

## SMART Recovery<sup>®</sup> Purposes and Methods Statement

1. We help individuals gain independence from addictive behavior.
2. We teach how to
  - enhance and maintain motivation to abstain
  - cope with urges
  - manage thoughts, feelings and behavior
  - balance momentary and enduring satisfaction
3. Our efforts are based on scientific knowledge, and evolve as scientific knowledge evolves.
4. Individuals who have gained independence from addictive behavior are invited to stay involved with us, to enhance their gains and help others.

### Commentary:

1. We assume that addictive behavior can arise from both substance use (e.g., psychoactive substances of all kinds, including alcohol, nicotine, caffeine, food, illicit drugs, and prescribed medications), and involvement in activities (e.g., gambling, sexual behavior, eating, spending, relationships, exercise, etc.). We assume that there are degrees of addictive behavior, and that all individuals to some degree experience it. For some individuals the negative consequences of addictive behavior (which can involve several substances or activities) become so great that change becomes highly desirable.

To individuals who are, or think they may be, at this point, we offer our services. Our groups are free of charge (although a donation is requested). Our Internet listserv discussion group is free to those who can access it. There is a nominal charge for our publications.

2. Gaining independence from addictive behavior can involve changes that affect an individual's entire life, not just changes directly related to the addictive behavior itself. Consequently there appear to be as many roads to gaining independence from addictive behavior as there are individuals. For many the road will lead somewhere other than using our services. We recommend they follow the direction they have chosen, and we wish them well. They are always welcome to return.

Individuals who have been successful in gaining independence from addictive behavior appear to have made changes in all four areas we teach about. These four areas could also be described as maintaining motivation, coping with craving, thinking rationally, and leading a balanced lifestyle. Although we teach important information in each of these areas, ultimately it is the individual's determination and persistence to keep moving forward that will determine how much success is achieved.



Our services are provided for those who desire, or think they may desire, to achieve abstinence. Individuals unsure about whether to pursue abstinence may observe in our group discussions how abstinence can be achieved, and how it can help. Even those whose ultimate goal is moderated involvement with their substances or activities may benefit from participation in abstinence-oriented discussions. Benefit could occur if the individual aims to engage in selected periods of abstinence, or frames the goal as abstaining from over- involvement (as opposed to all involvement).

Much of the information imparted by us is drawn from the field of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), and particularly from Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, as developed by Albert Ellis, Ph.D. Use of the CBT perspective allows us to use a rich and easily accessible body of ideas, techniques, and publications. Some of these publications we are able to make available directly to our participants, and others are available through bookstores and other sources.

3. What we offer is consistent with the most effective methods yet discovered for resolving emotional and behavioral problems. As scientific knowledge advances, our teachings will be modified accordingly. Individuals with religious beliefs are likely to find our program as compatible with their beliefs as other scientifically derived knowledge and applications.

4. The length of time an individual will derive help from our services is variable. For many sincere participants there will come a time when attending our groups, or participating in our other services, is more in conflict with the pursuit of their life goals than enhancing them. Although these participants will always be welcome back if they want to come, this conflict signals that the time for graduation has arrived.

One of the most enduring satisfactions in life is helping others. The individuals who have nurtured SMART Recovery<sup>®</sup> thus far have reported intense satisfaction at witnessing the positive changes our participants have experienced, and at witnessing the influence we are having on professional addictive behavior treatment. We offer to others, whether graduates of our efforts or not, the opportunity to join us in experiencing that satisfaction.

### **SMART vs. 12-Step Programs**

At SMART we believe that each individual finds his own path to recovery. For some that may include 12-step programs like Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA). While the SMART approach differs from AA and NA, it does not exclude them. Some SMART participants choose to attend AA or NA meetings when they cannot attend a SMART meeting. Some find that what they hear at AA or NA meetings helps them on their path to permanent recovery.

