

ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE EDUCATION PROGRAM**STUDY MATERIAL****SECTION 9****ALCOHOL AND THE NERVOUS SYSTEM****INSTRUCTIONS**

This is the 9th Section in a series of 14 Sections covering study material on alcohol abuse, alcoholics, alcoholism and substance (drug) abuse. This Section is named "Recovery - Part II". You will find this Section's study material divided into many "subsections" for easy understanding by you.

After you read and study the material in the first subsection, you may answer that subsection's study questions. As you learn each subsection you should then go on to the next. Before you try to answer any study questions, however, you should understand these guidelines, which will help you when answering the questions:

1. Some questions need a complete sentence for the answer.
2. Other questions need a True or False, or a Yes or No answer.
3. When answering any "fill-in" questions, remember that a blank may stand for just one (1) word, for a few words (2 or 3), or for even part of a sentence (4 or more words).
4. When any study questions offer you from 2 to 6 possible answers (these are called "multiple choice"), **only one of the answers given will be correct.**
5. There are no "trick" questions. **All answers will be found easily enough in the study material.**

Do not write in, fold or otherwise mutilate this booklet. Other people are going to be using it after you. You must return it in good condition before you will be issued a multiple choice test. Since the test questions will come from the study material and study questions found in this booklet, learning the study material and knowing the answers to all the study questions will help you to prepare for and do well on the multiple choice test.

RECOVERY - PART II

LONG RANGE THINKING ABOUT LIVING WITHOUT ALCOHOL

1. **MAKE A HABIT OF EATING GOOD MEALS AT REGULAR TIMES.** - If you are feeling hungry between meals, go ahead and have a snack - it's still better than drinking. Of course, you don't want to get fat, either. But keep in mind that hunger pains might serve as an excuse to start drinking. Instead of feeling hungry, try lemon drops or mints or something else, so long as it is non-alcoholic (Gorski, T., Miller, M., 1986, Staying Sober, page 74-75). If you are a recovering alcoholic, it is not good to even eat food cooked with wine or any other alcoholic beverage. The alcohol itself may be gone, but the flavor is still there. Many recovering alcoholics have been unable to resist the temptation or urge to drink after eating food cooked in an alcoholic beverage. Don't risk it. Stay totally away from food cooked in alcohol or other such things like non-alcoholic beer or wine. The risk is not worth it.
2. **GET EXERCISE, BUT NOT TOO MUCH.** - Remember that your tolerance, or your ability to handle pain will be way below that for non-drinkers. If you have been drinking heavily for a long time, your mind and body are not used to facing either mental or physical pain straight. You will experience pain much more intensely than someone who drinks little or not at all. If you exercise to the point of pain or exhaustion you are stressing yourself out needlessly. You may use the excuse that you are tired or hurting to start drinking again. Watch out for this game that alcoholics and heavy drinkers play with themselves. It is a very dangerous game and can be avoided by exercising sensibly and being aware that there is a possibility that you may try to use this game on yourself (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, Staying Sober, pages 76-54-).
3. **GET PLENTY OF REST.** - If you feel tired don't push yourself, take a nap or relax. Recovering alcoholics often have the tendency to turn into workaholics. They use work to keep their minds off the mess they have made of their lives and all the people they have alienated. They often work to the point of exhaustion or complete tiredness then come home and collapse or pass out. When you are this tired, it's easy to get upset about little things that usually are not worth the fuss. Remember that you may use getting upset as an excuse to drink or to take drugs.

Especially during your first several months of recovery, try to stay away from things that cause you unnecessary stress (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, Staying Sober, page 77).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. It is important to make a habit of eating _____ meals at _____ times.

2. Remember to get _____, but not too much.
3. If you get too worn out from exercise, you will be putting yourself under a lot of _____.
4. You also need to remember to get plenty of _____ .
5. When you are too tired it's easy to get upset about _____ .

4. **GIVE YOURSELF TIME TO GET OVER NIGHT SWEATS AND TROUBLE FALLING ASLEEP.** - If you are an alcoholic, in general, it is believed that it takes about one month for each year you have been drinking for your nervous system to settle down after long periods of drinking. This means that you can expect to have trouble sleeping for a period of time after you stop drinking. One of the things you can do to cope with this situation is to make regular sleeping hours part of your routine. If you can make it through this initial period of sleeplessness, you should be able to sleep with no trouble after awhile. There are several other things that you can do that will help you get to sleep. Mild exercise, and drinking a glass of warm milk or eating a few bananas prior to bedtime will help you to get to sleep. Taking a vitamin B-Complex tablet after supper will also help relax you and help you sleep (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, Staying Sober, page 149-142).
5. **WHEN YOU GET DEPRESSED, DO SOMETHING!** - Don't just sit around and expect things to get better. Do something, even if you have to force yourself. Do something you get satisfaction from doing, exercise, go for a walk, write a letter. It is times like these when you can do things like washing the car, or cleaning the house. Keep track on your calendar of those things you finished or accomplished during the day. Remember something else, if you are depressed because you are lonely, a good way to take care of that is to help someone else out. Don't spend all your time feeling sorry for yourself. There are always people out there who can use your help (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, Staying Sober, page 71).
6. **DON'T WORRY ABOUT SEX.** - Many people try to use alcohol to improve their sex life. In the long run, this doesn't work too well. After a few drinks sex is more likely to get worse than better. Remember, alcohol is a central nervous system depressant. Aside from lowering sexual performance, being kissed by someone who smells like a brewery is not a great turn on. Its more likely to turn off your partner, who will not want to smell your alcohol breath for long. People use alcohol to get up the courage to do things in relationships that they would never try without it. You may fear that you cannot have a good and loving sex life without alcohol, especially if you have used it as a crutch for a long time. However, as you become healthy in mind and body, you should be able to have a normal sex life without all the problems alcohol has caused for you in the past (Gorski, T., Miller, M., 1986, Staying Sober, page 122, para c).
7. **WATCH OUT FOR MEDICINES WITH ALCOHOL.** - Many cough medicines, cold medicines, sleeping potions and mouth washes contain alcohol. If you are a recovering

alcoholic and use any of these, you could find yourself craving a drink again a few hours later. Be sure to tell any doctor who is treating you that you have had problems with alcohol. Avoid such over the counter medicines like they are poison. For a recovering alcoholic, they are poison (Kinney, J., & Leaton, G., 1987, Loosening the Grip, page 131-277-280).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. The best way to take care of night sweats and poor sleeping is to have _____ sleeping hours.
2. If you are feeling low or depressed, _____ .
3. If you are depressed because you are lonely, a good way to take care of that is to _____ .
4. As you become _____, you should be able to have normal sex.
5. Be sure to tell any doctor who is treating you that _____.

CHANGING YOUR THINKING ABOUT ALCOHOL

It is extremely important to learn to think differently about alcohol. Not only do you have to start thinking of yourself as a non-drinker, but you need to rethink your relationship with family, friends, job, and your life in general. When you take a good hard look at yourself, you may find there are a lot of things you want to change. Some of these things may be easy to change, others may require a lot of work. Even though you see other people with many problems and "stinkin thinking", that is no reason for you to hang onto old ways of thinking that messes up your life (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, Staying Sober, page 115, para 1/2). Here are some thoughts on how you can improve the way you get along with your family and yourself (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, Staying Sober, page 72-73).

1. **BE HONEST WITH YOURSELF ABOUT YOUR PAST.** - Look at the times you were wrong and admit you made mistakes both to yourself and others. Once you do this, forget about the past. It doesn't make sense to keep on beating yourself over the head and brooding about the way you hurt yourself or others in the past (Kinney, J., & Leaton, G., 1987, Loosening the Grip, page 209).
2. **WHAT GOES AROUND COMES AROUND.** - All you are seeing in other people is a mirror of yourself. Any time you start putting down other people, you are talking about yourself. Other people see you basically the way you see them. If you find other

people boring, they are also seeing you as boring. Change yourself, and you will magically find that the other people around you will mysteriously change also. People treat you the way you treat them. If you don't like the way people are treating you, change them. Remember, other people are basically reflecting back to you a picture of yourself.

3. **YOU ALWAYS ATTACK YOURSELF FIRST.** - First you treat yourself bad and blame and beat up on yourself, then you turn around and beat up on others. That comes back to you. You will not treat others any better than you are able to treat yourself. Remember, other people treat you as you treat them. If you treat others well, they will treat you well, and then you win. When you treat others well, and they in turn treat you well, then you in turn become more certain or convinced that you are a good person. In reality, all you are getting back from others is what you gave to them. Treat yourself better.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. It is important to learn how to start thinking in a new way, not only your thinking about _____, but also the way you feel about _____ .
2. Even though you see poor living in other people, that is no reason for _____ .
3. Be _____ with yourself about your past.
4. It doesn't make sense to keep on BROODING about the way _____ .

2. **TRY TO MAKE UP FOR THE HARM YOUR ALCOHOLISM CAUSED.** - Remember, what you dish out to others comes back to you. It doesn't matter whether or not you were drunk or not when you dished it out. Unless you repair the damage, you will get back what you dished out.

Of course, at times it may be better to let sleeping dogs lie and to not bring up the past at all. However, if there is something you can do to repair the harm that you have caused, go ahead. Here again, once you have done your best to improve things, stop worrying about them. Begin living so that you will have little to feel guilty about in the future (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, *Staying Sober*, page 55).

3. **ADMIT YOUR PAST MISTAKES TO SOMEONE ELSE.** - This may be one of the hardest things you ever do. However, it will go a long way toward helping you deal with and understand the past plus develop honesty for the future. You don't have to tell one person everything, nor do you have to say everything at once. At times you may find that it is easier to talk to people you don't know very well. Getting everything off your

chest will keep you from feeling that if people knew how awful you used to be, they would have nothing to do with you. Everyone on this planet has done things they are ashamed of. You are not alone, the sooner you realize this, the better you will feel. Once you start admitting your mistakes to others, you will find that they also have been hiding the same kinds of things from others. Everyone makes mistakes, it takes real courage to admit them to yourself and others (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, *Staying Sober*, page 71, para 2).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Then you can, make up for the _____ your alcoholism caused.
2. Once you have done your best to improve things, stop _____.
3. Begin living so that you will have little to _____ in the future.
4. Admit your _____ to someone else.
5. Telling someone about your past will go a long way toward helping you _____ and _____ the past plus develop _____ for the future.
6. Getting everything off your chest will keep you from feeling _____.

4. **BE THOUGHTFUL AND DON'T KEEP POINTING OUT OTHER PEOPLE'S FAULTS.** - The only thing you are doing when you point other peoples faults is seeing your own. Remember, other people are mirrors of who and what you are. You are only seeing your own faults as reflected through another person. That doesn't mean that they don't have those faults, it means that it takes one to know one, and that if you didn't have the same faults in yourself, you would not be able to see them in another person. If you blame someone else for having them, what goes around comes around, and it will just be a short while before someone starts blaming you for the same thing. Most alcoholics become selfish people and many times they have a habit of pointing out the wrong things other people do because this makes the alcoholics think they feel they aren't so bad after all. If you have been this kind of alcoholic (and you most likely were), you have a long way to go in the other way in order to get along with people. Besides, if you spend time helping other people, that will give you less time to get too worried about yourself.
5. **DO NO LET GUILT BUILD UP.** - If you find yourself doing things that push you toward your old life, admit it at once. Don't let your mistakes pile up, or you may find yourself telling lies to cover your errors. Then you will be faced with trying to keep all your lies straight. Sooner or later you will slip up and no one will trust anything you have to say once they find out you have been lying to them to cover your mistakes.

Remember, that along with guilt goes punishment. If you are carrying around your gilts, sooner or later, consciously or unconsciously, you will do something to punish yourself for the guilt you are feeling. The more you punish yourself, the worse you will feel about yourself, and the more deserving of punishment you will feel. It is a vicious circle that gains speed with every blow you deal to yourself. It is critical that you do something to rid yourself of your gilts and fears as soon as possible. Admit your gilts and fears to at least one other person. Everyone has done things that they are very ashamed of. The people who have less trouble have talked about their gilts and self hatreds with someone else and have learned to forgive themselves for the rotten things they have done in their past. Remember, you are your own worse enemy. Holding your rotten feelings and gilts inside has never helped you in the past, why do you continue to do it? Let out some of that steam with a person who you feel you can trust. Be careful not to just pick anyone. Choose a person who you can trust not to hurt you. Someone who will share themselves with you (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, *Staying Sober*, page 71-96).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Be _____ and don't keep pointing out _____ .
2. Many times alcoholics have a habit of pointing out _____ because this makes the alcoholics feel they are not so bad after all.
3. If you spend time helping other people, that will give you less time to _____.
4. Don't let your mistakes pile up, or you may find yourself _____ .
6. **BEWARE OF FEELINGS THAT PULL YOU BACK TO ALCOHOL.** - You may be at a party where everyone is drinking and think, "I sure would have more fun if I take one or two drinks". But remember, that while alcohol may be fun for others, it is poison to you and has wrecked your life (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, *Staying Sober*, page 71-108-153).

Don't let yourself get tired, hungry or angry. Any of these feelings are danger signals. Remember that while first recovering that the amount of any kind of pain that you will be able to stand will be much smaller than that of the average person who does not drink. This is because alcohol has been numbing you for a long time, and your mind has not been able to build up strong and stable defenses against pain. While recovering, it is important that you take very good care of yourself, even to the point of babying yourself. Keep things simple, and take it easy (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, *Staying Sober*, page 77).

7. **BEWARE OF GETTING TOO FRUSTRATED AND WANTING EVERYTHING RIGHT NOW.** - Beware of getting too upset. Most recovering alcoholics want everything right

now! Break tasks down into small steps, and do not bite off more than you can do. When you get frustrated with something, back off and take a shot at it later when you cool off. Frustration is the way you feel when you have worked hard to do something right, but it still turns out wrong. The belief that you have tried in vain is a danger to your sense of well being. If you have worked all day trying to fix your car, but by supper it still won't start, you are likely to feel that life is unfair. From there it is only a little more thinking to reach for a bottle so you can cope with life. Remember that for you, alcohol ends up making life harder rather than easier. Remember that everything that happens to you is for your own growth and development. Patience is one of the things that we all need to learn (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, *Staying Sober*, page 73, para 2).

You are here to learn. There are lessons to be learned from everything that happens to you. At first you will be afraid that you can't handle life without alcohol. But as the days and months go by you will get stronger. You will learn that you can stop drinking and say "no" to liquor. The farther away from your drinking days you get, the stronger you will be in your new life.

USE ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

AA is the most successful program going for keeping people sober. Find a sponsor, and use him. Although some people don't like AA, the fact is that it works, and it works better than just about anything else available. The first time you try AA, you may not like a particular group. If that is the case, find one that you can get along with. Each group has its own particular personality. Each group is very different from many of the others. It may take you awhile to find a group that suits you. If at first you do not succeed, don't give up, try a different group. AA can provide you with a recovering person who you may be able to call and talk to when you get into trouble. Use A.A.. Some groups spend an awful lot of time telling war stories.

These are usually the people in their first year of sobriety. If you have already done your mourning over the death of alcohol in your life and realized that you cannot drink, you don't need to be in with a group that is still mourning the loss of alcohol. Get with a different group that is moving on (Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, *Staying Sober*, page 114-115).

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Remember that while alcohol may be fun for others, it has
_____.
2. Why is it important not to get too tired?
3. When you feel that life is unfair, it is only a little more thinking to
_____.

4. The farther away from your drinking days you get, the _____ you will be in your new life.

REFERENCES:

Gorski, T., & Miller, M., 1986, *Staying Sober*: This book is an effort to update the relapse prevention model with new information that has been learned since their previous book, *Cenaps*, Herald House/Independence Press, Independence, Missouri, 64055-0770.

Kinney, J., & Leaton, G., 1987, *Loosening the Grip*: This handbook is an attempt to contain the basic information an alcohol counselor or other professional confronted with alcohol problems needs to know. C.V. Mosby Company, St. Louis, Missouri, 63146.