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The "Self-Steps" to Realizing & Recovering From Addiction

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I am suggesting that theories that offer reasons or causes of

addiction are only useful in preventing addiction, and relative to recovery, for

purposes of self-reflection. **Forman/May-Evidence & Action**

Research Proposal

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Recovery from addiction incorporates actions, behaviors, thought processes and other elements that are different and vary for individuals in the course of recovery. Although the method of recovery may be different for each individual case, each requires some knowledge pertaining to the progressive factors that attributed to becoming addicted. Thus, knowledge pertaining to causes of addiction is relevant based on its application to self-reflection and self-evaluation.

Recovery from addiction requires that knowledge be presented or conjectures be made based on what may promote and achieve recovery. This is a difficult task based on the reality that any case involving individual recovery will be different. Even a minute difference in method or process demonstrates the uniqueness of each case.

Knowledge in the area of *addiction*¹ is not the same and should not be confused with knowledge in the area of *addiction recovery*² and/or ways to recover from addiction.

There exist several theories³ that point to causes of addiction and factors that promote, enable or refuel cycles of addiction. These theories only offer knowledge or explanation(s) of why and how addiction(s) occur or where they are born. Knowledge in this area is useful in the correct context.

Recovery from addiction is very different than *causes* of addiction. Therefore, I am suggesting that theories and/or knowledge that offer reasons or causes of addiction are only useful in preventing addiction, and relative to recovery, for purposes of self-reflection and self-evaluation.

Recovery from addiction incorporates actions, behaviors, thought processes and other elements that are different and vary for individuals in the course of recovery. Although the method of recovery may be different for each individual case, each requires some knowledge pertaining to the progressive factors that attributed to becoming addicted. Thus, knowledge pertaining to causes of addiction is relevant based on its application to self-reflection and self-evaluation.

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What precede these differences however are the *Realization* and/or recognition of one's addiction. All cases of recovery or attempts to recover share this solidarity. It is common sense within the scope of both addiction and recovery from addiction, and by definition (see endnote 2) that before one can recover one must recognize that from which they must recover. The recovery process is enabled upon this realization. The questions are: "What must take place in one's life to come to the realization of addiction? What methods or processes work and which do not work?"

There are several treatment models that assess⁴ the individual possibility of addiction to a given substance. These assessments are designed based on research data, psychiatric research data, and input of relative researchers, counselors, etc. One of the main conflicts of these assessments is their restriction to outdated methodology that can hinder the true assessment of an individual dealing with a modern, constantly changing problem. Another issue is that these assessments place the individual in a position to accept the outcome(s) of the assessment as explanation and guiding factor for their addiction and their recovery. This immediately strips power from the individual and leaves them seeking "all of the answers" from professionals who may not fully understand the complexities and dynamics of the addiction the individual faces. Groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous and other recovery groups all offer a functional recovery programs⁵ (methods) that have and continue to work for numerous individuals.

However, because the ideology of such groups limits and often wholly hinders individual power relative to addiction, individuals who utilize such methods of recovery often become addicted to the 'group' and if the group is unavailable, they can't make it to a meeting, or their sponsor is not within contact, they are once again 'powerless' and the chances for relapse are tragically high.

Individual assessment and personal recovery has worked for numerous addicts. Although scarce, the number of individuals who have recovered from addiction using this method cannot be ignored. Yet, because of the large number of individuals who have attempted recovery and failed (relapsed) using self-assessment and recovery methods, traditional and institutional methods cannot be ignored.

Although these processes of recovery differ, those cases or individuals who achieve recovery using any of these processes count as knowledge or validate knowledge within the context of recovery from addiction. This (experiential) knowledge⁶ is just as valid as traditional ideas, conjectures and theories in regards to addiction recovery.

With respect to existing treatment methods, theories, and the contributed thoughts ideas of intellectuals, this proposal presents the *'Self-Steps' to Realizing & Recovering from Addiction* as a modern method towards successful recovery from addiction. Based on the premise of both scientific theories (ex. Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations*) and feminist theories (P.H. Collins) these steps offer both a working and successful⁷ method of recovery as well as valid knowledge in the field of addiction and recovery.

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Rather than attempt to refute theories of recovery, the presentation of the 'Self-Steps' serves to enhance the necessary role of any recovery methodology based on the premise that 'individuals require different methods'. No matter what the process may be, if it serves to help an individual recover from addiction, it is valid and should be recognized as a successful method and therefore counts as knowledge. Furthermore, the 'Self-Steps' serve to empower the individual in his/her recovery; defining resources and support mechanisms as 'useful' not more powerful than the individual themselves. Finally, the 'Self-Steps' provide a framework for self-analysis, self-evaluation, and evaluation of one's social & environmental conditions (past, present and future) assisting them in establishing a strong foundation as they embark on their personal & unique road to recovery.

The Self-Steps to Realizing, Recovering and Conquering Addiction

- 1. Recognize and accept that you have lost some control of your life to your alcohol and/or drug consumption, thus sacrificed some personal power in your life.**

Rationale

One of the most critical steps in professional assessment of a client is the assessment, conceptualization, and referral made by the professional doing the intake.⁸ One of the main goals of the assessment is to help both the client and the professional achieve the goal in step #1. The questions are aimed at answering questions that will help an individual recognize their addiction, moving them past denial. If by chance the client purposely avoids truth during questioning the outcome measures are inaccurate. If they are dishonest they aren't ready for recovery based on the shared belief that one must get past denial in order to move towards recovery. So, this first step should be examined and implemented by the individual first and in a more personal, exclusive manner. Whether or not they recognize this reality on their own or through with the assistance of a professional, it is obvious they have moved past denial.

This 'Self-Step' saves money and the invested time and energy of both the client and the professional. In other words, the individual can achieve this realization by asking themselves the same question(s).

- 2. Believe that you still have personal power to conquer your addiction and regain the power that you given to drugs and/or alcohol.**

Rationale

Unlike the first step in the '12' Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous that states: "We come to realize that we are powerless over alcohol. " This "Self-Step" recognizes that the individual still has the power to recover from drugs and/or alcohol, other, and by moving from step 1 to step 2, they now harness whatever power they have and now have the opportunity through recovery to regain the power they gave to their addiction.

Rationale

This is the 'Self-Steps' first claim to the importance of existing methodologies.

- 3. Begin to understand the complexities and dynamics of your addiction, realizing that you are not the problem, drugs and alcohol are the problem and your desire is to eliminate this problem from your life.**

Rationale

Once you have gained some clarity of the factors involved, begin to offset

Once an individual accepts their power to recover, they must understand what they are recovering from. There must be a significant understanding of drugs, alcohol, other chemicals and a conclusion to the fact that these elements have existed long before he or she became addicted to them. This is important in not taking 'full-blame' for being addicted, rather accepting the fact that these elements have strong effects on millions of individuals. This is also one of the major focuses of specific recovery programs.

- 4. Examine the progressive factors that lead to your addiction (environment, social conditions, association, etc.). Understand that these conditions played a role in your addiction and realize that these conditions must now change.**

Rationale

With a new framework and with newfound knowledge, power and identity, By examining progressive factors, the individual can begin to see what factors played a role in their continuous use or unnecessary use of drugs and/or alcohol throughout their lives.

These steps are currently undergoing review, testing and application to specific case studies. They are far from 'set-in-stone'. As I explore the issue of recovery as well as research more information, I would like to consider this subject matter as a basis for a possible Master's thesis.

- 5. Examine the present social/cultural conditions (environment) that associate's your addiction. (Family, friends, peers, etc.) Realize that these associations must also change.**

Rationale

This step enables the addict to make connection between historic, progressive factors and factors that currently occupy their lives. They can clearly see which factors have 'remained' over the course of their addiction.

- 6. Be willing to seek help, either professional or non-professional, to assist you in clarifying particular factors or further examining discoveries in these areas. This is your addiction and your recovery. You need to understand the history of your addiction and the factors that helped get you there.**

Rationale

This is the 'Self-Steps' first claim to the importance of existing methodologies. Professional help may be necessary and may serve as critical in one's recovery. The individual should base this on their ability to fully grasp the complexities of their addiction. If the circumstance presents itself, the individual must move forward in honesty to gain understanding by any means necessary

- 7. Once you have gained some clarity of the factors involved, begin to offset each with positive, non-addictive alternatives. EX: *Friday Night spent at the local nightclub can be offset by Friday night at a restaurant.***

Rationale

This step is not only necessary it is vital. Disassociation and reconstructing social norms and behaviors is a key element in nearly every recovery program. Reconstructing one's social norms and or behavior's allows for the discovery of positive alternatives that were hindered by the addiction.

- 8. With a new framework and with newfound knowledge, power and identity, redefine your desires, goals and hobbies and work everyday to achieve them.**

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Endnotes

- ¹ 2. Compulsive need for and use of a habit-forming substance (as heroin, nicotine, or alcohol) characterized by tolerance and by well-defined physiological symptoms upon withdrawal: Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary-Tenth Edition.
- ² The act, process, or instance of recovering RECOVER 2a. To bring back to normal position or condition Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary-Tenth Edition.
- ³ Theories Of Addiction, Page(s) 8, 9, 10 & 11, The Guilford Substance Abuse Series, (1996) Clinical Work with Substance Abusing Clients. The Guilford Press: New York-London
- ⁴ The CAGE Process, Page 16, The Guilford Substance Abuse Series, (1996) Clinical Work with Substance Abusing Clients. The Guilford Press: New York-London
- ⁵ The '12 Steps' of Alcoholics Anonymous
- ⁶ P.H. Collins, Black Feminist Thought
- ⁷ "Kids With Courage", a short autobiography of the life of Charles L. Carson, Barbara Lewis (1990)
- ⁸ Page 47, Buelow, G. Beulow, S. (1998) Psychotherapy In Chemical Dependence Treatment. Brooks/Cole Publishing Co.

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