

A Woman's Path to Recovery

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Educational Resources

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Web Resources

1) Women's Addiction Foundation

Internet address: <http://www.womenfdn.org>

A nonprofit foundation dedicated to helping improve the lives of women with addiction. Provides downloadable fact sheets and other resources.

2) National Center for PTSD

Internet address: www.ptsd.va.gov

A nonprofit organization that provides resources and support for people with trauma/PTSD, as well as for family members and professionals, primarily related to veterans. Provides downloadable information and other resources.

3) Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator

Internet address: www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov/

Phone: 800-662-HELP (800-662-4357) *Offers alcohol and drug information and treatment referral assistance. (This service is provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.)*

4) Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters

Internet address: www.al-anon.alateen.org

For locations of Al-Anon or Alateen meetings worldwide, call 888-4AL-ANON (888-425-2666), Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-6 p.m. (EST)

For free informational materials, call 757-563-1600, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-6 p.m.

Makes referrals to local Al-Anon groups, which are support groups for spouses and other significant adults in an alcoholic person's life. Also makes referrals to Alateen groups, which offer support to children of alcoholics.

5) Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) World Services

Internet address: www.aa.org

Phone: 212-870-3400 *Makes referrals to local AA groups and provides informational materials on the AA program. Many cities and towns also have a local AA office listed in the telephone book.*

6) National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA)

Internet address: www.nacoa.net

E-mail: nacoa@nacoa.org

Phone: 888-554-COAS or 301-468-0985

Works on behalf of children of alcohol- and drug-dependent parents.

7) National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD)

Internet address: www.ncadd.org

Phone: 800-622-2255

Provides telephone numbers of local NCADD affiliates (who can provide information on local treatment resources) and educational materials on alcoholism.

8) National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)

11420 Rockville Pike

Rockville, MD 20852

Internet address: www.health.org

Phone: 301-770-5800 or 800-729-6686

Provides alcohol and drug abuse information produced by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Quiz on Women and Addiction

Multiple choice (circle one answer)

1. If you have an emotional problem and an addiction, the best advice is to work on:
 - a) the addiction
 - b) the emotional problem
 - c) both
 - d) whichever came first
2. Women's "telescoped course" of drinking means:
 - a) Women can learn to use telescopes if they drink
 - b) Drinking is a downward spiral for women
 - c) Women have problems from drinking sooner than men
 - d) Women have problems from drinking later than men
3. What number of drinks per day causes serious health problems for women?
 - a) 1
 - b) 2
 - c) 3
 - d) 4
4. What number of drinks per day causes serious health problems for men?
 - a) 2
 - b) 3
 - c) 4
 - d) 5
5. Who has the highest rate of addiction:
 - a) Whites
 - b) Blacks
 - c) Hispanics
 - d) All three are equal
6. "Binge drinking" means how many drinks at a time:
 - a) 3
 - b) 5
 - c) 7
 - d) When you've lost count
7. Controlled drinking is not safe for:
 - a) Women
 - b) Air traffic controllers
 - c) People with a history of alcohol dependence
 - d) People with a history of drug use
8. The single best treatment for addiction is:
 - a) AA
 - b) Psychotherapy
 - c) A combination of AA and psychotherapy
 - d) There is no single best treatment
9. Who has the highest rate of addiction: women or men?
 - a) Women
 - b) Men

- c) They are equal
 - d) No one knows
10. The best definition of addiction is:
- a) How much denial you have
 - b) Continued use despite harm
 - c) Amount you use
 - d) Level of physical dependence
11. In the US, what percent of people get addicted to a substance in their lifetime?
- a) 9%
 - b) 15%
 - c) 26%
 - d) 43%
12. Who is most likely to die from addiction: women or men?
- a) Women
 - b) Men
 - c) They are equal
 - d) Neither
13. Harm reduction means:
- a) Abstinence
 - b) Controlled use
 - c) Stress management
 - d) Decreased use
14. "Trauma" is common for women; it means:
- a) Physical harm
 - b) Thrill-seeking
 - c) Mourning a loss
 - d) Drug dreams
15. Men are more likely than women to:
- a) Seek treatment early for addiction
 - b) Become addicted slowly
 - c) Get support for entering treatment
 - d) All of the above
16. To recover from addiction, you have to:
- a) Attend AA
 - b) Hit bottom
 - c) Say you have an addiction
 - d) None of the above
17. The most common psychiatric disorder in the U.S. is:
- a) Depression
 - b) Foot fetish
 - c) Substance addiction
 - d) Anxiety
18. The number one cause of relapse is:
- a) Stress
 - b) Thrill-seeking
 - c) Body image problems

d) Depression

True or false?

- 1) As you get clean from substances, your co-occurring emotional disorder will most likely go away. True / False
- 2) Most people get help for their emotional problems. True / False
- 3) If you have an addiction, your children are more likely to develop an addiction. True / False
- 4) People who attend addiction treatment voluntarily do better than those who are forced into treatment (e.g., by courts) True / False
- 5) Girls start drinking at an later age than boys. True / False
- 6) Lesbians have higher rates of addiction than straight women. True / False
- 7) As minorities become “acculturated” (adapt to the dominant culture more than their culture of origin) their addiction rates decrease. True / False
- 8) Women-focused treatment is more successful than mixed-gender treatment. True / False
- 9) Taking a psychiatric medication is considered the same as using a substance. True / False
- 10) Co-occurring disorders are more common in women than men. True / False

Chapter 3

Exploring your life patterns

As you heal from addiction, you will see that recovery is not just about giving up something, such as alcohol, compulsive shopping, or overeating. It is, far more, a process of discovering who you are. Addiction arises out of unmet needs-- and thus much of the work ahead is to identify and fulfill your needs. It's about giving voice to wishes and feelings you may have hidden away for a long time. It's about taking good care of yourself, finding your truth, and becoming aware. Changing a habit may take as little as a month [Covey, 1990 #1867], but this deeper journey to your real self will be life-long.

Addiction is always an escape, and as such, it detaches you from yourself. You lose your groundedness and sense of confidence. Addiction is an illusion: a seemingly good thing in the beginning that somehow in the end goes bad. You lose yourself to your addiction, and after a while it owns you. You may literally live and die for it. The focus of an addiction is, moreover, almost always something physical: a drink, a drug, excessive physical pursuits such as sex or exercise, money, possessions. By trying to grasp too much onto these material things, you lose your grip on other, non-material sides of life that may be even more fulfilling-- such as love of nature, sense of purpose, healthy relationships, and creativity. But you're not "sick, lazy, crazy, or bad"-- addiction is never about some irredeemable flaw in you as a person. Rather, it's a sign that you have gone off track, chased the wrong dream.

In this chapter, the goal will be to explore life issues that may be related to your addiction. Five typical themes for women are:

- ≈ Body and sexuality
- ≈ Stress
- ≈ Thrill-seeking
- ≈ Relationships
- ≈ Trauma / violence

For each theme, some ideas will be discussed, a brief personal story will be provided, and then you will be asked to explore the theme in your own life. Resources will be provided if you want to find out more. Some topics will likely ring more true for you than others, and indeed, that's the purpose of this chapter-- to help you look beyond the addiction to unmet needs you may have. In the next chapter, emotional problems will be described-- such as depression, anxiety, and eating disorders.

Keep in mind that exploring these life problems does not mean they are the "real" issue behind your addiction, or that they caused your addiction. In earlier times, a mistake in the treatment field was to search for an underlying cause rather than helping people work on the addiction itself-- e.g., "If you resolve your psychological conflicts, the addiction will disappear on its own." This is known to be false [Margolis, 1998 #1985]. Addiction is a disease that needs direct attention and care, regardless of what other problems you have.

Yet it is also true that women often have life issues that are associated with addiction. By addressing these, as well as the addiction itself, you are more likely to get better. The idea is "Let's help you with all parts of your life, not just the addiction."

Women often suppress their own needs to focus on others, and may lose touch with themselves. In Chapters 6 through 9, ways of healing will be discussed, but for now the goal is just to get to know your life patterns more fully. As with the rest of this book, feel free to skip around to what interests you.

Life strengths

Before starting on the life difficulties, it may be helpful to identify the strong sides of yourself—the qualities that come naturally to you, your talents and gifts. This might include, for example, sense of humor, persistence, or the ability to face your feelings. It's just as important to notice what's going right as to notice what's wrong. And don't be modest—no need to hide your strengths. Really own them and delight in them. The work on life difficulties may be painful, so it's good to first connect with your strengths. Everyone, addicted or not, has a mix of strengths and difficulties. *Try this exercise even if you think you don't need it, or it feels "stupid", or you think you can't.* Give it your best shot!

★ Rate each strength below using the following scale. Really notice what's good about you!

0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 Extremely
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- ★ Connecting with others. I have a gift for making connections with people. I find friends easily, and enjoy being with people. _____
- ★ Creativity. I'm good at art, dance, music, writing or some other creative pursuit. I like to play with imagination and possibility. _____
- ★ Political action. I try to make a difference in the larger world. I may help with advocacy (such as promoting the rights of women, lesbians, or children). I may volunteer in my community at a library or soup kitchen, for example. _____
- ★ Attractiveness. I am physically beautiful or charming. People are drawn to me because they find me appealing. _____
- ★ Sense of humor. I can find fun in almost any situation. I like to laugh and notice the quirks and absurdities in life. _____
- ★ Survival skills. I survived painful life experiences, such as a dysfunctional family or child abuse. Or I may have completed schooling or a job that was difficult. I am a survivor. _____
- ★ Persistence. I can follow through on commitments even when I don't feel like it. I have a sense of will and make an effort to improve things. _____
- ★ Self-care. I take care of myself—eating right, exercising, annual check-ups, and taking care of my physical environment such as my home. _____
- ★ Physical ability. I'm good at sports or other physical activity (without being addicted to it). _____
- ★ Social support. I have one or more people in my life who love me and genuinely want me to get better. I believe they'll help me when I ask, and be there emotionally when I need them. _____
- ★ Helping others. I'm good at caring for others, such as children, pets, elderly, or others who need my help. _____
- ★ Self-esteem. I have some positive feelings about myself. This may include pride in my achievements, valuing my personal qualities (e.g., honesty, integrity, warmth), or believing that I'm a good person. _____
- ★ Spirituality. I am a deeply spiritual person. I sense larger forces and can tap into that positive energy. I may or may not be religious, but I have this gift of awareness. _____
- ★ Intelligence. I "get it"—whether it's formal learning (mental intelligence), knowing how to relate to people (social intelligence), or dealing with feelings (emotional intelligence). I may have one of these strongly, or all of these somewhat. _____
- ★ Ability to face my feelings. I can face feelings that are painful and deal with them. I may manage my feelings in a variety of ways—sometimes crying, thinking about them, or just letting myself experience them. _____

* Ability to communicate. I can say what I think and feel, without hurting myself or others. This is sometimes called “assertiveness”—expressing myself without being either passive (getting “walked on”) or aggressive (attacking people). _____

* Financial resources. I have money available, which can help me obtain therapy and other resources for overcoming addiction. _____

* Others: _____

GROWTH EXERCISE: ASK QUESTIONS

Everyone gets stuck sometimes. You're in a dark place, and it feels so very real -- as if it's all you've ever known and ever will know. Everything seems to have gone wrong; you can't see a way out. You may feel trapped and can't even think straight anymore.

When you're in this place, your mind has become rigid, narrowed. There are always choices in life, but you can't see them. This growth exercise is about ways you can shake your mind loose-- how to get flexible in your thinking. It's about learning to have a conversation with yourself that leads you out of the woods, into the light. You ask yourself bold questions and then answer them. Questioning has long been a way that people use to get unstuck. It's used as a method in philosophy, and it's the primary way that therapy works-- your therapist asks you questions to help you see things in a new way. In all fields, new knowledge starts from asking good questions.

There's a real art to asking good questions. (Indeed, good questions are really statements-- they "know" something.) You can train yourself to do this. As kids, we question everything, but as we get older, we think in ruts-- same old, same old. You have to train your mind to not just accept your automatic way of thinking, but to wake up. It's saying, "Life is rich and varied-- it has limitless possibilities. I can discover new ways of looking at the world. I can challenge myself to think creatively." When they said the earth was flat, Columbus alone said, "Maybe it's round". It takes guts to go against what you (or others) have been thinking for a long time. It takes courage and will.

When you learn to do it, it feels good. It feels right because we know that no one has all the answers. Life is about constant learning. When you leave your house in the morning, you step out into the possibility of finding out something new that you didn't know yesterday. There are many ways to learn: you can read books, talk to people, visit new places, even just browse through a magazine you haven't read before (perhaps *Boaters World* or *Country Living*). All of these give you a glimpse into a new reality. "The world is an oyster"-- there are always treasures to uncover.

How?

Create questions

The idea is to challenge yourself with provocative questions, to break out of your usual thought patterns. It's like shaking the cobwebs and dust from your mind, doing some spring cleaning. Circle any below that you like, and make up your own.

- ☞ What's Plan B, if Plan A doesn't work?
- ☞ Which way has integrity?
- ☞ What's missing in this picture?
- ☞ What's the "message" I hear?
- ☞ What if I were just as important as anyone else?
- ☞ In the end, what matters most?
- ☞ How can I protect myself?
- ☞ What are my actions saying?
- ☞ What am I trying to push away?
- ☞ Is there anyone who can help me?
- ☞ How can I be there for myself?
- ☞ Is there an image that can guide me?
- ☞ What can I do, no matter how imperfect?
- ☞ What happened growing up that led me here?
- ☞ What's a real gift I give myself?
- ☞ If I liked myself, what would I do?
- ☞ How do I really feel?
- ☞ Where's the balance?
- ☞ Are there different sides of me that I need to hear?
- ☞ What is safest for me?
- ☞ Your question: _____

Give it a try

Read the example, then try it for yourself. Note that sometimes you may need to ask yourself more than one question to make it work.

Example:

* You were three months clean from substances. Yesterday you slipped. You wake up thinking, "I can't do it. I'm not strong enough."

What can you ask yourself to see it in a new way?

Question: I would ask myself, "*What kind of help do I need?*"

Answer: I would answer by saying, "*I see now that I can't do it alone. I need people to show me the way. This slip can be just a bump in the road-- I don't have to let it become a full-blown disaster. If I listen to what this slip is telling me, it's saying I need help. This problem won't go away on its own. Three months clean is good, but if I can't sustain it, I need to try something new.*"

* Your partner keeps asking you for large amounts of money. You feel uncomfortable but you're afraid s/he will leave you. You think, "Just once more is okay."

What can you ask yourself to see it in a new way?

Question: I would ask myself, "_____?"

Answer: I would answer by saying, "_____"

* You're having horrible memories of being assaulted. The pictures keep replaying in your mind and you can't shut them off. You think, "I can't live this way. I want to die."

What can you ask yourself to see it in a new way?

Question: I would ask myself, "_____?"

Answer: I would answer by saying, "_____"

* You have a toothache that's getting worse. You try to ignore it. You're in a lot of pain, but you hate going to the dentist. You keep putting it off.

What can you ask yourself to see it in a new way?

Question: I would ask myself, "_____?"

Answer: I would answer by saying, "_____"

* You've been putting up a good front. No one knows you're struggling with addiction. But inside you're dying. You think, "I can't stop."

What can you ask yourself to see it in a new way?

Question: I would ask myself, "_____?"

Answer: I would answer by saying, "_____"

* **One of your situations:** _____

What can you ask yourself to see it in a new way?

Question: I would ask myself, "_____?"

Answer: I would answer by saying, "_____"

Short Michigan Screening Test

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Do you feel you are a normal drinker? | yes | no |
| 2. Do your spouse or parents worry or complain about your drinking? | yes | no |
| 3. Do you ever feel bad about your drinking? | yes | no |
| 4. Do friends or relatives think you are a normal drinker? | yes | no |
| 5. Are you always able to stop drinking when you want to? | yes | no |
| 6. Have you ever attended a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous? | yes | no |
| 7. Has drinking ever created problems between you and your spouse? | yes | no |
| 8. Have you ever gotten into trouble at work because of drinking? | yes | no |
| 9. Have you ever neglected your obligations, your family, or your work for 2 or more days in a row because you were drinking? | yes | no |
| 10. Have you ever gone to anyone for help about your drinking? | yes | no |
| 11. Have you ever been in the hospital because of drinking? | yes | no |
| 12. Have you ever been arrested even for a few hours because of drinking? | yes | no |
| 13. Have you ever been arrested for drunk driving or driving after drinking? | yes | no |

Reference: Seltzer MA; Vinokur A; Van Rooijen LJ. A Self-Administered Short Michigan Alcohol Screening Test (SMAST) *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 36:117-126, 1975

-----delete scoring below before copying scale for clients-----

Scoring : 1 point for each of answers in bold.

2 points possible problem

3 points probable alcohol problem.

A Brief Screening Test for Adolescent Substance Abuse

The CRAFFT Questions

- 1) Have you ever ridden in a **CAR** driven by someone (including yourself) who was "high" or had been using alcohol or drugs?
- 2) Do you ever use alcohol or drugs to **RELAX**, feel better about yourself, or fit in?
- 3) Do you ever use alcohol/drugs while you are by yourself, **ALONE**?
- 4) Do your family or **FRIENDS** ever tell you that you should cut down on your drinking or drug use?
- 5) Do you ever **FORGET** things you did while using alcohol or drugs?
- 6) Have you gotten into **TROUBLE** while you were using alcohol or drugs?

This instrument was developed by John Knight, M.D., Boston Children's Hospital.

downloaded from <http://www.netwellness.org/healthtopics/substanceabuse/crafft.cfm>

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Scoring: 2 or more YES answers suggest a significant problem.