

Helping the Body and Mind Recover from a Chemical Dependency



If you or a loved one is chemically dependent, the first step to recovery is accepting that there is a problem and making the decision to get help. From there, the journey has just begun. Being addicted to a substance affects the body and the mind, and in order to fully recover, you'll have to address all of the physical, behavioral, and mental patterns that have developed over the course of your addiction.

Given that taking the first step is always the hardest, once you decide to seek help there is hope; success can be achieved through determination. When you restore your physical and mental self, you will get more

of your life back, chemical-free. Read on for information on how you or a loved one can make a full recovery.

Treating the Body Right

When quitting a substance, it will take time for the body to adjust back to life without the substance. Your doctor will know if you should have medical help while quitting the drug, or if it is safe to quit "cold turkey" without any medical assistance.

Exercise can be a valuable part of recovery. Engaging in exercise helps to release stress and also to strengthen and return your body back to health. Endorphins are released through exercise; these natural chemicals generate positive feelings that can further assist your recovery. When you begin an exercise routine, start small and build up from there. Be careful not to overwork your body limits; use exercise to release stress, not build up stress.

In addition to exercise, good nutrition is important. Make sure you have plenty of fresh vegetables, fruits, and whole grains in your diet. Work to remove processed foods, additives, refined sugar, caffeine, and high-fat foods. Note that sugar and caffeine can actually increase cravings for drugs or alcohol.

Eating right and exercising will help you sleep better during this difficult time. Make sure you take time to rest, as it will be an essential part of your recovery.

Healing the Mind

Oftentimes, chemical dependency develops as a means to cover or numb the emotional pain one is feeling. When the substance is no longer part of their unhealthy coping mechanisms, people may feel the emotions they have masked for the first time. This is when the person has to put their energy towards learning healthy coping skills to work through and manage the emotional pain. Below are some activities that can help restore the mind to a healthy state:

- Write down situations or people in your life that trigger you to take the substance. Avoid them the best you can.
- Seek out a therapist who specializes in addiction and recovery.
- Surround yourself with people who respect and support your sobriety.
- Develop a routine of meditation, visualization, or other relaxation techniques.
- Meet and communicate with others at a 12-step program. The phone book or your employee assistance program can help you find groups in your area that can support you on your journey.