

House of Sobriety – Handout 1

Introduction:

- To lay groundwork for ongoing recovery, think of an invisible structure that will protect your sobriety for the rest of your life: “The House of Sobriety.”
 - 4 Rooms or Levels: Physical, Mental, Emotional and Spiritual
 - We need all four parts to keep the house strong
 - Important not to let any of the rooms get dusty, moldy, or filled with cobwebs or it will impact the other rooms as well
 - Treatment gives you the tools to build a solid, strong structure that is able to withstand internal and external threats.
 - How long with this take?
 - Skeletal structure: a few weeks
 - Fortify structure (siding, floorboards, insulating walls): next few months
 - Rock solid, sturdy, stable, proud and comfortable: A few years
 - But house is never complete. Must work on is constantly, repair it, replace word out parts, remove mold, dirt, dust. If you don’t pay attention, it will slowly fall apart and become a place your no longer want to live, making you susceptible to relapse.

The Foundation is Abstinence

- Begins by walling off the addictions. Starving it until it loosens its grip on you.
- The rest of house built with the knowledge and understanding that the addiction is still “down there” walled off by the foundation. It is quiet, weak, sleeping perhaps, but still alive. Addiction is a chronic disease that will be with you (out of control or under control) for the rest of your life. Any break in the foundation will reawaken the addiction and allow it to grow stronger until it threatens to overwhelm you again.
- Foundation of abstinence most crucial and basic structure, but what you build on top of it will protect and strengthen it and determine the quality and direction of the rest of your life.

The First Level: Physical

- Addiction has a profound effect on your physical health
- Physical Health takes time to rebuild
- You will not feel good right away (physical healing can take weeks, months, years)
- You may experience Post-Acute Withdrawal Symptoms (PAWS): After you stop using you may experience irritability, depression, anxiety, mood swings, tension, memory loss, forgetfulness, difficulty concentrating, short attention span, insomnia, nightmares, headaches, fatigue, hunger, shakiness, excessive perspiration and craving.
- PAWS symptoms will fade and eventually go away if you: eat right, exercise regularly and avoid unnecessary stress.
- Substance abuse has a direct toxic effect on your organs, especially your brain and liver, causing you to feel irritable, moody and have thinking disturbances while your brain and body recover.
- Substance abuse has depleted essential nutrients necessary for healing and repairing your brain and body. A balanced diet is essential to recovery.
- To promote a stable mood:
 - Avoid sweets, stimulants (caffeine is coffee, tea, soft drinks) and stress
 - Follow a diet rich in complex carbohydrate (fruits, vegetables and whole grains) and lean proteins
 - Drink plenty of water
 - 3 Meals per day (no skipping meals) plus nutritious snacks mid-morning and mid-afternoons (fruits, seeds, whole grain breads or crackers, cheese, vegetables)
 - Add to your diet: fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain foods, grains, nuts and seeds
 - Cut down on: processed meats, dried fruits and fruit juice (high in sugar), white flour products and salt.

Exercise

- Exercise is crucial to recovery because:
 - Strengthens the body, promotes circulation and helps send the nutrients you are eating to your cells
 - Makes you feel better mentally and physically; increases mental and physical vitality and clears your mind so you have better perspective
- As you become aware of your body, you become aware of how to make it feel better.
- Exercise creates a new way of living that is a stark contrast to the addicted lifestyle.
- In recovery, you gain back the time that you spent using, so try to fill it with activities that make you feel good, healthy, and alive, such as:

- Walk or run outside in fresh air (bring your kids along in a stroller, walk with other moms)
- Take up a sport (softball, volleyball)
- Take a class or do exercise videos
- Join a gym

Focus on relaxation and avoidance of unnecessary stress

- Stress can trigger a relapse by eroding the foundation that keeps your addiction under control.
- Stress is a mental and physical condition. It causes worry and anxiety, but also, aggravated heart conditions, ulcers and even cancer.
- For people with addiction, stress has the same physical consequences in re-activating disease as it does for people with cancer, heart disease and diabetes. Diabetics have a hard time regulating blood pressure after a divorce, just as this might be a trigger for a relapse for an addict. Stress can lead to changes in blood pressure, sleep disturbance, anxiety and depression, all of which can be triggers to relapse as well.
 - Stress → Adrenaline → Glucose → Insulin → allows energy rich Glucose into cells. Severe or prolonged stress can disrupt this mechanism. Alcohol use disorder can make you susceptible to hypoglycemia, so even more susceptible. Alcohol use disorder also damages your adrenal glands, which control your body's reaction to stress.
 - People with any chronic, incurable disease should avoid unnecessary stress because their bodies are more vulnerable and less able to withstand shocks associated with stress.
- People with addictions often do not receive the same family support as do people with other chronic illnesses and may suffer additional stresses of shame related to past, as well as relational, emotional, financial and legal consequences.
- Knowledge of the disease helps protect you against this stress. Understand that you are not responsible for having an addiction and that your emotions and behaviors were manipulated by your addiction. Learn your limitations and grow with them.
- Be vigilant about protecting yourself from stress, particularly in the first year of your sobriety. Don't create unnecessary stress for yourself.
- Be patient, take it slow, and know that time will heal a lot of things. And don't expect life to be perfect: it never is, not for anyone. Believe in change, believe in time, believe in yourself and, most of all, believe in your sobriety.

- Work on developing meaningful and trusting, sober relationships, where your problems and concerns can be heard and understood (12 step programs and other recovery groups can be enormously helpful.)
- Learn how to communicate your thoughts and feelings instead of repressing them, when dealing with family, friends and business relationships. Learn how to listen.
- Don't settle for a perpetually stressful relationship or environment: your body cannot handle the stress forever. You may have to ease out of a high stress, demanding job, or a troubled relationship. Protect yourself from the "little" stresses in life. If you find yourself anxious or afraid—leave. You do not have to go to parties, cook fancy dinners or prove yourself to anyone. All you have to do is stay sober; and if you stay sober and take care of yourself, soon everything else will fall into place.
- Insulate yourself from stress, recognize the signs, learn to relax, treat yourself as if you were a small, fragile child taking baby steps. They may seem like tiny, insignificant steps forward, but they are all giant steps because they are all going in the right direction—away from the power of addiction.