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# *IN SIGHT* for Oregon Lawyers and Judges

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

## 12 THINGS THAT MESS UP RECOVERY

Anyone who has attempted to recover from addiction realizes how difficult a quest it is. Only about 20% of the people who enter recovery remain clean and sober that first year. But once you make it past the first year, your chances to stay clean and sober greatly improve to 80%. Getting over the first-year hump into the second year of recovery is critical. So what can you do to give yourself the best chance? Avoid these common traps that mess up your recovery from addiction specialist Dr. Allen Berger:

**1. Believing addiction to one substance is the only problem.** Your best chance for recovery lies in total abstinence from all mind-altering drugs.

**2. Believing sobriety will fix everything.** Recovery begins with breaking the bonds of addiction, but this is only the first step on a long journey. Recovery is ultimately about recovering our spiritual, or true, self.

**3. Pursuing recovery with less energy than pursuing addiction.** We have to pursue recovery with the same tenacity and enthusiasm that we had when we were drinking or using other drugs.

**4. Being selectively honest.** Recovery requires rigorous honesty. Nothing less will work. We are as sick as we are secretive. Recovery is like a salvage operation – we are recovering our lost self.

**5. Feeling special and unique.** Humility is the spiritual foundation of recovery. In order to feel worthy, we do not need to be unique. People who do best in recovery are those who surrender and follow suggestions.

**6. Not making amends.** To keep a strong spiritual foundation of recovery, it is essential that we accept full responsibility

for our harmful and hurtful behavior and that we attempt to repair the damage we have caused in our relationships with family, friends, and loved ones.

**7. Using the program to try to become perfect.** Most of our life has been spent trying to be perfect. This has been a fruitless goal. Instead, we need to learn how to become more human.

**8. Confusing self-concern with selfishness.** Self-concern is different from selfishness. Self-concern does not exclude others; it is inclusive. Part of our self is concerned with cooperating with and pleasing others. These desires are natural and healthy when they are balanced with personal integrity.

**9. Playing futile self-improvement games.** Recovery requires honesty. Playing games with ourselves is dishonest and doesn't address our problems. It is instead a sophisticated strategy to avoid dealing with our problems. Avoidance is ultimately destructive to the process of recovery.

**10. Not getting help for relationship troubles.** Dysfunctional relationships are one of the top three causes of relapse.

**11. Believing that life should be easy.** Life is difficult. The sooner we are initiated into this reality, the sooner we learn how to deal with life on its terms rather than waste our time looking for the easy way.

**12. Using the program to handle everything.** Recognizing our need for additional help is an indication that we are working a good program.

*Source: Dr. Allen Berger, 12 Stupid Things That Mess Up Recovery (Hazelden, 2008). Reprinted with permission.*

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