are the only intelligent life in the universe. You are very special if only because you are alive and have the power to realize it!

You may have heard that a lot of “self-love” or high “self-esteem” is necessary to succeed, and that these things depend on

success and approval. However, if you will simply accept yourself, unconditionally, just as you are, the good and the bad, then you are on a level playing field with anyone else and you can much more easily make changes in your life! This is one of the important means to achieve success that we recommend at SMART Recovery®.

### Things That Are Difficult To Say When Drunk

by Stephen Baxter, SMART Recovery® Board Member

Things that are difficult to say when drunk:

1. Innovative
2. Preliminary
3. Proliferation
4. Cinnamon

Things that are very difficult to say when drunk:

1. Specificity
2. Anti-constitutionally
3. Passive-aggressive disorder
4. Transubstantiate

Things that are downright impossible to say when drunk:

1. No thanks, I'm married.
2. Nope, no more booze for me!
3. Sorry, but you're not really my type.
4. Taco Bell? No thanks, I'm not hungry.
5. Good evening, officer. Isn't it lovely out tonight?
6. Oh, I couldn't! No one wants to hear me sing karaoke.
7. I'm not interested in fighting you.

8. Thank you, but I won't even try to dance; I have no coordination.
9. Where is the nearest bathroom? I refuse to pee in this parking lot or on the side of the road.
10. I must be going home now, as I have to work in the morning.

### People Power



### Reflections on Two Years

As posted to the Message Board by Ray R.

I watched the Super Bowl yesterday with my brother and his wife in their garage. We played ping-pong and ate buffalo wings. A friend of my brother's stopped by. He had his own ping-pong paddle and some pot and told us all about the weight he had lost from the wrong heart medication. He smoked a cigarette as he told us that they changed the medication and he hoped he would not have to have another bypass. They drank some beer and I had a Coke. I was celebrating two years of sobriety and reflecting on how much my perspective on life has changed, as I enjoyed the game, the food, and the company. In my drinking days I would have been in a bar with a bunch of yahoos, buying beers and bourbon, smoking a pack or two of cigs, pretending to have a grand old time before staggering home

alone to smoke a joint while looking out my window or passing out with the headphones on. Maybe I would wake up without any scrapes, bruises, or broken furniture.

Yesterday as I thoroughly enjoyed myself, I had the realization that the idea of having a drink or a toke was as unimaginable to me as quitting smoking was to this fellow with the heart condition. This is amazing, because just two short years ago I had only imagined myself as someone who did not drink or smoke. I would imagine that I was going to wake up the next morning and be this amazing new person who was full of drive and creativity, a spiritual being who did t'ai chi and meditated and brought peace and meaning to people's lives. Then the morning would come and find me—a hunched, groaning, hung over miserable wretch of a human being, bloodshot and bilious. People would wince and look away when they caught sight of me. Finally, when I was sitting in the dark and feeling broken beyond repair, my sister and my brother offered their help.

It was hard at first. The humiliation of rehab, the fear of failure and the unknown, the seeming loss of self and self-respect, the wasteland of the past, the vacuum of loneliness—it all seemed unbearable, unsustainable. But a little bit of knowledge managed to lodge itself in my brain as I learned the nature of addiction, and a little bit of wit and wisdom (you can drink tomorrow if you want, just not today) got me through a few lonely, hopeless-feeling nights. Gradually I stopped worrying about sleep and began to enjoy just lying down to rest. I learned to watch the whole movie and not

have the trailer suck me in. I prepared and armed myself against panic attacks and moments of extreme weakness with a simple question (and then what?) and a serenity prayer. These were backed up by a written down drinking history, a cost/benefit analysis, phone numbers, a true desire, and days of sobriety stacked like bricks in a wall, a foundation that became weeks and then months as gradually the obsession was lifted and I began to experience what it is like to live a day without it.

I have learned that one does not undo a lifetime of addictive behavior overnight. Drive and creativity do not just materialize out of the thin, exhilarating air of sobriety. T'ai chi and meditation are disciplines. Peace and meaning are a process, not a destination. Sometimes I feel like I am spinning my wheels and getting nowhere fast. Sometimes it feels like others are making much more progress than I am, and that may be true. Comparing is a sure way to find someone doing better. But yesterday, hanging out with my brother and watching the Super Bowl, winning a couple games of ping-pong, having a few real, sober laughs, I had the gift of perspective and something else that I couldn't name at the time; a sense of well-being. It was definitely worth it.

## **Why Do I Donate to SMART Recovery®?**

That's an easy question for me. When I first came to SMART Recovery®, I had no idea what to expect. I was so desperate I was open to anything. After a few weeks, I started to feel the effects of the community.

There was so much "giving" going on. Even though many of them were suffering, they were willing to give back. I felt affected by that.

I joined up as a volunteer. After the first fundraiser, I decided to donate some money and in doing so, I enriched my life even more. After all, I was now saving a ton by not drinking. Because of my busy schedule, I set up a payment through the head office via my credit card. Every month I get a receipt and at the end of the year a total donation statement for tax purposes. It has proven not only to be an easy way to donate, but also very secure.

To sum up all of the above I would have to say my number one reason for donating to SMART Recovery® is that for the first time in my life I am finding a balance. I am healing inside and outside and I want to share that. One way that will happen is if those of us who are already here and finding our way, give back to this wonderful community to ensure that it will be here, not only for us but for others who are hurting and also trying to find their way.

Warm Regards,  
*Sam Lester,*  
SMART Recovery®  
*Online Facilitator/Liaison*

## **What SMART Recovery® Has Done For Me**

*by Everett Whritenour, Morris Township, NJ*

I first learned of the SMART Recovery® program while at the Morris County Correctional Facility. I used to think that there was only one way to getting sober and that was by

attending 12-step meetings. It was then I began to view my addiction not as a medical or spiritual problem—a disease—but as a psychological problem requiring a psychological solution. From the time I read the SMART Recovery® Handbook I can remember feeling like this was the program for me. My ideas about being able to get sober have most certainly changed. There was hope for me in this horrible existence that I called life. SMART Recovery® has built up my confidence. I had learned that I do have a will and it wasn't my best thinking that got me into trouble. Although attending AA or other 12-step groups may be helpful or even necessary for recovery, I believe that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is just as important.

Even though I've had serious difficulties with alcohol and other drugs and have sought professional help for my addictive behavior, I have found that the SMART Recovery® Handbook and its volunteer led meetings to be very useful in aiding in my recovery. I like the common sense approach to overcoming addiction and the fact that it's supported by scientific research.

The SMART Recovery® program teaches about making changes in the four areas that I needed to make changes in. Building and maintaining motivation, coping with cravings and urges, self managing thoughts, behaviors and feelings, and finding a lifestyle with a balance of long and short term satisfactions. The SMART Recovery 4-Point Program® has a

variety of tools to help in your recovery (an index can be found in the Handbook at Section 2/Page 7 and on page 4 of this issue of the *News & Views*). One of the tools I found to be most helpful is the Stages of Change. It has helped me to focus on the area I needed to concentrate most on. Such as, one day I was feeling a bit discouraged about my recovering from my addictions. I decided to open my Handbook up to the Stages of Change section and review the different stages because at one point I was sure that I was in the determination stage of the stages. As I read through the stages it had appeared that I had fallen back to the Pre-contemplation Stage. Within this stage it states “writing out the Pros and Cons in a Cost Benefit Analysis and reviewing it regularly can help”. So I took out my Cost Benefit Analysis and reviewed what I had written. Doing this has helped me to get back to the Determination Stage. I am now at the Action stage and review my Cost Benefit Analysis regularly.

Understanding where I was in the Stages of Change has helped me to focus on the appropriate recovery task with the right tools, activities and information. The Handbook has taught me that the 4-Point Program™ is my foundation for recovery. If I work this program, my life will only get better. Today I have friendships and social support within SMART Recovery®. This program is simply sharing and following through with your plan of recovery.

SMART Recovery® has worked wonders for me. I encourage

newcomers to attend a few meetings, try SMART Recovery® methods, read the publication and return if you find SMART Recovery® helpful.



## **Westate Corrections Network Now Using InsideOut™**

According to counselors and facilitators, InsideOut™ is such a standout program because it is comprehensive. It incorporates REBT (Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy) and its ABC model of psychological disturbance and change; related CBTs (Cognitive and Behavior Therapies); and other evidence-based approaches. All of these together make up the SMART Recovery 4-Point Program®, which is the foundation for InsideOut™.

This foundation is why Dr. Johnnie Welch, a mental health and drug rehabilitation counselor, decided to start using the InsideOut™ program at Westate Corrections Network in northwest Tennessee. “I didn’t want to reinvent the wheel in trying to come up with a program myself that could teach offenders the core of several therapies,” said Dr. Welch. “The material in InsideOut™ is strong, and it incorporates many therapies I have used for years.”

Dr. Welch believes that the material in InsideOut™ will allow him to create a sustainable program in both his drug court and probation groups at Westate Corrections Network. He thinks the way CBT is broken down and specifically applied to offenders is one of the most valuable parts of the program. “It’s very easy for anyone to use, which makes it likely that more people will complete the curriculum.”

SMART Recovery® and Inflexxion are happy to have Westate Corrections Network continue to provide quality care to offenders by using InsideOut™, and look forward to hearing about the positive results it will bring to the community in northwest Tennessee. If you have any questions about the InsideOut™ program or you would like more information about this article, please contact Tyler Achilles at (617) 614-0376 or [tachilles@inflexxion.com](mailto:tachilles@inflexxion.com).

## **From Beyond the Walls Reaching Out and Feeling Touched: One Example** by Barry A. Grant

Self-confidence is not a given in our lives. We must develop it, often painstakingly, one task, one account, one deadline at a time. Moreover, each day that we court indecision and doubt, we erode not only this development in process but the level of self-confidence that we had already attained.

A resident of Logan Hall wrote the article that follows. Logan Hall is a Newark, New Jersey, halfway house for federal and state parolees who are in the process of re-entering the community. Logan Hall also houses county detainees awaiting bail or sentencing. It is where I work. Like all too many individuals, the

unavailability of SMART Recovery® tends to stifle the motivation towards recovery by attempting to apply a “one size fits all” approach to the depth, breadth, and diverse magnitude of substance abuse and addiction.

## **SMART Recovery® at a Glance and What It Did for Me**

by Shawn Powell, Jersey City, New Jersey

I rarely gave much thought to getting it right. I was never convinced that any type of program could ever work for me. In short, I was in a program as part of parole so that I maybe would have a chance at being on the right track. However, as usual, I did the opposite. I used again and got caught. The penalty could have been my return to prison which I was definitely not feeling so I just wandered lost and scared about how things would play out. One thought really stood out and that was I needed help and I really needed it fast. The day came for sentencing, and I did not get what I expected. Instead, my sentence was to another rehab group. At first I said hell no I'm not doing this group. I'm going back down and finish my time.

After about an hour, I had a change of heart. I felt I could get something out of it after all. It gave me insight into why I was acting out, why I stayed stuck for so long, the cost and benefits of being trapped, the hurt, the shame and pain that I wreaked upon myself and my loved ones. It let me know that I could change all my negative charms. It has been hard for me at times to just let go of the past and I know I have to do it so that I will not stunt my growth. I may not have the greatest mind when it comes time to deal with change but being armed with the knowledge on how to,

what to do and where to do it and why, but by applying it rationally will no doubt lead me to a successful ending.

SMART Recovery® is a simple, but not necessarily easy, set of techniques in which one can manage his or her self in a positive way. Somehow, my family has forgiven me for my past, so somehow I have to forgive myself for the past that has consumed me. Through SMART Recovery®, I am learning the tool in which to empower me so I can once again walk in the light. Just to wake up is motivation for me knowing that God has allowed me one more day to get my bearings and purpose in order so that maybe I will find just what my purpose in life is and how to live life on life's terms. Armed with the knowledge of SMART Recovery®, I will persevere and manage self to remain positive. Bear in mind that I am still in training. One day in the future I will become a vital member of SMART Recovery®!

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A confident posture in one instance makes easier the same posture in instances thereafter. Likewise, doubt breeds itself. The attitude we choose to express teaches others what to expect from us. It takes patience and willingness to reach out and touch ourselves. When we succeed in self-transformation, it is good to remember that everything we will become we already are.

Mr. Powell is doing well as he does have considerable access to the community and has offered feedback on the challenges he has surmounted. By the way, another “SMART” choice is his desire to help start a SMART Recovery® group in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Positively Speaking: The universe is transformation; our life is what our thoughts make it.

— Marcus Aurelius

## **We Want You To Submit Material To the SMART Recovery® News & Views**

We want your articles—long or short, rough draft or refined, just an idea or well thought out. MUST they be flawless? MUST they cause all readers to bow down to you in adulation? Yes. Oops. I mean no. Your battle-scarred and beloved editor will work with you. The point is to get more and more of the SMART Set in on the act in YOUR newsletter, to get stories from the front lines and the back forty, and to gain diverse perspectives. To get your opinions.

Here are a couple of ideas: What if only one or two people, or even zero sometimes, show up for your meeting? What then? What did you do? What about success stories? Failure stories? What did you learn from them? What about someone who goes both to AA and to SMART Recovery®? What does the person say about how that works for him or her? Among facilitators and groups, what are some non-standard self-management and recovery training tools you invented, adapted, used? When someone “got motivated,” how did that seem to happen? Has anyone bashed SMART Recovery® lately, and how did you deal with the person?

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

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## 3-Minute REBT

### Thinking Can Interfere With Doing

by Philip Tate, PhD

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

(Reprinted from the April 2003 News & Views)

Humans are born to think. We observe events and we think about them. Usually we consider our thinking to be a good thing, but often it isn't. In fact, it can interfere with our appreciation of what's going on. Imagine you're looking at a sunset. You feel an emotion as you look at its beauty. Then you think, "That sunset is really beautiful." The thought gives you a different experience. It creates a different emotion, and it interferes with your experience of the sunset. Now, the sunset is gone, but you remember it; you imagine its beauty; and you feel an emotion. The thoughts you have and the emotions you feel are not the same as when you merely were looking at the sunset.

Tomorrow you may observe another sunset not as lovely as the one today. You may think, "This isn't as pretty as the one yesterday." By comparing the two, you again interfere with your enjoyment.

In the above instances, you and I can agree that your thoughts are consistent with what we call reality. There is a sunset, so your thoughts and imagination refer to reality. However, your thoughts are their own reality: they are not the same thing as your observations, and they can interfere with what is going on between you and what you observe.

Now you think, "All sunsets *should* be as pretty as the one I saw yesterday." This comparison also interferes with your appreciation of the sunset, but it goes further: it gets you to rant and rave about it. If you think about it, this belief also may not be provable. Check it out. Is there any evidence that one sunset *has* to be as pretty as the next?

In SMART Recovery<sup>®</sup>, the thinking we examine most closely is the thinking related to quitting alcohol, other drugs, or addictive behavior, and staying "sober." For instance, you observe your behavior, and sometimes you fail to do as you want. Let's say you make a commitment to abstain from alcohol, but you take a few drinks. You may think something like, "I don't like what I did," which gives you a feeling of regret, which in REBT we view usually as a helpful emotion, despite the fact that it is unpleasant (negative).

You may think of some of AA's teachings, such as, "You have to go to AA and you can't stay sober without it." These beliefs easily contribute to feelings of self-hatred and depression. You may also think, "I'm no good for taking a drink, so I can't succeed," which contributes to feelings of hopelessness and guilt. These thoughts and feelings create an experience distinctly different from the fact of a particular failure, and they interfere with your ability to learn from failure and move on.

Your goal is to quit, and focusing on quitting is essential. So, when you fail to quit, you want to quickly get back to quitting. But, when you first look to someone else for help, you distract yourself. As well, when you believe you are *no good* and that you *can't* quit, your belief system easily hinders you. You get absorbed in your feelings of worthlessness and misery. That gets between you and accomplishing your goal. If you can easily put such thoughts aside and continue with quitting, then do so. However, if you strongly cling to such beliefs, then challenge them, discover they have no basis in reality, and put them aside.

Here is how you can challenge them. Ask yourself, "Is there any evidence that failing *makes me* worthless? Is there any evidence that failing means I *can't* succeed?" When you consider these questions carefully, you will find there is no evidence. Such thoughts are meaningless—*unless you give them meaning*. They are not of the stuff that makes you who you are. Give them up. Focus on quitting. Then do it.

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