

**Overcoming Your Alcohol or
Drug Problem:
Effective Recovery Strategies,
Second Edition**

Dennis C. Daley
G. Alan Marlatt

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Overcoming Your Alcohol or Drug Problem

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W o r k b o o k

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About Treatments *ThatWork*™

One of the most difficult problems confronting patients with various disorders and diseases is finding the best help available. Everyone is aware of friends or family who have sought treatment from a seemingly reputable practitioner, only to find out later from another doctor that the original diagnosis was wrong or the treatments recommended were inappropriate or perhaps even harmful. Most patients, or family members, address this problem by reading everything they can about their symptoms, seeking out information on the Internet, or aggressively “asking around” to tap knowledge from friends and acquaintances. Governments and healthcare policymakers are also aware that people in need don’t always get the best treatments, something they refer to as “variability in healthcare practices.”

Now healthcare systems around the world are attempting to correct this variability by introducing “evidence-based practice.” This simply means that it is in everyone’s interest that patients get the most up-to-date and effective care for a particular problem. Healthcare policymakers have also recognized that it is very useful to give consumers of healthcare as much information as possible, so that they can make intelligent decisions in a collaborative effort to improve health and mental health. This series, “Treatments *ThatWork*™,” is designed to accomplish just that. Only the latest and most effective interventions for particular problems are described in user-friendly language. To be included in this series, each treatment program must pass the highest standards of evidence available, as determined by a scientific advisory board. Thus, when individuals suffering from these problems or their family members seek out an expert clinician who is familiar with these interventions and decides that they are appropriate, they will have confidence that they are receiving the best care available. Of course, only your healthcare professional can decide on the right mix of treatments for you.

The ravages of alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse have been documented time and again, and the lives ruined are too numerous to count. But new treatment programs have appeared in the last decade that have been proven to be effective in relieving the burden of abuse and addiction for a large

number of individuals. The program described in this manual presents the latest version of one of the most advanced treatment programs yet developed for problems with alcohol, tobacco, or drugs. This program recognizes that these problems have both biological and psychological causes, and that no single program will work the same for everyone. Therefore it is meant to be flexibly adapted to where the individual is on the long road to recovery, from just getting started through preventing relapse. Incorporating the wisdom of programs that have come before such as 12-step programs, cognitive-behavioral programs, and relapse prevention approaches, this treatment benefits from decades of development and scientific evaluation and has been used to the benefit of thousands of individuals with these problems. In this program you will learn skills to cope effectively with cues and triggers that lead to use and abuse of drugs and alcohol and hopefully master the emotional roller coaster that accompanies this condition. This includes altering patterns of beliefs, dealing with interpersonal conflicts that often lead to use and abuse, and building healthy social support systems. This program is most effectively applied by working in collaboration with your clinician.

David H. Barlow, Editor-in-Chief,
Treatments *That Work*™
Boston, Massachusetts

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Contents

Overview of Substance Use Problems and Assessment

Chapter 1	Introduction and Plan for Workbook	3
Chapter 2	Recognizing Your Substance Use Problem	11
Chapter 3	Recognizing Consequences of Your Substance Use	19

Change Issues and Strategies

Chapter 4	Treatment Settings for Substance Use Problems	27
Chapter 5	Stages of Change	35
Chapter 6	How to Use Therapy or Counseling	41
Chapter 7	Overview of Goal Planning	53
Chapter 8	Managing Cravings and Urges to Use Substances	59
Chapter 9	Managing Thoughts of Using Substances	69
Chapter 10	Managing Emotions	75
Chapter 11	Refusing Offers to Use Substances	83
Chapter 12	Dealing With Family and Interpersonal Problems	89
Chapter 13	Building a Recovery Support System	99
Chapter 14	Self-Help Programs and Recovery Clubs	105
Chapter 15	Medications for Substance Use Problems	113

Relapse Prevention, Progress Measurement, and Co-occurring Psychiatric Disorders

Chapter 16	Relapse Prevention: Reducing the Risk of Relapse	127
Chapter 17	Relapse Management: What to Do if You Lapse or Relapse	135

Chapter 18	Strategies for Balanced Living	<i>143</i>
Chapter 19	Measuring Your Progress	<i>153</i>
Chapter 20	Managing a Co-occurring Psychiatric Disorder	<i>159</i>
Appendix	Helpful Resources	<i>169</i>
	References and Suggested Readings	<i>171</i>
	About the Authors	<i>175</i>

Overview of Substance Use Problems and Assessment

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Goals

- To understand the characteristics of substance use problems
- To understand the benefits of using this workbook in conjunction with supervised therapy or counseling
- To learn the importance of keeping records and completing recovery worksheets

Introduction and Overview

This recovery workbook provides you with practical information and skills to help you understand and change your problem with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, pills, or heroin. It is designed to be used in therapy or counseling and will help you focus on specific issues involved in stopping substance use and in changing behaviors or aspects of your lifestyle that keep your substance use problem active. The information presented in this workbook is derived from research studies of substance abuse treatment and our many years of experience working with clients who have alcohol, tobacco, and other drug problems. It discusses the most effective and helpful recovery issues and change strategies from studies of cognitive-behavioral treatment, coping skills training, 12-step counseling, and relapse prevention. These studies focus on the importance of changing beliefs, thinking, relationships, and behaviors and learning “skills” to help you stay sober and change your life.

Your change plan should be tailored to your needs and problems. No single recovery program is for everyone. The ideas in this workbook will help you work with a therapist or counselor to develop your personal plan for recovery.

In this workbook, we provide you with information about substance use problems, the recovery process, the relapse process, types of professional

treatments available, and self-help groups. When we talk about “substance use problems,” we are referring to problems with alcohol, tobacco, or any other type of drug. Although there are differences among the various substance use problems, there are also many similarities. Therefore, the recovery strategies discussed throughout this workbook can be adapted to any type of substance-related problem. The major goals of this workbook are to help you reach maximum treatment benefit by motivating you to develop and implement a personal change plan and to provide you with practical strategies or skills to cope with the most common problems and challenges encountered when substance use is stopped.

This workbook includes the following topics:

- Recognizing your substance use problem and the consequences of it
- Choosing the right treatment setting
- Managing your cravings
- Controlling thoughts of using alcohol or drugs
- Dealing with upsetting emotions (anger, boredom, depression, etc.)
- Refusing offers to use substances
- Dealing with family and interpersonal conflicts
- Building a recovery support system
- Identifying and managing relapse warning signs and high-risk factors
- Relapse management
- Living a balanced life
- Measuring your progress
- Managing a co-existing psychiatric disorder

Definition and Prevalence of Substance Use Problems

A substance use problem exists when you experience any type of difficulty related to using alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs, including illicit street drugs

or prescribed drugs such as painkillers or tranquilizers. The difficulty can be in any area of your life: medical or physical, psychological, family, interpersonal, social, academic, occupational, legal, financial, or spiritual.

Substance abuse and substance dependence are clinical diagnoses used when your problematic use of substances meets specific criteria in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, Fourth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR)*.

Substance abuse is diagnosed when your pattern of use leads to significant impairment or distress, evidenced by meeting one or more of the following criteria within a 12-month period of time:

- Your recurrent use of alcohol or other drugs leads to failure to fulfill your major obligations at work, school, or home.
- You drink or take drugs in situations in which it is physically hazardous to do so.
- Your use causes legal problems.
- You continue to drink alcohol or take drugs even though they are causing social or relationship problems in your life.

Substance dependence is diagnosed when you meet three or more of the following criteria:

- Your tolerance to alcohol or drugs increases (takes you more to get high or achieve the desired effect of using alcohol or other substances).
- Your tolerance to alcohol or drugs decreases (you are affected by smaller quantities than in the past).
- You suffer withdrawal symptoms when you cut down or stop using alcohol or drugs.
- You keep using substances to avoid withdrawal sickness.
- You lose control over how much you use or for what length of time you use.
- You have difficulty cutting down or controlling your substance use.
- You are preoccupied with using or getting substances.

- You experience social, work, or recreational problems as a result of your use.
- You continue to use despite negative effects of such use.

The main difference between abuse and dependence is that the latter involves more symptoms and negative effects than abuse and often involves physiological symptoms such as tolerance change or withdrawal symptoms. Examples of each of the symptoms of abuse and dependence are provided in the next chapter along with a checklist so that you can note which symptoms you are currently experiencing.

Although many types of substances can be abused and can cause physical or psychological dependence, the most commonly abused substances are alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and cocaine. Almost 14% of adults in our country will experience an alcohol abuse or dependency problem, and over 6% will experience a drug abuse or dependency problem. The majority of smokers in the United States are considered dependent. Many people have problems with two or more substances.

Causes of Substance Use Problems

There is no single cause of all alcohol or drug problems. These problems are caused by a number of different biological, psychological, and social or environmental factors that vary from one person to the next.

Biological Causes

Alcohol problems run in families, so it is thought that some individuals have a genetic predisposition to develop an alcohol problem. Keep in mind that no one specific “alcohol” or “drug dependence” gene has yet been identified. However, it is likely that there are differences in brain chemistry and metabolism that increase the likelihood of developing an addiction to alcohol or other substances. Scientists believe that these addictive substances work on the mesolimbic dopamine pathway or “reward” pathway of the brain. This is the part of the brain that makes food, sex, and social activities pleasurable. As addiction progresses, the brain is “hijacked” by substances. The result is that the addicted person relies more on substances

and less on natural rewards to feel good. Even though substance use causes many problems, it is then “reinforced” when the person ingests alcohol or drugs. Some addicted people also develop a tolerance for alcohol or other drugs, requiring an increasing amount of alcohol or drugs to obtain the desired effect. Their bodies seem to “need” or “want” substances, unlike people who do not develop an addiction or dependency on substances.

Psychological Causes

Substances are often used to reduce anxiety or tension, to relax, to cope with other unpleasant feelings, or to escape. For some people, this eventually contributes to substance abuse or dependency as they get more accustomed to using alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs to feel normal. Others have certain personality traits that make them more prone to using and subsequently abusing substances. Some have a psychiatric disorder, which can increase their vulnerability to developing a substance disorder.

Social or Environmental Causes

The family and social environment in which we live influences most behaviors, including substance use behavior. A person’s decision to use or not to use substances is affected by access to substances, pressure from peers to use, reinforcement from peers for using, observance of role models (e.g., parents) abusing substances, and standards or values learned from the community or broader culture.

Multiple Causes

Most likely it is not one but a combination of factors that caused you to develop a substance use problem. In cases of addiction or dependency, the factors that contributed to your initial use may be totally different than those that cause you to continue using. For some people physical factors may be the strongest, whereas for others psychological or social factors may be the strongest. Identifying the factors that contribute to your substance use problem can contribute to your recovery.

Benefits of This Workbook

This workbook offers many benefits, especially when used with professional therapy or counseling. First, it will help you become more educated about substance use problems and recovery. Understanding the recovery process, for example, makes it easier to cope with the ups and downs you are likely to experience. Second, this workbook will help you take a look at your particular problem with alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs and identify how it has affected your life and the lives of people close to you. Third, it will help you learn specific skills to manage the challenges and “nuts and bolts” problems encountered in recovery. Finally, it will help you reduce the risk of a future relapse. As a result of working a recovery program, you can experience benefits in your physical, emotional, or spiritual health; family and social relationships; ability to work or go to school; and financial condition. There are many potential short-term and long-term benefits of recovery.

Tips on Using This Workbook in Your Treatment

Overcoming Your Alcohol or Drug Problem: Effective Recovery Strategies, Workbook, Second Edition, was written to be used in conjunction with therapy or counseling. Ask your therapist or counselor for help in choosing which topics to work on and in what sequence. The sequence you choose should be based on your unique problems with substance use and where you are in the recovery process. If you have any questions about the meaning of the information presented, how it relates to your situation, or how to use it to aid your recovery, ask your therapist. If you try to implement some of the change strategies recommended and find they aren't working for you, work with your therapist to figure out why these ideas aren't helpful or if you need to find other strategies. Even if you don't agree with what you read in this workbook, you will find it helpful to discuss your reactions and ideas with your therapist.

This workbook can be used whether you are in individual or group therapy, or both. An open, honest, realistic, and disciplined approach to recovery in which you face your issues rather than avoid them will help you make the most progress.

Abstinence from the use of substances is usually the most appropriate goal of treatment, especially if you have an addiction. However, some people initially benefit from a harm-reduction approach before they agree on abstinence. Harm reduction refers to a reduction in the amount and frequency of substance use so there is a reduction in the negative consequences such as medical, family, work, or legal problems. However, if you are addicted, there is always the risk that serious consequences or even death could result if you do not stop completely.

The Importance of Keeping Records and Completing Recovery Worksheets

Throughout this recovery workbook, you will be asked to complete a number of records and worksheets related to each area of recovery. These assignments have several purposes:

1. To help you personalize the information presented so that you relate it to your unique situation. The information presented will make the most sense if you can relate it to your individual circumstances.
2. To help you become aware of the many aspects of recovery and of the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. We use the biopsychosocial model, in which biological, psychological, social, and spiritual aspects of recovery are all emphasized as important to your well-being and continued progress.
3. To help you identify internal and external triggers of substance use and develop strategies to manage them.
4. To provide you with a reminder that you need to take an active role in stopping alcohol and drug use and learn to cope positively with the problems experienced in recovery.
5. To help you carry out the proposed recovery change techniques and practice them in your daily life.
6. To help you document problems as well as successes with specific changes. Keeping track of your progress over time allows you to see the “big picture” and put setbacks into perspective.
7. To help you approach your treatment in a systematic and structured way. This allows you to take maximum advantage of your therapy

sessions because you are always working on important recovery issues between treatment sessions.

This interactive recovery workbook can be used as your personal notebook to keep track of important issues in your quest to manage your substance use problem. You can revisit sections of this workbook as many times as you need to help yourself develop and modify your change plan. When you are finished with professional treatment, this workbook can serve as a reminder for you. After a period of time, you can go back, review, and add to it as you learn new ways to handle the problems and demands of recovery.