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KEYS TO RECOVERY — NEWSPAPER, INC. —



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by: Batista Gremaud

FORTIFYING AGAINST RELAPSES

Relapse in recovery is common. It happens in stages, often beginning with unresolved issues that lead to uncontrollable negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, fear, and resentments that are still deeply rooted in the subconscious mind. Temptations often emerge out of nowhere; unforeseen pressures, psychological and circumstantial, may build progressively and then unexpectedly combine to drive the person over the edge. Having lost tremendous functional strength, especially if it drops below 50%, becomes critical causing the person to overreact first without thinking (impulsiveness and lack of control) as opposed to thinking first and then taking the appropriate action or response (discipline and spontaneity). When living a life through an addictive unhealthy lifestyle, he or she is unable to think reasonably and may make unhealthy decisions, potentially leading to a relapse. In this article, we will address two common triggers to relapse, which are relationships and stress.

Relationships: A foundational concept to acknowledge before going on, is that all relationships begin with the relationship with ourselves and our own ability to love and forgive ourselves first, then forgive others and let go of resentments and regrets. Resentment is considered one main offender when it comes to relapse. Since the addict's emotional growth was stunted when the active addiction started, they face many challenges for healthy relationships. Some factors may include fear of rejection, abandonment, noise, failure, intimacy, and poor self-esteem. Constant rumination between thoughts and feelings leads to indecision and vulnerability to relapse, if no positive action is taken.

The most commonly adopted methods to address this phenomenon in recovery, are based on intellectual knowledge through the medium of workshops, support groups, therapy etc. Those methods are valuable, however much emphasis is placed on the social, psychological and emotional causes of the problem via intellectual data, while little attention is placed on grounding the information into the physical body, (brain to muscle connection), where the information is housed. When it is all said and done, at the end of the day, the fact remains that addicts and alcoholics, are by nature uncomfortable in their own skin; always seeking to escape that feeling of being present and lacking the desire, and ability to be grounded. This results in the inability to set healthy boundaries, which is a key factor in relapse.

Every action creates a reaction and every motion creates an emotion. Strength training is a specific action step that can be taken immediately to provide instant functional strength increase, and begin to change one's desire and habits to a positive lifestyle change. It provides an avenue to create new healthy relationships with health-focused individuals. When you start feeling better in your own skin, you will automatically begin to make new relationships to support your newfound self-esteem and lifestyle.

Stress: The relationship between stress and addictions has long been established. Acute stress can lead to drug abuse in vulnerable individuals, and increase the risk of relapse in recovering addicts. Stress response hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol are released via the sympathetic nervous system. The heart rate increases, causing blood vessels to constrict and blood pressure to increase as a result of the fight and flight response. The recovering individual might be more susceptible to stress, due to the way that alcohol and drug abuse has changed brain chemistry. This may also explain why some individuals relapse in response to situations that would only be considered mildly stressful by others. Long-term, fulfilling sobriety happens by attaining emotional sobriety, which requires the ability to remain calm and centered under stress and to make healthy choices. Recovery houses and treatment centers incorporate stress management courses, and other interventions or modalities aimed at helping addicts more successfully manage their stress by focusing on social support, problem solving and coping skills. Remember the acronym H.A.L.T. – avoid getting too hungry, angry, lonely and tired is recommended. This might be easier said than done, especially for the individual who has lost tremendous functional strength and is on overload emotionally.

So creating new habits and behavior patterns to strengthen the nervous system and relieve stress is essential.

When done properly, strength training allows you to create such new habits and behavior patterns in a methodical way. It is a safe sport that provides fast and measurable results, and an instant sense of well being, by quieting the mind. Added benefits: exercise becomes a fun activity rather than one more thing on the to-do list, giving you more free time to an over-extended schedule.

Fast becoming the number 1 anti-aging sport because of its amazing overall health benefits, strength training is a powerful exercise modality with superior ability to rebuild the alcoholic brain, by increasing neurogenesis, allowing you to become more balanced physically and emotionally, as it stimulates the release of endorphins and neurotransmitters that help to relieve stress response and fight against depression. It serves as a form of meditation that takes the mind off stress factors. It offers an avenue to blow off steam so to speak. It also allows a safe place to let go of negativity, and distance yourself from undesired situations; Men and women who have grown up believing that they are victims of everything from their mothers to the foods, and the drinks they consume begin to experience a new sense of self-confidence and self-respect, feeling powerful, competent and capable of taking charge of their bodies and their lives.

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