Fellowship Recovery Compass: May 2025



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The Fellowship Centre's Financial Health

Thanks to the many volunteers who worked the major fundraiser at the end of last year, the Fellowship Centre is in a better financial situation then it has been since its inception in 2020. The Centre now has a prudent reserve and has also been able to make leasehold improvements such as the new glass entrance. Nonetheless, all the major fundraiser money is externally restricted which means the Centre can only use the funds for certain things as determined by an office of the Alberta Govenment. In this regard, the monthly donations of the groups (in lieu of rent) are essential to the continued financial health of the Fellowship Centre. Donations from groups and meetings total approximately \$3300 each month. It costs approximately \$5000 each month to maintain the current level of services offered at the Fellowship Centre (for example, facility lease payments, coffee supplies, cleaning services, insurance, repairs and maintenance, program supplies such as printing the *Recovery Compass*, natural gas, water, electricity, garbage disposable, WIFI, and telephone).

Another important source of funding for the Fellowship Centre are donations from individuals. Thank you to the individuals who donate to the Centre. Please be reminded that an official income tax receipt can be issued if the donation is accompanied by first and last name and home address. This information is required by Canada Revenue Agency for all charity receipts. If you are not certain about how to make a charitable donation to the Fellowship Centre and how to receive your official charity receipt, please contact the Fellowship Centre at info@fellowship-centre.org.

Social Committee Recruiting Members



One of the objectives of the Fellowship Centre, as registered under the Societies Act with the Province of Alberta, is: to provide recovery-oriented social activities in a safe and welcoming environment. At the Board meeting last month, the Directors unanimously voted to have a Social Committee to ensure satisfaction of this important objective of the Centre. A Social Committee is a group of individuals who come together to organize social activities with the goal of enhancing social interaction, fostering a sense of community, and boosting morale.

To volunteer to serve on the Social Committee or if more

information is required, please contact the Social Committee Leader Stacey at 780.850.9941.

The Transformational Value of Step Five

The first three Steps begin the construction of a new foundation for a more positive self-concept, a foundation that will support an improved version of ourselves. In the next four Steps, we come to a much deeper understanding of ourselves and a more realistic view of ourselves. We will fearlessly face the self that we had become and begin to see the self that we can evolve into -- our possible or true-self. Steps 4 through 8 generate a complete restructuring who we are and what we know about ourselves.

Step 5: Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Transformational Value: Teachers us to be vulnerable and authentic.

In Step 4 we conducted a searching and fearless moral inventory. For many of us, this was the first time we had been rigorously honest with ourselves. During this soul-searching process, we learned a lot about ourselves and our human relations. We may sum up what we uncovered in this simple way: we were more than we thought we were and less than we thought we were. We discovered that when we set aside the judgement of our false-self (ego) and it's many shoulds, it was easier to be honest with ourselves, face our shortcomings, and recognizing our assets.

We also came to see that we are living a paradox -- that we are simultaneously *being* and *becoming*. This gave us hope that we could restructure ourselves, that we could develop our better self and a better attitude toward life. This is something we never would have believed before we started this journey. Our false-self (ego) turn the world into a state of absolutes; there was no gray. Either we met the demands of the false-self or we failed completely. Either we are perfect, or we are nothing. There was never a sense of ourselves as a work in progress.

We are about to rewrite a demand of the false-self which tells us that the only person we can rely on is ourself. It tells us not to air our dirty laundry in public -- that someone will use what we share against us. It makes us cynical and distrustful.

To deconstruct our false-self (ego), we must disobey its rules. This is referred to as *ego deflation*. Step 5 instructs us to share the results of our fearless inventory with another person. "Hence it was most evident that a solitary self-appraisal, the admission of our defects based upon that alone, wouldn't be nearly enough. We'd have to have outside help if we were surely to know and admit the truth of ourselves" (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 59).

We are going to be extremely vulnerable with the person who hears our Step 5 and open our hearts to him or her. We are going to take off our mask and be authentic. This goes against the defiant self-reliance that we developed because of our false-self. We were the masters of our own fate; we ran the show. We didn't trust anyone to do it for us. Now we need to take a leap of faith. We need to find someone we can trust with our fearless admissions.

Many of the hurtful things we did to others were best understood as a symptom of our addiction. Addiction hijacked our brain and impaired our judgment. What was wrong seemed right. While we are not to blame for our addiction, we are responsible for our recovery and for the damage we have inflicted on ourselves and others. We will never achieve serenity and peace of mind if we don't accept responsibility for our actions and clean house, if we don't learn to turn to others for help, and if we don't learn from our mistakes.

Now that we have opened ourselves up and faced ourselves courageously and truthfully, we are ready for the next task that will help us recover our lost true-self (higher power). We are ready to build upon the knowledge we have gained by being honest with ourselves and someone else, we are ready to aim at becoming our best possible self, and to develop even more insight into our shortcomings.

(Adapted from the work of Allen Berger, expert on the science of recovery)

Making Amends to Ourselves

Most of us, perhaps all of us, have hurt ourselves at least as much as we have hurts others, probably much more. Many sponsors suggest that we add ourselves to our amends list, when we complete Step 8, and make amends to ourselves in Step 9.

We have abused ourselves for many years. We abandoned our real-self in favour of an engineered-self based on an idealized image of the self we hoped we could love and respect. We compromised our integrity, our personal values, and our trustworthiness. We embarrassed ourselves and disappointed those who cared about us by using their love to manipulate them. We sold ourselves short and stunted our growth by taking the path of least resistance. We had sex with people we didn't want to because we needed their approval or because they had drugs. We poisoned our bodies and our souls. We let fear, anxiety, greed, and power control our lives. We have let the worst in us run the rest of us. We did not protect or honor ourselves. We treated ourselves worse than anyone we had harmed. We need to be included on the list of people we have harmed.

The very process of making amends to others is the first step in making amends to ourselves. Making amends restores our integrity. It makes us whole again because we are honouring ourselves. We are letting the best in us take the lead in our lives.

By managing our ongoing vulnerability to addiction daily, we are making amends to ourselves and protecting ourselves. When we attend a meeting or reach out to our sponsor, we are making amends to ourselves. When we make a mistake and take responsibility for it, we are making amends to ourselves. When we reach out and help someone who is still suffering or when we stop the worst in us from destroying a relationship, we are making amends to ourselves. Any action that we take to support or realize our true-self (higher power) is making amends to ourselves.

We can make amends to ourselves very directly by using an empty chair or writing a letter to ourself. Imagine yourself sitting in the empty chair. Make a heartfelt amends to yourself specifically listing off the incidents when you failed yourself, where you failed to protect yourself and ended up hurting yourself. If you prefer, write a letter of amends detailing your regrets and your heartfelt apology and commitment to treating yourself better in the future.

Self-Forgiveness Affirmations (Repeat to Yourself Often)

An affirmation can create a positive mindset and energy that can help you start to think about yourself differently and ultimately treat yourself differently. Below are some examples that you can try. You don't have to believe them completely. You can think of them as intentions or goals if that's helpful.

- I accept that I'm human and I make mistakes.
- I forgive myself for the hurt I've caused.
- I am worthy of forgiveness.
- Forgiveness is a gift I give myself.
- I forgive myself for not knowing what I know now.
- I will not judge my past behavior using all that I've learned since then.
- I will treat myself with compassion.
- Everyone makes mistakes.
- Self-forgiveness is a process. I will continue to take small steps toward making peace with my past.
- Self-criticism and self-punishment do not help me learn and be my best self.
- Self-compassion encourages me to learn and grow.
- I believe I did the best I could with what I knew, who I was, and the resources I had at the time.
- I accept my shortcomings and forgive myself.
- Dwelling on the past and beating myself up for my mistakes isn't helpful. Instead, I will stay focused on the present and use what I have learned.
- Now, I would do things differently, but I did the best I could at the time, and I forgive myself for my mistakes.

How Can I Forgive Myself? A Therapist Explains

 $(https://www.verywellmind.com/how-to-forgive-yourself-4583819\#:\sim: text=Understand\%20 your\%20 emotions, better\%20 choices\%20 in\%20 the\%20 future)$

Forgiveness is often defined as a deliberate decision to let go of feeling of anger, resentment, and retribution toward someone who you believe has wronged you. However, while you may be quite generous in your ability to forgive others, you may be much harder on yourself. Everyone makes mistakes, but learning how to learn from these errors, let go, move on, and forgive yourself is important for mental health and well-being.

Self-forgiveness is not about letting yourself off the hook, nor is it a sign of weakness. The act of forgiveness, whether you are forgiving yourself or someone who has wronged you, does not suggest that you are condoning the behavior. To forgive yourself, you should:

- Understand your emotions.
- Accept responsibility for what happened.
- Treat yourself with kindness and compassion.
- Express remorse for your mistakes.
- Make amends and apologize (including apologizing to yourself).
- Look for ways to learn from the experience.
- Focus on making better choices in the future.

Accept responsibility for your actions.

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Forgiveness means that you

accept the behavior, you accept what has happened, and you are willing to move past it and move on with your life without ruminating over past events that cannot be changed. One therapeutic approach to self-forgiveness suggests that four key actions can be helpful: Responsibility, Remorse, Restoration, and Renewal.

Becoming aware of the emotions you are experiencing is an important part of learning to forgive yourself. Research has found that identifying and labeling your emotion can help reduce the intensity of your feelings. Forgiving yourself is about accepting what has happened and showing compassion to yourself. Facing what you have done or what has happened is the first step toward self-forgiveness. It's also the hardest step. If you have been making excuses, rationalizing, or justifying your actions to make them seem acceptable, it is time to face up and accept what you have done. Making amends is an important part of forgiveness, even when the person you are forgiving is yourself. Just as you might not forgive someone else until they've made it up to you in some way, forgiving yourself is more likely to stick when you feel you've earned it. Everyone makes mistakes and has things for which they feel sorry or regretful. Falling into the trap of rumination, self-hatred, or even pity can be damaging and make it difficult to maintain your self-esteem and motivation. Forgiving yourself often requires finding a way to learn from the experience and grow as a person. To do this, you need to understand why you behaved the way you did and why you feel guilty. What steps can you take to prevent the same behaviors again in the future? Yes, you might have messed up, but it was a learning experience that can help you make better choices in the future. Forgiving yourself also means making an active effort to do better in the future. As you approach similar situations, reflect on how you felt about your past mistakes. Rather than feeling guilty about those past errors, remind yourself about what you learned and how you can use that knowledge and experience to guide your actions going forward.

The Importance of Hope in Addiction Recovery

(https://www.edgewoodhealthnetwork.com/resources/blog/thmpe-iortance-of-hope-in-addiction-recovery/)

When preoccupied with an addictive substance or behaviour, it is not always easy to see a life beyond the addiction, beyond the chaos, pain and suffering. But hope can be found. There is no right or wrong way to find hope. Sometimes it comes easy, and sometimes we need to work to find hope. Below are a few ways that may help you find hope even during times of deep despair.



Listen to Stories of Hope

Hearing stories of hope, success and triumphs of others can help us find hope. These stories not only inspire us but also shed light on strategies for finding and sustaining hope even during the darkest times.

Think of the Future

Look into the future and identify who and what is important to you. It could be a loved one, such as a child, spouse or parent. It can also be an event or something you always wanted to do. Looking into the future helps cultivate a purpose and direction in life (that is, hope).

Positive Affirmations

Though a simple process, positive affirmations do work. The repetition of positive affirmations leads to belief, and belief is at the heart of hope. Affirmations such as 'I am strong, I can overcome my challenges, I am a new person, I feel new hope and I can recover' rebuild a sense of self-worth and your belief that you can achieve your goals. Not only do affirmations build belief, but also a confidence and a drive for change and action.

Leaning on a Higher Power

Many find hope by reaching for a higher power. This could be through spirituality, religion or philosophy. Reaching to a higher power is Step 2 in the 12-Step Process: "Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." Simplified, this reads as, 'There is help for my problem and I believe I can address it.'

Accept Your Current Situation

For some, it may be hard to accept that they are currently in a bad place. But the courage of acceptance is the first step in desiring a better future (that is, hope). Acceptance helps us realize that our current situation is not where we want to be and helps us develop a vision of where we want to be. Without acceptance, we cannot take control of our destiny to reach a better tomorrow.

Have Realistic and Meaningful Plans

It is action that makes hopes come true. By the mere fact of developing a plan for a better future, you will build hope. The more your plan has firm action steps and dates, the more successfully you will come to realize that your vision is truly attainable.

"Everything that is done in the world is done by hope" - Martin Luther

Powerlessness: An Overeaters Anonymous Perspective

A dictionary definition of the word "powerless" is "help-less, without authority."

On my own, I was and am helpless, without the authority needed to make changes in my relationship with food. Most of us have been able to imagine we were powerful over food, for a time, because our addiction to diets worked early in our food experience, giving us the illusion of control. Then one day, diets didn't work anymore. No matter how strong our willpower, and I believe most of us demonstrate extraordinary willpower, we could not will ourselves to lose weight or keep it off for long. When I reached that stage, I was sure my willpower was the problem.

When I finally came to Overeaters Anonymous (OA), after six successful years in AA, I began to realize that food had always been my primary addiction, present since early childhood. But I still did not see my own powerlessness over food and compulsive food behaviors. At that time, food consumed most or my waking hours: planning, shopping, learning new recipes, cooking, eating, and using just the right containers for cooking and storing my precious food.

I learned from my group that I needed a new approach to life. I learned also that to retake authority over my life, I had to admit my powerlessness over most of life and its events. I began to gain an understanding of my helplessness over my disease of compulsive eating, first on an intellectual and later an emotional level. It felt as I imagined bankruptcy would feel -- an experience I had narrowly escaped several times because of my addiction to overspending -- like reaching the end of life as I knew it. At that time, it was an experience for me of utter humiliation and defeat.

By working the OA program with the help of my sponsor and doing the Steps as suggested in OA's *Twelve* and *Twelve* and the workbook, which really spoke to me, I began to move from defeat to an understanding of my own inevitable limitedness. I am only a human being. All past feelings of power over life, others, and food began to transform into acceptance and humility.

Taken from a "Taste of Lifeline," a collection of short articles submitted by OA members to the monthly magazine "Lifeline." January 2013

Overeaters Anonymous is a 12-Step program founded by Rozanne S. Its first meeting was held in Hollywood, California, on January 19, 1960, after Rozanne attended a Gamblers Anonymous meeting and realized that the Twelve Steps could potentially help with her own addictive behaviors relating to food.

Face 2 Face is an Overeaters Anonymous meeting every Thursdays at 2:30 PM at the Centre.

All are welcome.

Recent Survey of Members Overeaters Anonymous

	Significant improvement	Moderate improvement	Total
Mental/emotional health	76%	18%	94%
Daily functioning	72%	21%	93%
Spiritual connection	74%	18%	92%
Relationships	64%	24%	88%
Overall physical health	58%	26%	84%
Weight issues	53%	27%	80%

Daily Affirmations (repeat to yourself frequently throughout the day)

Embracing Life Changes

Changes can help shape who you are as a person. Every experience, whether positive or negative, has the potential to teach you something new about yourself and about the world around you. Embrace these experiences and let them help you become a better version of yourself.

Changes, even difficult ones, can help you grow and develop as a person. Embrace these changes and use them as opportunities to learn, evolve, and become more resilient. Remember, growth is a continuous process, and every experience can help you become stronger and wiser.

Every experience, even the most difficult ones, can teach you something new. Take time to reflect on your experiences and think about what you can learn from them. This can help you gain valuable insight and knowledge that you can use to navigate future changes and challenges.

When you approach life changes with an open mind and willingness to learn, there is no such thing as a loss. Every experience has the potential to help you grow and become a better person. Remember that even in difficult times, there is always something positive to be gained.

Being Present and Grateful

Being present means fully immersing yourself in the moment without distractions. It's important to be aware of your thoughts, emotions, and physical surroundings. Mindfulness practices such as meditation can help you stay present.

Each moment is an opportunity to make it beautiful. Take time to appreciate the small things in life and find joy in the present. Spend time with loved ones, enjoy your favourite hobbies, or simply take a walk in nature.

Gratitude is a powerful practice that can help shift your mindset and increase happiness. Take time each day to reflect on what you're grateful for, no matter how small. This can help cultivate a positive outlook on life and increase your overall well-being.

It's important to let go of the past and future and focus on the present moment. Dwelling on the past or worrying about the future can lead to stress and anxiety. Instead, focus on what you can do now to improve your life.

The Art of Surrender

Acceptance is the first step toward surrender. Instead of resisting change, learn to accept it as a natural part of life. Acknowledge the changes that are happening in your life and allow yourself to feel the emotions that come with them.

Surrender means letting go of things that no longer serve us. This could be relationships, habits, or even beliefs that are holding us back. Be willing to release what no longer serves you to make space for new opportunities and growth.

Going with the flow means trusting that things will work out in their own time and in their own way. Trust that the universe has a plan for you and that everything is happening for your highest good. Instead of swimming against the tide, learn to go with the flow of life.

Surrendering can be a peaceful and freeing experience. When we release control and allow life to unfold, we create space for peace and clarity. Surrendering allows us to find peace in the present moment and let go of worry about the future.

Destructive Beliefs About Guilt

Guilt is a moral emotion that occurs when a person believes or realizes -- accurately or not -- that they have compromised their own standards of conduct or have violated universal moral standards and bear significant responsibility for that violation. Guilt is closely related to the concepts of remorse, regret, and shame (Wikipedia).

- 1. "If I feel guilty, I must have something to feel guilty about." This is simply untrue. For instance, some people feel guilty when they survive an accident in which others died. This kind of survior guilt is clearly irrational. It's an example of emotional reasoning. Just because you think you are a bad person who should be ashamed of yourself doesn't mean you have anything to feel bad about. Only by stepping back and taking a long look at the situation can you really come to a reasonable conclusion.
- 2. "If I feel guilty, it means I am a bad person." Even if most people would agree that your guilt is justified, you are not a bad person. This line of thinking is an example of generalization, which is a thinking distortion. Just like everyone else, you are a complex individual who has done great things but has also made mistakes.
- 3. "Guilt will stop me from hurting people in the future." Don't fall into the trap of assuming that guilt protects you from repeating your mistakes. This thought undermines your self-confidence. Your morals and values are better at helping you make good choices, not guilt. Guilt damages your relationships with other people. It makes you negative and afraid, and your loved ones will always have the sense that your decisions and emotions are driven by something they cannot see or understand. Guilt sucks up your energy. You end up wasting time beating yourself up instead of making positive changes.
- 4. "I need to feel guilty forever because I need to punish myself for what I've done." In small doses, guilt is healthy. It's a kind of warning signal. Guilt lets you know that you have violated your own moral code. When we feel guilty, we know it's time to make amends and apologize if appropriate. However, feeling guilt for a long time doesn't benefit anyone. If you've hurt someone else, they don't feel better just because you feel bad. The mere fact that you're carrying guilty feelings won't make a difference. You can't go back in time and change the past. Guilt can become self-indulgent. After a while, it doesn't always feel like a punishment. In fact, it can become almost comfortable. After all, if you are a bad person why bother working hard or building better relationships? Clinging to your guilt gives you an excuse to be lazy.
- 5. "If I let myself stop feeling guilty, this means I approve of my own actions." Have you ever been reluctant to forgive someone because you don't want to let them off the hook? The same principle can apply to your own guilt. On some level you might think that allowing yourself to live guilt-free means that you are totally fine with the things you've done. It doesn't have to work that way. You can recognize when you've done something wrong, learn from it, and then move on. Releasing your guilt doesn't mean you approve of your own actions. It means that you've decided not to give them too much time and attention.
- 6. "If I make a mistake, I am an unacceptable human being." This thought can be traced back to a single core belief: I must be perfect, or I'm worthless. This belief is both illogical and harmful. No one is perfect. The sooner you realize this, the happier you'll be. You wouldn't expect your friends and family to always behave impeccably, would you?
- 7. "If I keep analyzing the situation long enough, I can work out exactly how much of the blame I deserved." Some of us want to know precisely what went wrong in a situation that left us feeling guilty. Unfortunately, the world doesn't work like that. In most cases, there's no objective, scientific way to figure out exactly how much blame lies with you. It's smarter to invest your energy toward looking forward instead.

(Adapted from Cognitive behavioural Therapy and Mindfulness by Olivia Telford, 2021)

News from the Fellowship Library

Thank you to the anonymous and generous people who donate books to the Fellowship Library. The Library has proven popular with many books frequently on loan. To encourage use of the library and to guarantee anonymity, there is no formal sign out procedure for borrowing library material. Feel free to take a book or CD and return it when you are finished. More books are always needed so please consider donating any sort of recovery material to the Fellowship Library. Simply leave donated material on the library shelves, and the librarian will process your much appreciated and valued contribution to carrying the message of recovery. The Fellowship Library now has a copy of Allan Stain's book Changing the Status Quo.

Allan Strain was raised in a good home. One in North Vancouver, British Columbia, a city surrounded by mountains, forests, and sea. But despite this seemingly unspoiled atmosphere, everything started to change for the worse when Strain was just ten years old. His dad died. Three year later, Strain learned he was

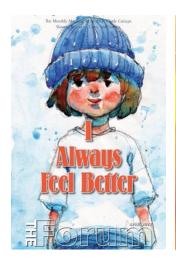
adopted: his teacher announced it in front of the class. Strain discovered that his birth mother was Indigenous. Both parents had a history of alcoholism. And worse: a decade before, Strain's birth father beat a sex worker to death. Forty years later, he's still incarcerated for the crime.

Changing the Status Quo is a memoir detailing the events that led Strain down a destructive path of alcohol abuse and addiction to crack cocaine. Although the subject matter can be difficult to endure at times, Strain's compelling storytelling draws the reader into his self-destructive world. You can practically hear him whispering the words, "Act sober, act sober, act sober" (he knows the liquor store won't let him buy more beer if he's drunk) and hold your breath as he tumbles down his apartment building's stairs -- twice. The book also balances darkness with hope, namely Strain's detailed descriptions of how he recovered from addiction. Strain has been clean and sober since September 3, 2002.



During his recovery, Allan Strain recognized the need to stop blaming others for his problems and take accountability for his own actions. This inspiration, along with encouragement from family and friends, inspired him to share his story to help others struggling with addiction. The memoir's title refers to Strain's goal to break the cycle of addiction and ensure a bright future for the next generation. Changing the Status Quo is his first book. Allan Strain lives in Edmonton, Alberta, with his wife, three children, and two dogs.

The Fellowship Library has had a generous contribution of Al-Anon printed material including five copies of <u>The Forum</u>, an international monthly publication of Al-Anon family groups (a fellowship that offers help





and hope for families and friends of alcoholics). This magazine features timely sharings from Aland Alateen Anon members, much in the way that they contribute when attending Al-Anon or Alateen meetings. The magazine also includes suggested meeting topics, as well as information about Al-Anon's World Service Conference and Office.

May 2025 South Edmonton Fellowship Centre

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
AA = Alcoholics Anonymo				1	2	3
CA = Cocaine Anonymous Meeting OA = Overeaters Anonymous Meeting SMART Recovery = Self-Management and Recovery Training (based on psychological treatment methods) every Friday at 1:30 PM Mental Health and Addiction Support every Sunday at 3:00 PM, facilitated by a Canadian Certified Counsellor, for anyone seeking help with mental health issues related to addiction.			 7:00 AM Sunrise (AA) 12:00 PM Lunchtime Lifeline (AA) 2:30 PM Face 2 Face (OA) 6:30 PM Plain Language Big Book Study (AA) 	 7:00 AM Sunrise (AA) 12:00 PM Lunchtime Lifeline (AA) 1:30 PM SMART Recovery 7:00 PM Serenity by Candlelight (AA) 	10:00 AM Imagine a New Freedom (AA) 12:00 PM Lunchtime Lifeline (AA) 2:00 PM Gamblers Anonymous 7:00 PM Sex Addicts Anonymous	
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