

JanL – 42, Raleigh, NC

- Former maladaptive behavior: alcohol
- Member and Online Meeting Facilitator, SMART Recovery® Online
- Sober: one year and counting

Jan's 5 cents

I got here when I got a wicked bad DWI and the attorney I hired told me I had better start going to AA meetings as fast as possible before I went to court. I had been to a couple of AA meetings and they just made my drinking worse. The meetings were nothing about how to quit drinking and all about the miracle of being born again, that if you just believed enough, God would do all the work of quitting for you. I was horrified. I'm pretty sure Billy Graham himself would have been cringing. I was deeply depressed and thinking there was no help for me.

In desperation, I googled alternatives to AA online and found this reference to SMART Recovery® and tracked down the site. Yay.

At the first couple of meetings, I started learning about simple tools like the CBA and ABC. They can take time to master, but just in the first week, I began seeing daily problems and being aware that maybe one of those tools would help me address concerns when I could think clearly.

If you are ready to do the work, and that's a very big IF, **SMART RECOVERY® tools begin to work on day one. You do not have to come for weeks before you see progress.** You start thinking SMART Recovery® thoughts by the end of week one. Folks here encouraged me through those first really hard days and by day 30, I didn't lean on the daily rah rahs anymore from others. Now I was feeling good for myself and continuing to apply SMART Recovery® tools to more subtle aspects of my life.

In addition to the tools, the support here has continued to be invaluable to me. SMART RECOVERY® is about support and nurturing rather than judgment and submission. One special benefit of SMART RECOVERY® Online is great diversity of culture, community, race, gender, and sexual orientation. We have all kinds here, from homeless to family money, members from Australia and Malaysia to North Carolina and British Columbia. I myself am bisexual and involved in polyamorous relationships. At SMART RECOVERY® Online, I can be open about all aspects of my life without fear of judgment.

This week I am celebrating one year with SMART Recovery®. My DWI a year ago was ugly bad. Numerous psych "experts" would insist that I could not possibly have quit drinking cold turkey and turned my life around given the degree of my drinking a year ago with just my own willpower, getting away from a nasty relationship, leaning on the love of good friends, and using every day the SMART Recovery® tools. Changing old habits is hard work and you've got to want to change how you think and stop thinking destructive old thoughts. When you're ready, SMART Recovery® will be ready too.