

Relapse Is Preventable

A relapse into active Alcoholism or Sex Addiction, or any other addictive disorder, is a preventable syndrome and not a predictable aspect of recovery. Proponents of the position that relapse is a common phenomenon in the recovery process from addiction would have you believe that relapses are expected and that most people recovering from an addictive illness will “fall short” of “perfection” from time to time. Some supporters of this idea are quick to reference the “program” as teaching that we cannot expect perfection. The following excerpt from the original 12 Step recovery text *Alcoholics Anonymous*, is often quoted by supporters when the issue of or the potential for relapse is being discussed:

“No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not saints ... The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.”

On the surface it would seem that the encouragement to aim for spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection supports the idea that relapse just happens. While we believe that relapse can happen when one has not developed sufficient emotional and spiritual tools for coping with life’s challenges, we do not believe that it should be expected or that one should reserve their right to “fall” from time to time. We do not believe that the program supports the eventuality of relapse, just the opposite. The author of *Alcoholics Anonymous* cautions, when discussing the addiction of Alcoholism, that:

“If we are planning to stop drinking, there must be no reservation of any kind, nor any lurking notion that someday we will be immune to alcohol.”

It is true that none of us is perfect. We are not suggesting otherwise. However, our abstinence must be perfect. The 1st Step must be taken without reservation or qualification. If you reserve the right to relapse then you will. There are many challenges in life that were once answered with an addictive substance or behavior but that can and will change if we are willing to go to any lengths to achieve and maintain sobriety. A particular path that one follows to a relapse may have highly individualized trigger points and each person’s life can introduce seemingly unique challenges. However, the path to sober living is clearly marked in the 12 Steps.

If you are struggling with recovery or returning from a relapse please remember that the “misery” of addiction is optional. You never have to relapse again.

For more information on therapeutic strategies for intervening on what *appears* to be a free-fall to the bottom, contact us by email or phone. Also look for an upcoming release title, *An Ounce of Prevention*©, to be published later this year by Leadem Counseling & Consulting Services, (2010).