

HOW TO *Quit Drinking:* An All-Inclusive Resource Guide



OUR
PERSONAL
STORIES

HOW WE
GOT SOBER AND
STAY SOBER

WAYS
TO GET
SOBER

By Kelly Fitzgerald and Carly Benson

Your Hosts

KELLY

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Kelly Fitzgerald is an online sober influencer, a content writer for a group of addiction treatment centers, as well as a freelance writer, based in Cape Coral, Florida. She graduated from Millersville University of Pennsylvania in December 2007 with a B.A. in Government and Political Affairs, and a B.S. in Communications, with a minor in psychology. Her work has been featured across the web on sites like the Huffington Post, Medium, Ravishly, Addiction.com, The Fix, SheKnows, Sober Nation, BuzzFeed, Elite Daily, Addiction Unscripted, and AfterParty Magazine.

She is a person in long-term recovery from a substance use disorder, which to her means that she has not had a drink or a drug of any kind since May 7, 2013. She is best known for her popular blog about her life and adventures in sobriety, *The Adventures of a Sober Señorita*. Kelly was one of the 2016 award recipients of the Heroes in Recovery award presented by Foundations Recovery Network for, “courageously paving the way for others to find healing and recovery.”

Kelly’s dream is to become a certified recovery coach and publish her own book. She is currently writing a memoir.

Your Hosts



CARLY

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Carly Benson is the impactful author behind the delightfully, budding personal development blog, MiraclesAreBrewing.com.

As an avid traveler, yogi & confessed self-help junkie, Carly writes about her adventures in life & sobriety, offering inspirational concepts for enlightenment, spirituality & embracing epicness. Her work has been featured on Elite Daily, Thought Catalog, Addiction Unscripted, The Recovery Revolution, DrugRehab.com, The Recovery Village and Orlando Recovery Center.

She works as Certified Life Coach and Yoga Instructor specializing in Sobriety & Faith coaching and has been sober from alcohol and cocaine since August 17, 2008. Her passionate charge with this work is to inspire and breathe hope into the lives of others by coming alongside them to help them find their own unique paths.

“My mission is to teach people to love their weirdness and to bring forth the most epic versions of themselves. To live epic lives that are purpose-driven, passion-fueled, faith-centered and serve others in a way that offers impactful change.

Why This Book Is For You

If you are reading this book, you are probably no stranger to hangovers. Most likely you've grown sick and tired of feeling sick and tired and are searching, maybe even desperately, for a way to stop the chaos and the dreadful feeling of waking up feeling horrible or better yet opening your eyes after a complete blackout...

Your eyelids are crusty and you wonder where the hell you actually are. You don't recall falling asleep and you're not too sure how you even made it home. You begin to panic a bit. Your heart is racing because this feeling of uncertainty has started coursing through your veins. It feels like it's going to jump out of your chest as you quickly sit up in bed. "Am I in my own bed? How did I get here?" you think to yourself.

Your mouth is dry and tastes of stale alcohol. You reach for the closest water you can find and try not to let the sunlight hit your eyes.

Your hands are clammy and you look down to notice you are still in your clothes from the night before. You reek of cigarettes and bad decisions.

Your head feels like there's a drum and bass concert going on inside of it. It won't stop pounding and your jumbled stream of thoughts starts going at 100 mph.

You reach for your phone. It's 2 p.m. and you were supposed to be up for work at 7 a.m.

You curse yourself. Why does this always happen to you?

Now begins the process of figuring out what happened last night. How did you get home? Who were you with? Did you invite someone back to your apartment to sleep with you? What embarrassing things did you say?

Anything is possible when you black out. Why don't you have any underwear on?

You flip through your text messages and notice you don't remember sending the ones after 1 a.m. You see repeated phone calls to people who should be blocked as well as the pizza delivery at 4 a.m.

Your hangover routine starts: damage control first. You text your bestie and make sure you didn't say or do anything completely humiliating. You grill her for information. You get pissed off when it takes her over 30 minutes to answer your text. Doesn't she understand what I'm going through right now? She needs to message me back, NOW!

You fill a cup with water and gulp it down. Then another. And another, but not too fast or it will make you nauseous. You look through all your drawers and cabinets for some Advil to make your splitting headache go away, while heavily considering having a beer to calm yourself.

You study a bruise on your shin. How did that get there? Another mystery with no answer. Another question that makes your stomach churn. "WTF happened last night?"

Feelings of worthlessness set in. Another day wasted. Another embarrassing situation. You disappointed yourself again because after this happened the last time, you promised yourself you wouldn't do this again. Yet, here you are, sitting in misery asking yourself: "Why do I keep doing this?"

It's the million-dollar question we've all asked ourselves. It's that moment, or moments, that we've had when it feels like getting wasted isn't fun anymore. It brings about too much anxiety, too much shame, embarrassment, and remorse. It's like we've gone from party girls and boys to almost being unable to identify what we're doing with our lives. We don't even know why we keep drinking the way we do. We keep trying to moderate, to make it fun again, or to prove that we don't have a problem and it doesn't ever seem to work. Happy hours turn into all night drunken debauchery every single time. We end up feeling like failures. We wonder what is wrong with us. Why can't we drink normally?

Those lingering questions may have brought you here, to this very book. We know how you feel because we've been there, too. We have sat inside these very same scenarios, despising our decisions. We got to the end of our ropes and we ruthlessly looked for a way out. Which you may be doing right now. The good news is: you're in the right place for answers.



In This Book You'll Learn About...

- Kelly Fitzgerald and Carly Benson, two girls from two different worlds who overused the same substances and both ended up getting sober in a non-traditional way.
- We'll share what worked for us and exactly what we did to create our paths in sobriety.
- What our lives in recovery look like now and how we maintain our sobriety.
- We'll detail all the ways that sobriety can work for you along with what works for us.
- What methods you can take to get there as there is no one-size-fits-all solution.
- The resources you need to put everything into action.

Sobriety is a lifestyle. It's a completely new of living and we're here to help you find what works for you.



Carly and Kelly

CHAPTER ONE: OUR PERSONAL STORIES

Carly

I took my first sip of alcohol when I was fifteen years old. From there, I quickly moved into smoking marijuana and experimenting with psychedelics. By the summer leading into my freshman year of college, I had found ecstasy and spent that entire summer rolling for days on end each weekend.

As I got to college at Florida State my freshman year, I calmed things down a bit and was your typical beer drinking, pot-smoking, freshman, with the freshman fifteen prove it. I ended up transferring to the University of Tampa my sophomore year and would complete my college and partying career there.

At school in Tampa, I was an above average party girl enjoying blunts everyday, all day and smashing bottles of alcohol at night as I worked in Ybor city as a flyer girl, shot girl, go-go dancer and bartender. Often, I would find myself in situations where I completely blacked out or, worse, was drugged, unsure of what transpired and able to recall anything other than how horribly sick I would spend the next day. I managed to make it through to my Senior year before trying the drug that would captivate me and grab me by the wrists.

I began using cocaine recreationally when I was 22 years old. At first, it was out of curiosity and it swiftly became part of my reoccurring party regimen. It became my go-to for energy and super powers, which included being able to drink exorbitantly more, being inducted into the “it” girl realm and offering me a VIP entry pass to all of the after-after parties in the secret coke society, as I liked to call it.



You see, growing up I had always been somewhat shy and carried around a looming feeling that I never quite fit in. These feelings of “not-enoughness” were a springboard for my addictions and created an open invitation for substances to make me feel like I finally had a voice and that I finally “mattered.”

I would go on to graduate, move out into the ‘real’ world and naturally took my bad habits along for the ride. Needless to say, what started out as a fun experimentation with cocaine, over time, developed into a dire necessity.

For five solid years from 2003 to 2008, in true adrenaline junkie fashion, I continued to use and abuse alcohol, cocaine and other stimulants, with cocaine being my most valued and prized love affair. It made me feel alive and connected in ways I had never felt before to both myself and other people, or at least so I thought.

In 2007, I went through a devastating break up of a four-year relationship, which sent me spiraling completely out of control. I buried myself in bottles of wine, weekend warrior sessions filled with sunrises and binges of alcohol and cocaine and avoided being alone or feeling my emotions at all costs.

My depression and anxiety was at an all time high, which had me running frantically from one high to another. The cocaine had me chasing it on a weekly and then daily basis and all of this running and chasing left me utterly dizzy and exhausted.

I began experiencing massive anxiety and subsequent panic attacks that scared me into an Urgent Care center where they diagnosed me with Anxiety Disorder. But this didn’t stop me, not yet at least.

I knew what I was doing was wrong, I felt it at my core, but I couldn’t stop. I would argue with myself that I could begin to moderate. I had everything under control. “I’m fine.”

However, as history would have it, I went on to overdose during a drug-filled oblivion in Miami, causing all of my close friends to pull me aside and proclaim their genuine concern for my health. I then went on to disappear during a girls’ weekend in Las Vegas with an eight ball to my head and after hours that lasted through the weekend. All of my girlfriends left that encounter despising me for my selfishness.



I finally came to the realization that I needed to slow it down, but no matter how hard I tried I couldn't moderate. Two glasses of wine always turned into an escapade to find cocaine and a sunrise session complete with chugging from vodka bottles, where my self-loathing, shame and guilt would be put on display and highlighted as I white-knuckled the come down.

I hated myself. The shame I felt for not being able to be normal, hiding the enormity of my problem and fearing the monster I had turned into, had finally become too heavy to bare.

On August 17, 2008 after another happy hour turned into sunrise, something came over me in my despair. I was experiencing what I now know to be delirium tremens from all the alcohol and toxins in my body. I was hallucinating, frantically trying to make it go away and trying as hard as I could to silence the demonic voices in my head.

That day I got on my hands and knees and cried out to a God I had never talked to before. I prayed for help, for a miracle and that if he was real to show me because I clearly couldn't manage to get sober on my own.

As I finished my tearful plea for help, a wave of calmness washed over me. From that day forward, I never drank or did cocaine again. Miraculously so.





Kelly

In the suburbs of Philadelphia where I grew up, 'alcoholism' was a scary and loaded word. It represented someone in my family and their erratic behavior. I started out my teen years with an attitude against drugs and alcohol. I wanted no part of them and I criticized any friends and boyfriends I dated who chose to indulge. That quickly changed. By senior year I was smoking marijuana and drinking whenever I could. To me it was the gateway to socialization and popularity, something I had been striving for since elementary school. I had the deep desire to be liked by my peers. I wanted to be at every party, every get-together and school dance, and I thought alcohol could get me there.

Drinking was occasional for me until I reached college. I couldn't wait to go away to school because I knew I would be without parental supervision and that there would be endless amounts of partying. And that's exactly what happened. College was where I began to binge drink as a way of life. Every social function I attended I pounded shots, played beer pong and other drinking games, and the goal was always to get wasted. College is also where blacking out became my normal. I had several amnesia-inducing blackouts starting my freshman year of college. I would be mortified to not know what I had done or said. I would be at the mercy of my friends and roommates to tell me what happened. There were countless times when friends had to clean up my vomit, carry me to my bed, or help me find my belongings. That is when I started to internalize the shame, guilt, and trauma that came along with each of these events. I would drink again to erase those feelings and in doing so, create more.

I became more and more detached from my emotions and connections with people. A lot of friendships and relationships became toxic.

I saw a few psychologists in college and after college while I tried to figure out why my life was so hard. Both of them asked me if I thought I had a problem with drinking and I adamantly denied any alcohol issue. I couldn't put two and two together. I did not see or understand how alcohol and my addiction affected every aspect of my life. It wasn't until I got sober that I would realize every bad thing that has happened to me in my life was preceded by alcohol.

I continued to live a party girl lifestyle after college and even moved thousands of miles away from my home in Pennsylvania to a popular spring break destination called Cancun. As with many people who are addicted, my drinking and using became progressively worse. I easily found other people who were escaping reality by living in paradise and were more than willing to drink and use at my level. Alcohol affected every aspect of my life. I would miss work or go in hungover. I would not eat because I would be drinking instead. I would get in fights and arguments with boyfriends and friends. It was pure chaos. Living in Mexico away from my family and lifelong friends allowed me to create a new drinking world. Tumultuous relationships, unsafe sexual encounters, traumatizing blackouts, and bingeing until I was sick had become the normalized pattern of my life.

In 2013 after endless arguments with my boyfriend Fernando over whether or not I could control myself when I drank, I took a trip to Punta Cana that would change my life forever.

The entire previous year I had been trying to regulate my drinking. I tried to drink two or three drinks instead of 10. I tried not to drink hard liquor. I tried to not take shots. Any type of mathematical equation involving type of alcohol, amount, and strength, you can think of – I tried it. I would even go a month or two without blacking out. I was convinced I had it under control. When I brought up the Punta Cana trip to Fer he did not want me to go. He was worried I would get out of control, hurt myself, be taken advantage of or worse. I definitely could not miss the trip because it was a bachelorette party for a girlfriend of mine who I grew up with. All of my closest girl friends were going. I went anyway with promises made to Fer that I would be able to control myself and drink normally.



The first day of the trip went well. I drank and had fun. I remembered everything and messaged Fer every few hours so he would know I was ok. The second day didn't go so well. We day drank and I blacked out. My friends had to take care of me and I ended up puking all over our hotel bathroom. It was humiliating. I had failed completely. I didn't do what I said I was going to do. I failed at proving to Fer and myself that I was a normal drinker. When I went to message him after I awoke from the blackout he already knew. I had a slew of messages from him saying he knows that I didn't contact him because I was too drunk and that he didn't want to be with me anymore. He was sick of seeing me do that to myself. I spent the rest of the weekend drowning myself in booze and having a pity party.

In the airport on the way back to Cancun I was a mess. I was bloated, sick, hungover, and my head was fuzzy. I couldn't stop crying. Inside my soul was screaming for help. I called my mom and blubbered to her, "I don't know what's wrong with me." She answered simply, "There is nothing wrong with you Kel, you're an alcoholic." It was in that moment at the Punta Cana airport that I had my moment of clarity. I couldn't do this anymore. I barely recognized the shell of the person I had become. I didn't want to feel like this ever again and I didn't want another relationship of mine to be ruined because of booze.

It was there on May 7, 2013 in a little country called the Dominican Republic that this American girl made a pact with herself and the universe that she would try. She would try a life without drugs and alcohol.



CHAPTER TWO: HOW WE GOT SOBER AND STAY SOBER

Carly

HOW I GOT SOBER:

From that day when I hit my knees in prayer on August 17th 2008, something shifted inside of me. I was sick and tired of feeling sick and tired. My desire and determination to create real change was matched with a divine and holy power, which propelled me into a new life almost immediately.

That same dismal night I attended my first AA meeting, where I became fully convinced that I was not like “those people.” I went to work. I paid my bills. I even went to the gym. It just didn’t resonate with me. My life wasn’t in shambles on the outside although my inner world was utterly broken. I was a high functioning alcoholic and addict, which made me believe that AA wasn’t the place for me.

I attended church shortly after and left feeling uplifted and reminded of what being a good human was supposed to look like. I tried this church thing on a few more times and it just fit me. It spoke to my soul and it became my meeting place each week where I could go, be feed a good word and start my next week feeling grounded.

Ultimately, the way I got sober was rooted in becoming open to something new.

Becoming open to doing things differently; to being open to experiencing life on new terms. I started going to the gym and staying home on the weekends. I created a home life and new



sleeping patterns. I went to the movies and started running.

I entered into a relationship with someone who had never smoked or drank in his life, which was a breath of fresh air to me. While this relationship ended after a year or so, it was exactly what I needed at the time as if an angel had sent him right to me to do life sans the booze, drugs and escape methods I had previously relied on.

My mission during the initial phase of my sobriety was both a challenge to myself to see if I could go one month, which turned into three, six, then nine in which turning back became something inconceivable. It was also a commitment to not let my sobriety interfere with being social or having fun. I became determined to not allow my status with alcohol to make me boring.

So, I still went out to bars, clubs and music festivals. I still laughed, cracked jokes and indulged in making fun of myself with my friends so they understood that this new lifestyle was for me and did not make me inferior or difficult to be around or let loose with.

My goal in the beginning years of sobriety was to just stay sober. I would remind myself of why I started, question how I would feel if I gave into a craving and I became increasingly aware of my thoughts after reading a book called Rational Recovery, which spoke to me very loudly as it was a catalyst for changing my mental game around using and drinking.

HOW I STAY SOBER:

As you can imagine, these mindsets sustained me for a while. However about four years into my sobriety, I was hit with another heart-breaking break up, which left me in a state of deep inquiry.

Why had I let someone into my life that was lying, leading a double life and not in alignment with any of my values? Why was I the way I was? What was it that kept me from being able to moderate or be normal? How in the world did I become addicted to substances?

I was deeply saddened during this time, as I had just moved into my own condo anticipating he would be joining me. Only to be left all alone, feeling betrayed and broken, once again. Except this time, drinking and drugging it away wasn't a prescription I could write myself.

I wanted, NO I needed, to know who I was and what made me tick. I began gobbling up self-help books and started following resources like Gabby Bernstein, The Daily Love, Kute

Blackson and A Course In Miracles. I became addicted to the clarity I was finding in words, videos and things I was reading.

I unconsciously started out on my own journey through “step work,” without knowing that’s what was happening and without following the framework of the 12 steps. I was making amends, forgiving myself and others, seeking God daily, making journal entries and lists of my own self-inventory and a spiritual awakening was well underway.

I had my first encounter with life coaching principals as I enrolled and attended in an intensive life coaching crash course with the Handel Group where I analyzed and redesigned every area of my life with visioning.

I took a writing course at Florida Gulf Coast University that sent me into a therapeutic outlet to process my sobriety and all these amazing ideologies I was learning for myself. I found it so helpful to get things out of my head and onto paper that I started a blog, which I told no one about for quite some time.

Next, I started sharing my writing with a few people who told me that it could truly help other people. I had a way with words and my story was inspiring. This feedback coupled with my remembrance of little to no online resources for non-traditional paths to recovery, presented me with a dutiful opportunity to create something I had been looking for when I was first starting out in sobriety.

My blog, Miracles Are Brewing was born, which became a major accountability tool, and later turned into a thriving coaching and yoga teaching business. I started writing each week, building an online community inside of social media and it suddenly grew arms and legs all on its own.

Being of service and sharing my heart has kept me sober so many times. The realization that my recovery was bigger than me has been a catalyst for miracles beyond my sober date.

Shortly thereafter, I found power yoga, or maybe it found me. Yoga became a healthy outlet for me to channel my obsessive mind, emotions and the stresses of life. I would leave each sweat filled class feeling challenged, empowered and uplifted knowing that I left my troubles on my mat.

Yoga is a place for me to become fully present to me. When you’re in a 95-degree room, putting your body into challenging poses, you only have the attention span to breathe. There’s no time for thinking about to-do lists, who said what to whom or the things in life that make us feel worried. It’s just you and your mat in that space.

My spiritual practices have been enhanced and continue to evolve as I reach for new education, certifications and mastery of what has worked on my path so I can bring it to my clients. They are without question the practices that have helped me stay sober. Prayer, meditation, personal growth, my own therapists and coaches, becoming a life coach and offering that service to my readership, regular yoga, massage, writing, community, earning my yoga teacher training credentials, creating, becoming more aware and constantly striving to be more of who I was made to be are the staples of my recovery.



Kelly

HOW I GOT SOBER:

After that painful day in the Punta Cana airport in 2013, I had no idea I was actually going to get sober.

I just knew I needed a change. I could no longer go on living how I was. I had driven myself crazy for years trying to moderate and regulate my drinking and nothing worked. It was time I faced the fact that bad things always happened to me when I drank. The only thing I hadn't tried was quitting drinking and using drugs altogether. I figured I had nothing to lose because I had tried it all. I was desperate give sobriety a shot. I had never gone longer than a week without drinking, but I was willing to try.



I headed back to my apartment in Cancun and tried to pick up the pieces of my life. The first days were the most difficult. My then-boyfriend had moved his stuff out of our apartment and I was there on my own. I reached out to my support system: family, parents, and friends and told a few of them about what I was feeling and that I didn't want to drink anymore. I also reached out to a sober woman who I knew was in Alcoholics Anonymous and she recommended meetings and the Big Book. I knew nothing about addiction treatment and honestly, I was too scared and ashamed to ask. I was still in denial about my substance use disorder and I did not want to be an "alcoholic" who went to rehab or AA. My pride got the best of me. I also wasn't sure if there were English speaking AA meetings in Cancun (there are). I had another Mexican friend who bought me AA literature in Spanish and offered to take me to a meeting, but I declined. I wasn't ready. A few weeks into my sobriety I signed up for a bunch of online 12 step meetings to try and ease into it. I found myself in chat rooms with strangers who had unusual fictitious screen names and I didn't understand much of what was going on.

I had no idea how the format of the meeting ran, what literature they were quoting or referring to, or why I needed a sponsor. I had many women message me and tell me I should still go to a face-to-face 12 step meeting. Eventually I grew tired of interrogating questions and not understanding the rhetoric and I left the chat rooms.

Each day that passed that I did not pick up a drink or drug I began to physically feel better. The bloating, exhaustion, and hangovers faded away and I was able to approach life clearheaded. I began researching all I could about addiction, alcoholism, and sobriety. I was intrigued to know if I could live life as a sober woman. I read a lot of books, addiction and recovery blogs, and websites. One of the first books I read that made sense to me was from Veronica Valli entitled *Why You Drink and How To Stop*. That's when it all clicked for me. I could relate to everything in the book and I was realizing that alcoholism isn't a black and white issue. I was reconciling how I could fall on the addiction spectrum. Each day I read more and I continued to stay sober. As time went on my emotions began to even out and I was able to fix my relationship with Fer. I also did not want to miss out on life and I still attended weddings, birthday parties and some nights out at the club during my first year of sobriety. I wouldn't necessarily recommend this, but I was determined to keep my old life. I would tell people I just wasn't drinking on that night or make up an excuse and I would keep water or soda in my hand all night to make me feel comfortable. Eventually, going out didn't seem as fun of necessary as it had been for so many years. I began working out, getting up early to run before work, and going to bed early at night.

As the days began to rack up, I became proud of myself. I was excelling at my job which was doing social media and writing blogs for a group of hotels in Cancun. Co-workers suggested I start my own blog after praising my work. With help from my sister I named my blog *The Adventures of a Sober Señorita* and writing quickly became my passion. At first, the premise for my blog was an American girl living in Mexico and my posts were about local events in Cancun, travel, and funny posts like *11 Things You Must Accept Living as an Expat in Mexico*. I was still sober, and 'sober' was in my blog name, but I wasn't quite sure how to go about addressing it. A small part of me was scared that if I mentioned it I would fail at sobriety. A few months after I started the blog I reached one year sober. I couldn't believe it. I was in shock, awe, and felt pure happiness. I had so many feelings inside that I wanted to write down, so I did. That was the first blog I ever wrote about my sobriety, *One Year Without Alcohol* and it was a hit. It went viral, was picked up by the Huffington Post, translated into 5 languages, and shared around the world. This was my sign from the universe that I was on the right path. Sobriety was my thing and I was going to continue to share about it.

HOW I STAY SOBER:

After reaching one year, I knew sobriety was going to be part of my identity and something I would continue, maybe forever. Shortly after I reached one year sober in Cancun, Fer and I decided to move to Florida. At that point reading, writing, alone time, and exercise were the main components of my recovery program. After moving to Florida a blog reader reached out to

me and told me she lives in the same town where we moved and goes to 12 step meetings. She shared that there is a great group of women here and if I ever wanted to try a face-to-face 12 step meeting I could go with her. I took her up on the offer. I went to my first ever 12 step meeting at 1 year and 5 months sober. It wasn't as horrible as I imagined it to be. Everyone was super nice, welcoming, and loving. I kept going. I got a sponsor and she guided me through the 12 steps. The 12 steps taught me about why I drank, how I used alcohol as a coping mechanism, and how it played into every negative behavioral pattern in my life. I passed the message on to others and began a commitment every other Sunday chairing a 12 step meeting at a local addiction treatment center. I am grateful I gave 12 step a chance and found such a great group of women to share about addiction with here in Florida.

Today I am just over 3.5 years sober and I am overcome with gratitude every day for my sobriety. How I stay sober today is through writing and sharing my story, reading other sober teachers' work, remaining teachable and continuously learning about myself, keeping a strict exercise regiment, meditation and alone time. I also still go to 12 step meetings occasionally, but this is not the main focus of my recovery. I go to yoga and I enjoy building a spiritual practice there. My full-time job is in the addiction and recovery industry and therefore sobriety is always at the forefront of my life.

There were many years when I couldn't imagine my life without alcohol and today I can't imagine my life without sobriety. I finally come back to my inner being. I know who I am and where I want to go in life and I have sobriety to thank for that.



CHAPTER THREE: WAYS TO GET SOBER

Treatment Programs

Treatment for substance abuse is a great way to get started on the path to sobriety. This offers a setting with trained professionals who can help someone make the transition into getting healthy an easier one.

Depending on the substances, medical detox may or may not be needed upon initial check in to help offset withdrawal symptoms.

From there, several different options for treatment programs are available which range from inpatient programs where a person can go stay at a facility in a judgment free zone as they face their drinking problems or outpatient programs where a person has more flexibility as they stay in their own environment while visiting the treatment center for therapy, counseling or meetings.

The goal of treatment programs is always to help a person get to the root of their problems and teach them how to live life without substances. They prepare someone in early sobriety on how to enter back into their lives by teaching them how to learn new behaviors, manage emotions and stress, break habits and get the support they need through wellness habits and community.

Most insurance plans will offer coverage for treatment programs and, often, local governments will subsidize the costs. There are many options on how to pay as most facilities will offer payment plans. It's as easy as a few phone calls to learn more about your options.

12 Steps

WWW.AA.ORG

12-step is the dominant addiction treatment pathway across the world. The 12 steps were originally published in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1939. Since then, many different recovery groups have taken the 12 steps and made them their own.

The 12 steps are a set of guiding spiritual principles that help you connect with a higher power and live in recovery from behavioral, compulsive, and addictive problems. The 12 steps describe alcoholism and other addictions as a physical allergy as well as a spiritual malady. Total abstinence from alcohol is part of the pathway.

A sponsor helps guide you through the 12 steps and acts as a mentor for your recovery. The fellowship is a powerful community that allows you to connect with others who have gone through what you've gone through and have recovered.

Some other fellowships that have adapted the 12 steps for their own use include: Cocaine Anonymous, Marijuana Anonymous, Heroin Anonymous, Crystal Meth Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Sexaholics Anonymous, Overeaters Anonymous, Pills Anonymous and Smokers Anonymous.

Celebrate Recovery

WWW.CELEBRATERECOVERY.COM

Celebrate Recovery is a Christian based 12-step program offered throughout various ministries across the U.S. A pastor by the name of John Baker started the program at Saddlebrook Church in 1991 and is now available in thousands of churches with over 2.5 million people involved in the program.

They believe in Jesus Christ being their one and only higher power and teach from a curriculum based on the Bible along with supporting books such as devotionals and the 12-steps and 8 Principles, which are all rooted in scripture.

Meetings are held in local churches in a group format for both women and men and do not offer online groups. Meetings are all held face-to-face and can be found on their meeting locator.

This type of group would be perfect for a person who is religious or wanting to develop more faith as they work through their hurts, habits and hang ups. The program is more biblically based than psychologically and often the members of CR end up becoming very involved in the church community as they continue to attend.

Rational Recovery

WWW.RATIONAL.ORG

Rational Recovery is a book written by Jack Trimpey in 1985, which teaches people how to recognize their addictive voice and break the cycle of addiction by identifying their thoughts. He created the term: Addictive Voice Recognition Technique (AVRT), which is a simple self-help approach that is not based on step work or "one-day-at-a-time," but instead focuses on planned, permanent abstinence at an individual level of recovery.

This methodology is founded on the principles of breaking the pathways to the pleasure and reward centers in the brain. With this, Rational Recovery is centered on the Abstinence Commitment Effect (ACE) in which the person states, “I will NEVER drink again,” after realizing that moderating or the possibility of relapse is out of the question for them. At this point, AVRT comes into play to help them sustain their ACE.

This program helps a person to realize their thinking patterns around alcohol or drugs and relies on this instead of joining groups for sober alcoholics. The AVRT-based recovery model is not of the mindset that alcoholism is a disease, but rather that problem drinkers are addicted to alcohol and addiction is not a disease – defining it as:

“Addiction is simply any behavior that persists against one’s own better judgment, a love/hate relationship with the high-life. Addiction is a primary, functional disorder (not a disease) that may be willfully abandoned through a personal commitment to permanent abstinence.”

This type of recovery, or “recoveryism” a term coined by Rational Recovery for those living an inverted lifestyle free of addiction is used instead of using the word alcoholism, is great for someone who doesn’t see alcoholism as a disease, doesn’t want to work through steps or relate to a higher power and is generally more scientific in their reasoning. To learn more, visit the Crash Course On AVRT or pick up a copy of the book.

*Rational Recovery can also be used as supplementation in addition to other methods as a person can take what they like from this training.

Recovery Coaching

Coaching for sobriety is a great compliment to any and all programs in recovery. A Recovery Coach works one-on-one or in a group setting with people and comes along side them in their recovery journey. A sober coach helps the person find what works for them and can pass along advice for how to stay sober based on their own experiences.

Carly Benson is a Sobriety Coach and her coaching aims to help her clients find their own answers by asking them questions that lead them to their own discoveries. She is also trained in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, which is great for people who have underlying, co-occurring disorders such as anxiety or depression.

Recovery Coaching is an effective tool for sobriety because it gives a person someone to talk through his or her feelings, emotions and fears with. A coach will give homework assignments such as reading, journaling or completing exercises that help solidify spiritual practices, new and healthier lifestyle habits and also work to establish short and long term goals.

Accountability is often a number one reason for hiring a Recovery Coach and can it be a great way to dig deeper into the “why” and “how” of staying sober. Coaching is a great way to help someone establish a stronger connection to themselves and to their sobriety through the confidential and unbiased relationship with their coach.

Moderation Management

WWW.MODERATION.ORG

Lesser-known alternative to Alcoholics Anonymous and the 12 steps is a secular non-profit organization called moderation management (MM). MM is made up of peer-run support groups with members who would like to reduce their alcohol consumption. MM was created in 1994 for non-dependent problem drinkers who wish to limit their drinking due to its negative effects, but not stop drinking completely. The organization openly admits that moderation management is not for everyone, that there are some problem drinkers for whom only abstinence will work.

MM allows members to set their own drinking goals, although they are encouraged to particular guidelines and techniques including a 9-step cognitive-behavioral change program. These steps include a mandatory 30-day period of abstinence from alcohol. MM then suggests that you abstain from drinking alcohol at least 3 or 4 days per week.

Smart Recovery

WWW.SMARTRECOVERY.ORG

SMART Recovery stands for Self Management and Recovery Training, an international non-profit organization that provides help and support for people who are seeking abstinence from addictive behaviors. These behaviors can include alcohol consumption, drug use, gambling, sex, or anything else that is out of control in your life. SMART offers face-to-face meetings across the globe where members meet to discuss and work on their recoveries. Meetings are run by volunteer facilitators.

SMART’s approach is secular and scientifically-based using behavioral, cognitive, and motivational methods. The organization views addiction as a destructive habit, rather than a disease, but also recognizes that some people have a predisposition to addiction. The program concentrates on four areas: Building Motivation, Coping with Urges, Problem Solving, and Lifestyle Balance. The “SMART Toolbox” is made up of Motivational Enhancement Therapy and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy techniques. SMART talks about the stages of change and believes that members may need different exercises for different stages of change as they progress.

SMART recovery meetings and services are free, although donations are accepted. SMART is recognized by the American Academy of Family Physicians, the National Institute on Drug

Drug Abuse (NIDA), and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA).

Refuge Recovery

WWW.REFUGERECOVERY.ORG

Refuge Recovery offers a Buddhist pathway to recovery from drug and alcohol use. It's a mindfulness-based recovery community that utilizes Buddhist philosophy, including teachings of the Four Noble Truths, with an emphasis on empathy and knowledge as the path for overcoming addiction. The organization believes that people benefit from understanding the suffering addiction has created in their lives and how to accept and honor the pain.

There is a Refuge Recovery literature book and meetings available around the U.S. They engage in the Eight-Fold Path to Recovery, an abstinence path to be maintained throughout the remainder of someone's lifetime. The eight folds include: meditation, intention, understanding, service, effort, livelihood, communication and action. The path is not linear and does not have to be taken in order. The core principles of Refuge Recovery are mindfulness, compassion, forgiveness, and generosity.



Sobriety Is A Lifestyle

Our goal with this ebook is to offer you a look into our lives to show you all the different ways we practice sobriety. So many of us have such similar stories about drinking or using, and no matter how you wear an addiction, it all feels the same on the inside.

You don't have to walk around carrying shame and guilt for not being or feeling "normal," wondering if you have a problem or how to face what seems like a mountain to change your life.

Changing your life starts with a decision that you've had enough. It begins the moment you become open to doing things differently and to trying something new. Then it is a matter of making sure you put practices, support and a lifestyle in place that sets you up to live a life without substances.

We believe that no matter what path to sobriety resonates or works for you, at the end of the day living a life of sobriety is a lifestyle. Getting sober and staying sober is a daily choice and commitment that takes work, but the rewards over time are well worth it.

Sobriety offers a chance at a new life where you know who you are, what makes you tick and most importantly how you want to live your life.

WISHING YOU WELL ON YOUR JOURNEY!

- Kelly and Carly

