



■ THE
■ RECOVERY
■ COURSE



COURSE WORKBOOK

Welcome

We would like to welcome you to the Recovery Course and we are glad that you have chosen to take a step forward on your journey in Recovery by joining this course with us.

We have created this workbook so that it will make the coursework easier to follow.

What is The Recovery Course?

The Recovery Course is a Twelve Step programme albeit one that focuses on all kinds of addiction from alcohol and drug dependency through to gambling, sex addiction, pornography, self - harming and eating disorders. It is designed to bring freedom to people who struggle with addiction or any compulsive behaviour.

The Recovery Course also differs from a typical Anonymous Fellowship is that it is designed to enhance our recovery work by integrating texts from the Bible with the Twelve Steps.

The course works alongside conventional AA and NA programmes and guests are positively encouraged to join these other Anonymous Fellowships in conjunction with The Recovery Course should they so wish.

Who is it for?

The Recovery Course is open to anyone struggling with any sort of addiction or any compulsive behaviour that is spoiling one's life, such as using drugs, alcohol, pornography, sex, gambling and self-harming to name just a few. The course is a good starter for those completely new to recovery as well as those whom have been in recovery for years, but would like to take a fresh look at the steps from a Christian perspective

Format of the course

The course runs once a week for 16 weeks. A typical evening starts at 7pm for food, which is then followed by a 15/20-minute talk and then discussion in single-sex small groups for around an hour. The evening ends at 9.30pm. Each week there is some simple 'Coursework' that helps each participant to explore each of the 12 steps in a deeper way. Nobody has to do the 'Coursework', but it's fair to say that the guests who throw themselves into this are the ones who profit the most. The Coursework is entirely for the guest's benefit and no one else gets to see it; it is completely private.

*We look forward to welcoming you and walking with you on this journey
to freedom from addiction.*

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Pause for Thought

Introductory Session 1 - To Change or Not To Change?

There are no right or wrong answers to the following questions, just honest answers.

Honesty is the key because as Jesus says in John 8:32:

“Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

“If you wait for perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.”

Ecclesiastes 11:4 - The Living Bible

1. Make a note of your main triggers.

We know there are some obvious situations that trigger off our addictive urges. For instance, you are an alcoholic and you just can't walk home past The Pig and Whistle without dropping in for a drink. Solution; take another route home. You compulsively overeat; solution, clear out the fridge and get rid of those secret hordes of chocolate biscuits; you are bored and feeling lonely and so log on to a porn website for solace; solution, put on some music instead or read a book. One word of warning, the list will never be comprehensive enough. Someone with an addiction is susceptible to every situation becoming a possible trigger, because the real triggers are not the external situations, but the internal feelings provoked by that situation. So you may take the long way home past the pub only to find that in keeping yourself busy you go off to a football match and at half time end up having a pie and a pint or ten and that situation wasn't on your list. Addiction feeds off any kind of feeling; it will soothe bad feelings and it will prolong good ones and therefore all situations can potentially set you off.

Even so it can still be useful to make a list of the main situations that have caused you problems in the past. Divide a sheet of paper into two columns. In the left hand column put the situations that might cause you to use and in the right hand column put down how you intend to deal with that situation.

The aim of the exercise below is not just to find a mechanical solution to the problem, but also to change the way we **feel** about the situation.

Situation	Strategy
<i>Passing the pub</i>	<i>Take another route home</i>
<i>Raiding the fridge at night</i>	<i>Keep the fridge empty</i>
<i>Looking at porn late at night</i>	<i>Avoid looking at magazines, films or websites with sexual images in them (including advertisements)</i>
<i>Reward for successful business deal completed</i>	<i>Go to the cinema instead of the wine bar</i>
<i>Going clubbing on a Friday night</i>	<i>Find an alternative drug-free venue</i>
<i>Dealer keeps ringing you</i>	<i>Change your Sim card</i>
<i>Sitting at home alone, feeling</i>	<i>Keep yourself busy; get out with reliable friend</i>
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..... (Continue on an extra sheet if necessary.....)

2. Write your life story

It can be a really good idea to write down your life story. This might sound terrifying as it reminds you of being back at school and you failed then. Don't panic; you are not writing your autobiography for publication or to pass an exam. It is not a blow-by-blow account of your life, it is not an act of confession, it does not have to be painstakingly accurate in every chronological detail and it does not have to be a literary masterpiece. It does not matter one iota about your ability to spell or master basic rules of English grammar. It is also not being done to supply the leaders on this course with a source of information about you.

In an article for the BBC by Brendan O'Neill he reports that back in 2007 the bestseller lists were full of memoirs about miserable childhoods. At one point there were six such books in the top 10. Waterstone's bookshop even has a 'Painful Lives' section.

What lies behind the rise of what has become known in the trade as the 'misery memoir' or 'mis lit' Some of the authors say they write in order to come to terms with their traumatic experiences and to help readers to do likewise.

Toni Maguire, author of the top-selling paperback *Don't Tell Mummy*, in which she writes of her abuse at the hands of her father, said in a recent interview it was "*difficult going back over the past, but writing helped me deal with the past.*"

James W Pennebaker, a professor of psychology at the University of Texas says that writing about traumatic experiences can indeed help the writer to deal with his or her emotions. "*There's compelling evidence that writing about serious emotional upheavals can improve mental and physical health.*"

Professor Pennebaker admits scientific research into the value of expressive writing is still in the "early phases", but his research seems to show that trauma-writing is beneficial.

"In our studies we bring a group of people into the lab and randomly select some to write about a personal traumatic experience and others to write about something superficial. They write for 15 or 30-minute bursts over a period of three or four days. We found that those who write about trauma tend to see some improvement in wellbeing."

O'Neill also reports that the trauma-writers experienced health benefits - including improvement in immune function - and also reported feeling "*less haunted*" by their traumatic experiences.

What you need to understand is this testimony is for the benefit of you, no one else and it has three main functions:

- 1) To help you get an understanding of what has been happening in your life and possibly how and why you have become the person you are.
- 2) To help you to begin to tell others, in a small way, little bits about yourself. As these small disclosures are shared you will begin to learn to trust other people.
- 3) To give your group a rough idea of where you are coming from and where you are now. Consequently they will be in a better position to draw alongside you.

How do I write it?

You can write it out word for word or you can just make some rough headings that will remind you of specific things that have shaped your life. Keep it simple

As addicts we are by nature secretive people and there is real benefit to be had in being able to share openly and honestly about ourselves. We have become very skilled at keeping our defects well hidden. The trouble is healing only begins as we allow light to shine into the darkness and the quickest way to do this is to choose to bring those things that are in the darkness out into the light. The sooner we begin to openly share with our fellow human beings, the sooner the healing process will begin.

At the next meeting you may have the opportunity to share with your fellow strugglers your life story if that is something you would like to do (you don't have to). Just the thought of that at this moment in time might get you into a complete panic. The thought of sharing your testimony with someone else is the last thing on your mind, but we would like to encourage you to think about it. Your fellow strugglers will not only admire your courage, but will also probably be inspired by you to share their own story.

Another interesting thing will probably also happen. The fact that others have listened to you and can empathise with your story may help you feel as though a one ton weight has been lifted from your shoulders, leaving you with such a lightness of being you will probably feel quite euphoric. And we can all do with some euphoria now & again.

Finally, you are not writing an epic autobiography of every facet of your life for publication, so try restricting yourself to no more than a few pages at most, - just covering the main influential events,

b) How many of the good things in your life do you owe to your addiction? Count them up and write down the number.

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Total =

c) How many of the bad things in your life do you owe, either directly or indirectly to your addiction? Count them up and write down the number.

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Total =

d) Reflect on the result. Is your addiction still a 'friend' to you?

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The leaders in your group are here to help you, so make sure you have their mobile number or e-mail just in case you need to ask them anything over the next week. If you need to actually ring rather than texting or emailing them then make sure you contact them at a civilised hour (not 3am!) and try and keep the conversation relatively short, preferably no more than ten minutes as they, like you, have a lot of pressure on their time. Even if there are no problems to discuss, put in a 'check-call' or text just to touch base.

They will enjoy hearing from you!