Fellowship Recovery Compass: June 2025



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Happy Father's Day and welcome to the June 2025 edition of the *Fellowship Recovery Compass*. The *Recovery Compass* is published each month online and paper copies are available at the Fellowship Centre throughout the month of publication. Current circulation is approximately 100 readers monthly.

In early recovery, people often search for methods to help them stay on the right path. Even if you have attended the best addiction treatment program, received targeted therapies, and integrated yourself into a recovery community, you may still feel the effects of craving, regret, and doubt. One simple and effective solution for overcome these feelings is recovery-based reading.

Recovery-based written material contains the knowledge and experience of countless individuals -- no wonder so many people who have recovered from addiction record their experiences in print. Through this process, they offer access to insights and experiences that help others conquer addiction and maintain sobriety.

One of the oldest written stories of addiction dates back over 3,000 years. This story, known as *The Gambler's Lament*, appears in one of the four sacred texts of Hinduism: the Rigveda, a collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns. *The Gambler's Lament* tells the story of a man who constantly returns to playing dice, even as consequences continue to pile up around him. Despite facing shame from his wife and family, the gambler cannot control the compulsive urge to risk it all and roll again.

While recovery-based reading isn't a requirement for achieving abstinence, it can be a tremendously beneficial tool for people looking for more information, similar experiences, or a blueprint for living "life on life's terms." For example, you may have wondered why you act the way you do, feel the things you feel, or react differently than other people. Chances are, there's a book that explores the causes, symptoms, and consequences related to your situation.

- Dr. Gabor Maté's book, <u>In the Realm of Hungry Ghosts</u>, explores the connection between trauma and substance abuse.
- Anna Lembke's <u>Dopamine Nation</u> explains, from a neurological perspective, why people become addicted to substances and activities.

Take the entire month to slowly read and reflect on the recovery-oriented material presented in June's *Recovery Compass*. Make the *Recovery Compass* part of your Step 11 practice and consider implementing that which speaks to you most loudly. Take what you need and leave the rest. I hope you benefit from reading and reflecting on this month's articles about the value of Step 6, on becoming more assertive, on improving the effectiveness of your communication, on taming your anger, focusing on self-care, recognizing fear of missing out, and improving your nutrition.

Happy Recovery,

Genevieve J., Fellowship Recovery Compass Editor

The Transformational Value of Step Six

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 Four through Eight generate a complete restructuring who we are and what we know about ourselves.

Step 6: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Transformational Value: Aiming at becoming our best self.

The ability to step up and accept the responsibility to change our defects of character separates the willing from the unwilling. Our commitment to rid ourselves of those character flaws that caused problems with our fellows and with society at large is at the heart of the spirit of recovery. We are aiming to become our best self. We must remember, however, that desire doesn't equal action.

In Steps 4 and 5, our inventory and fearless admission of the nature of our wrongs helped us identify our false-self (ego) and all its shortcomings. We now have a good idea of who we are and who we aren't. Step 6 helps us understand character defects from a totally different perspective; we come to understand their purpose in our lives. This Step helps us realize that there are forces operating within us that might resist change. We need to understand these forces if we are to have our character defects removed. Our goal here is to continue to untangle the roots of our false-self (ego) that have so insidiously wrap themselves around the roots of our real-self (higher power). This will take time and patience, but if we endure, we will develop a new understanding of ourselves and more will be revealed about our true nature.

Bill W., in his 1958 <u>Grapevine</u> article on emotional sobriety, identifies his problem as "almost absolute dependence" on people, places, and things for his emotional well-being. His self-esteem depended on how people reacted to him. It was dependent on things going according to his expectations. Such emotional dependency causes serious problems in human relations. It generates a set of rules that specify how other people are to behave for us to feel loved and accepted. We try to regulate others to meet our expectation so that we feel okay. Emotional dependency creates unenforceable rules. When we are upset, it is because someone is not adhering to our demands.

In preparation to rid ourselves of our character defects, it is important to understand that they serve a purpose. "What we must recognize now is that we exalt in some of our defects. We really loved them. Who, for example, doesn't like to feel just a little superior to the next fellow, or even quite a lot superior? Isn't it true that we like to let greed masquerader as ambition?" (<u>Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions</u>, page 66). When we understand the purpose of our defects, we can get on with the business of replacing them with authenticity and more effective ways of meeting our needs.

Getting honest with ourselves and working through our resistance to remove our character defects are important parts of the change process. We are preparing to rid ourselves of the defects promoted by the false-self (ego). We are preparing to take responsibility for who we are and who we aren't. We are preparing to restructure the self.

Responsibility empowers us and facilitates the positive restructuring of our self-concept. It motivates us to strive toward being the best possible version of ourselves. Step 6 helps us see the function of our character defects to prepare us to let go of them. We can't fix the shortcomings alone. We need each other and the help of our true-self or higher power. We need to put the best in us in charge of the worst of us. (Adapted from the work of Allen Berger, expert on the science of recovery.)

Practical Tips to Become More Assertive

Assertive is the quality of being confident and not frightened to say what you want or believe. Assertiveness training is a behavioral therapy that helps people express their needs and opinions while respecting others.

1. Saying "no" more often.

Are you a people pleaser? Do you tend to go along with what everybody else wants, only to feel resentful later? The only solution is to learn how to decline requests and invitations. For example, suppose your sister wants you to babysit her children on Friday, even though you know you'll be tired at the end of the work week. Instead of gritting



your teeth and saying "yes," you could use the following assertive responses:

- "No, I can't, I'm too tired. I hope you find another solution.
- "No, I'm not available about night."

2. Use "I" statements.

"You" statements can sound accusatory, which isn't helpful if you are in a tense situation. Instead start sentences with "I need," "I feel," or "I would like." Keep statements simple and to the point. For example: "I need to leave by 6:00." "I feel worried."

3. Watch for body language.

Your posture and voice make a big difference in how you feel about yourself, and how others see you. Keep your arms and legs uncrossed, sit or stand up straight, and keep your shoulders relaxed. Keep your tone of voice even. Never shout. If you appear calm and assertive, others will take you seriously.

4. Use the broken record technique when somebody tries to override you.

If someone tries to overload you with objections and irrelevant arguments, rephrase and repeat your original response. Persistence people may ask you the same question several times, but even the rudest individual will get the message eventually if you stand by your answer. Don't allow yourself to be sidetracked.

5. Find an assertiveness role model.

Do you know someone who is assertive without being aggressive? Watch them carefully and see what you can learn.

6. Focus on behavior, not character, when asking someone to behave differently.

If you want to ask someone else to change their behavior, use this formula:

- State their observable behavior.
- Tell them how it affects you.
- Tell them how this makes you feel.
- Tell them how you would prefer them to act.

7. Spell out consequences.

If you have tried asking someone to change their behavior but to no avail, the next step is to assert consequences. This is only appropriate as a last resort, and only when you can impose sanctions. Never make empty threats; the other person may see through them or decide to call your bluff. Stay calm, keep to the point, and remained civil.

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

The Ego Problem

(adapter from https://focus3.com/12-signs-you-have-an-ego-problem/)

We all come with a factory setting, complete with a strong self-orientation that places each of us at the center of our own universe. Because of this natural self-orientation, ego is an easy trap to fall into. Best-selling author Ryan Holliday makes this observation: "Wherever you are, whatever you're doing, your worst enemy already lives inside you: your ego."

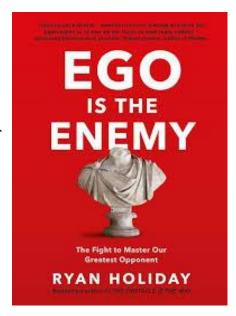
The fight against self-centered ego is no trivial battle. When we allow our ego to win, we become a prisoner unaware of our state of self-induced captivity. Ryan Holliday defines and observes the impact of an arrogant ego:

"It's that petulant child inside every person, the one that chooses getting his or her way over anything or anyone else. It's the sense of superiority and certainty that exceeds the bounds of confidence and talent. It's when the notion of ourselves and the world grows so inflated that it begins to distort the reality that surrounds us."

The first step to winning the battle against your ego is to recognize the power of its grip on you. Here are twelve signs that you have an ego problem:

- 1. You are a poor listener. You are slow to hear, quick to speak, and quick to anger.
- 2. You get defensive when someone gives you feedback.
- 3. You want others to do things for you, but you hesitate to do things for others.
- 4. You do not try to understand or empathize with people who disagree with you. When you argue, your goal isn't to understand and connect with people. Your goal is to prove you are right.
- 5. You have few un-expressed opinions. If you think it, you say it and argue for it.
- 6. You mistakenly think that having an opinion is the same as having credibility.
- 7. You feel jealous when other people do well.
- 8. You talk about yourself for 10 minutes before asking others how they are.
- 9. You prefer hearing things you agree with, rather than hearing things that challenge you.
- 10. You blame others when things don't go your way.
- 11. Your first instinct is to criticize; your last instinct is to encourage.
- 12. You see life through a narrow lens, and everything fits in it. You are blind to things outside your lens. Worse, you are blind to your blind spots.

Controlling your ego doesn't mean weakness or meekness. It means being humble about your strengths and honest about your weaknesses. It means recognizing you are not always right. It means respectfully considering the perspectives and interests of others. It means seeking feedback and using it to get better. It means serving and supporting the team, not just yourself.



Self-Prioritization is not Selfish

Self-prioritization means making your own well-being and happiness a top priority, rather than constantly putting the needs of others first. It involves taking time for yourself, engaging in activities you enjoy, and prioritizing your own goals and desires, without feeling guilty about it. This doesn't mean neglecting others but, rather, finding a balance where you can care for yourself and still give to those around you.

Here's a more detailed look at what self-prioritization entails:

- **Taking time for yourself:** This includes carving out personal time for relaxation, hobbies, or activities you enjoy.
- **Prioritizing your own needs:** This means recognizing and fulfilling your own emotional, physical, and mental health needs.
- **Setting boundaries:** It's important to learn how to set boundaries with others to protect your time and energy.
- Focusing on your own goals: Self-prioritization also involves pursuing your own aspirations and dreams.
- Cultivating self-compassion: Treating yourself with kindness and understanding, especially during challenging times.
- **Recognizing the value of self-care:** Understanding that self-care is not selfish, but rather a necessity for your overall well-being.
- Communicating your needs: Learning to express your needs and boundaries to others.

Benefits of self-prioritization:

• Improved mental health:

Prioritizing your own needs can reduce stress, anxiety, and feelings of burnout.

• Increased self-esteem:

Taking care of yourself can boost your confidence and sense of self-worth.

• Enhanced relationships:

By prioritizing your own needs, you can be a better partner, friend, or family member.

• Greater productivity and effectiveness:

Taking care of yourself can improve your focus, energy, and overall effectiveness in your work and daily life.

• Increased happiness and satisfaction:

Ultimately, self-prioritization can lead to a greater sense of happiness and fulfillment.

Examples of self-prioritization in action:

- Saying "no" to commitments that overwhelm you.
- Taking a break to meditate or practice mindfulness.
- Scheduling time for a hobby or activity you enjoy.
- Prioritizing healthy eating and exercise.
- Setting aside time for self-reflection and goal setting.

Important considerations:

- It's not about being selfish: Self-prioritization is about finding a balance between your own needs and the needs of others.
- It's a process: Prioritizing yourself is an ongoing journey, not a destination.
- It requires self-awareness: Understanding your own needs and boundaries is crucial for effective self-prioritization.

COMMUNICATION IN ADDICTION AND RECOVERY HOW TO COMMUNICATE TO HEAL, NOT HURT

Being able to communicate effectively is critical as you progress through your addiction recovery journey. From forgiveness to gratitude, there are several personal and interpersonal ways you can improve your communication skills in addiction recovery. Communication skills that can help you achieve long-lasting sobriety include:

Active Listening

Being able to listen to yourself and others is an important communication skill that's often overlooked. Communicating doesn't just involve talking but also being able to listen. It's important that you listen to yourself and your body. For example, you should be aware if you are experiencing triggers or urges to abuse drugs so you can act proactively to cope with these cravings in a healthy manner. Likewise, it's important that you listen to others in addiction recovery. Listening allows you to grow as a person and better understand yourself and those around you.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is another communication skill you should master on your road to recovery. You need to be able to forgive yourself and let go of the past to effectively progress along your recovery journey. Likewise, you must be able to ask for forgiveness and apologize to others you may have hurt because of your addiction. This may look like apologizing to friends, family members, or peers you may have hurt because of your addiction.

Boundary Setting

Another important communication skill is boundary setting and feeling comfortable with saying "no." As you progress along your sobriety journey, you'll inevitably be faced with certain places, situations, or people who may put your sobriety at risk. Therefore, it's important that, when faced with a difficult situation, you are comfortable saying "no" and not falling into old habits that may jeopardize your recovery journey.

Gratitude

Gratitude is another critical part of progressing along your road to recovery. It's important that you vocalize to yourself and others how grateful you are for your recovery journey. This may look like showing gratitude to friends or family members who have stuck by you as you have progressed in your addiction recovery journey. Or, this can be gratitude for how far you have come in recovery.

Speaking Up and Helping Others

As you progress further along your recovery journey, you can use what you have learned in your own recovery journey to support others. Therefore, it's important that you feel comfortable and confident speaking up for yourself and others. This may look like feeling comfortable talking in a recovery meeting. By being able to effectively communicate your feelings and experiences you are not just helping yourself, but you may also be helping others around you, whether you realize it or not.

(adapted from https://veritasdetox.com/effective-communication-skills-in-addiction-recovery)

A Cycle of Anger and Addiction

Although anger can be a healthy emotion, someone battling a addiction may struggle to cope with it in healthy ways. For example, someone who abuses alcohol may react with excessive anger depending on the circumstance. Conversely, someone may abuse alcohol to soothe angry feelings, often with the opposite effect. Regardless of the order of anger or substance abuse, chemicals can further disrupt and deepen feelings of anger.

Individuals can easily develop a dependent cycle of anger and substance abuse or use substances to cope with anger without realizing it. Consequently, this combination can worsen the condition of someone abusing chemicals and damage relationships. In response to anger, someone can develop temporary mental or emotional conditions like depression, anxiety, and feelings of hopelessness. When the person abuses substances to cope with these consequences, a cycle may begin. It can be difficult to find healthy methods of expressing anger. Individuals can intensify their



aggression or are at risk of experimenting with other drugs for a "better" high.

Handling Anger in Healthy Ways

How someone chooses to cope with anger can be the difference between a healthy and unhealthy lifestyle. Denying anger can cause one to feel frustrated or irritated and affect many parts of their life. A healthy way to cope with this feeling can reduce risks associated with substance use. Ways people can cope with anger in positive healthy ways include:

- Journaling
- Talking with a loved one or professional
- Meditation
- Feel it and release it with assertive communication
- Use humor to ease tension
- Picking up a creative hobby
- Exercising
- Positive distractions
- Self-awareness and knowing what makes you upset

Addiction To Anger: Highs And Lows

Anger can be an empowering and therapeutic emotion when released in a healthy way, but it can also be addictive. Just like individuals who seek thrills for the adrenaline rush, some people have the same effect from anger. Individuals can become addicted to endorphins they feel when they get angry. Like all "highs," once the feeling wears off, individuals can feel anxious or depressed. This can cause someone to seek thrills in the form of drugs. Stimulants like cocaine can provide excitement and can increase feelings of euphoria to replace anger. If someone can no longer acquire their substance of choice, he or she may revert back to angry feelings or develop a habit for emotional support.

(adapted from https://www.addictioncenter.com/addiction/anger-management/)

Fear of Missing Out (FoMO)

FoMO and Social Media Addiction

- FoMO, the anxiety or apprehension surrounding missing out on social events, gatherings, or news, is a significant driver of social media addiction.
- The constant need to stay connected and "in the know" can lead to excessive social media use, potentially impacting mental health.
- Research suggests that social media addiction can produce symptoms like those observed in substance addiction.

Mental Health Impacts

- Excessive social media use and FoMO have been linked to increased anxiety, depression, lower self-esteem, and reduced sleep quality.
- Some studies indicate that FoMO may be associated with negative alcohol-related consequences, either through higher alcohol use or greater willingness to engage in high-risk behaviors.

FOMO and **Substance** Use

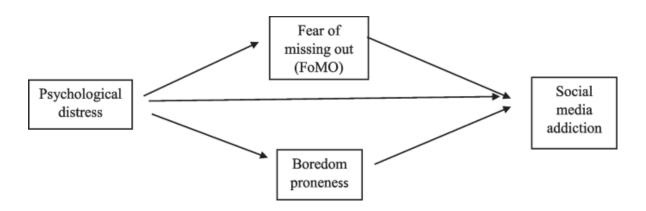
- While not directly causing substance addiction, FoMO can contribute to problematic substance use behaviors, potentially driven by the desire to cope with negative emotions or enhance social experiences.
- The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction has resources to address FoMO and its potential impact on risky behaviors, including alcohol consumption.

Canadian Context

- The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) in Toronto has been researching and addressing the mental health impacts of technology use, including social media addiction and FoMO.
- CAMH highlights the importance of reducing screen time and promoting healthy habits to improve mental well-being.

Addressing FoMO and Addiction

- Strategies for reducing FoMO and promoting healthy social media use include setting boundaries, limiting screen time, engaging in non-screen activities, and seeking professional help if needed.
- Parents can play a crucial role in modeling healthy technology use and supporting their children in reducing screen time, especially before bedtime.



Nutrition in Recovery

Nutrition is a crucial element of addiction recovery, playing a vital role in restoring physical and mental well-being. A balanced diet rich in essential nutrients can help repair the body, stabilize mood, and combat cravings, while a lack of proper nutrition can exacerbate mental health challenges and hinder recovery.

1. Supporting the Body's Healing Process:

Nutrient-rich foods:

Focus on whole, unprocessed foods like fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, whole grains, and healthy fats. These provide essential vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants to support the body's natural healing processes.

Hydration

Drinking plenty of water is crucial for flushing out toxins, supporting overall health, and reducing cravings.

Balanced Macronutrients:

Aim for a balanced intake of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats to sustain energy and support bodily functions.

Limit Processed Foods and Sugary Drinks:

Minimize consumption of processed foods and sugary drinks which can lead to blood sugar imbalances.

2. Supporting Mental Health and Mood Regulation:

Essential Nutrients:

Nutrients like omega-3 fatty acids, B vitamins, and antioxidants play a role in brain health and mood regulation.

Antioxidant-rich foods:

Fruits, vegetables, nuts, and seeds are excellent sources of antioxidants which help protect the brain from damage caused by free radicals.

Magnesium:

This mineral can help reduce symptoms of anxiety and improve sleep quality, both of which are important during recovery.

Protein:

Ensure adequate protein intake because it's essential for building and repairing tissues and supporting mood.

3. Managing Cravings and Preventing Relapse:

Stabilizing Blood Sugar:

A diet rich in complex carbohydrates, lean protein, and healthy fats can help stabilize blood sugar levels and reduce cravings.

Fiber:

High-fiber foods like whole grains, vegetables, and fruits can promote feelings of fullness and help regulate blood sugar.

Limit Sweet Foods:

Reduce or eliminate consumption of sugary foods and drinks because they can exacerbate cravings.

4. Seeking Professional Guidance:

Registered Dietitian or Nutritionist:

Working with a professional can help create a personalized nutrition plan that meets individual needs.

Nutritional Therapy:

This approach can help individuals identify and address any nutritional deficiencies and develop healthy eating habits.

5. Practical Tips for Incorporating Healthy Eating Habits:

Plan meals in advance: This can help ensure you have healthy options available and prevent impulsive unhealthy choices.

Cook at home more often: This allows you to control ingredients and portion sizes.

Eat regular meals and snacks: This can help prevent blood sugar drops and cravings.

Make healthy swaps: Instead of sugary drinks, opt for water, herbal tea, or unsweetened fruit juice.

Find healthy alternatives to snacking: Nuts, seeds, fruits, and vegetables are great alternatives to processed snacks.

June 2025 South Edmonton Fellowship Centre

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1	2 7:00 AM Sunrise (AA) 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) 6:30 PM Our Basic Text (AA) 8:00 PM Awakenings Men's Meeting (AA)	3 ☐ 7:00 AM Sunrise (AA) ☐ 10:30 AM Sunshine (AA) ☐ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) ☐ 7:00 PM ISMs (AA)	4 ☐ 7:00 AM Sunrise (AA) ☐ 10:30 AM Sunshine (AA) ☐ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) ☐ 7:00 PM ISMs (AA)	5 7:00 AM Sunrise (AA) 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) 2:30 PM Face 2 Face (OA) 6:30 PM Plain Language Big Book Study (AA)	6 7:00 AM Sunrise (AA) 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) 1:30 PM SMART Recovery 7:00 PM Serenity by Candlelight (AA)	7 □ 10:00 AM Imagine a New Freedom (AA) □ 12:00 PM Fellowship Nooner (AA) □ 2:00 PM Gamblers Anonymous □ 7:00 PM Sex Addicts Anonymous
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