Recovery is possible



If you or someone you love is struggling to overcome addiction to alcohol or drugs, you know how difficult the journey to recovery can be. This article offers ten helpful reminders for those on the road to recovery.

Believe in yourself. Once you have made the decision to give up alcohol or drugs and are ready to change, you begin the recovery process. It is difficult and requires strength and believing in and loving yourself. You might consider writing a personal affirmation statement—a simple, positive sentence or two about yourself, such as "I'm proud of myself. I can do this." Think of it as your personal self-esteem booster. Keep your statement on your phone or on a piece of paper in your wallet and refer to it regularly.

2. **Rely on professional help.**One of the most important steps you can take to give yourself the best chance for recovery is to enlist the help of trained professionals. They can not only help you deal with the addiction challenges you are facing, but also the emotional or mental health issues you may need help addressing.
3. **Remember that there will be ups and downs, setbacks, and relapses.** Relapse is likely for everyone in recovery, and especially if you are going through it for the first time. Not everyone relapses, but if you do, recognize it and reach out to your supports for help to get back on track. Recovery takes time, patience, and work. Keep your expectations realistic so you don't set yourself up for disappointment.
4. **Seek support from family and friends.** We all need human connection, especially during times of crisis and difficulty. Studies show that support is essential for those in recovery. Build a support system of people with whom you can be honest and who you know believe in you and support your recovery. Avoid isolating yourself. Let your circle of trusted family and friends know you could use their support.
5. **Join and participate in a support group.** Most addiction programs offer access to recovery support groups. Join one of these. Addiction specialists agree that support groups can be a powerful and positive tool for those in recovery and provide ongoing support over the long-term. Some people attend 12-step programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous. While these work for some people, they are not right for everyone. You might also try a SMART Recovery group meeting. These work on a 4-point system based on scientific knowledge about addiction. If you prefer a group that is not spiritually based, you might try a Secular Organizations for Sobriety (SOS.) meeting.
6. **Establish healthy daily routines to help you stay focused on your recovery goals.** Structure your day to make sure sobriety remains a priority and keep your schedule simple. Maintain a balanced and healthy lifestyle. Eat a healthy diet. Adopt an exercise routine. (Exercise releases endorphins, which can make you feel good.) Pursue new interests and hobbies that give you pleasure. Actions such as these will help you build a healthy new life. "You don't recover from an addiction by stopping using," writes Dr. Steven Melemis in this article at **org**. "You recover by creating a new life where it is easier to not use."
7. **Keep busy and stay productive.** "Everyone who's ever attempted sobriety can attest to the fact that boredom is a major trigger with enormous relapse potential," writes Denise Fournier in this **Psychology Today article**. That's why it's very important to stay busy and productive, whether it is with work, volunteering, or other activities. Note that overwork can be a sign of an addictive personality and people in recovery should be mindful of this.
8. **Find healthy ways to unwind and manage stress.** One reason people use alcohol and drugs is to relax and push away stress, but this is not a healthy response and can be detrimental to health and well-being. Instead, try to engage in activities such as walking, exercising, listening to music, or practising deep breathing or mindfulness exercises.
9. **Find a sense of purpose.** We all need meaning in our lives, and to use our talents and abilities to reach our potential. Otherwise, we're likely to feel dissatisfied. Purpose may come from work, volunteering, caring for family, doing for others, or other actions that allow you to realize your potential. Spending time with others who live a life of purpose can inspire you to do the same.

10. **Focus on what you're gaining by giving up alcohol or drugs.** Picture the new you. Improved health. More positive relationships. Higher self-esteem. Improved performance at work. And a life where the future looks clear and you're in charge!