



# Serene Scene

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Courtesy of Serene Center Long Beach

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## SELF-EFFICACY IN RECOVERY

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Addiction carries with it so many destructive symptoms that, aside from remaining abstinent, it can be difficult to arrange and organize the problem areas that need to be addressed in recovery. It seems clear that every individual afflicted with the disease of addiction has their own unique mixture of complex challenges. Likewise, it is necessary for every individual to approach recovery in their own unique way in order to develop the required coping skills and life skills that will help them to lead a long-term quality lifestyle of recovery.

At some point along the journey of recovery, it is inevitable that the recovering individual must address their past addictive behaviors of irresponsibility, chaos, lack of healthy motivation, and discontent. All of these symptoms of addiction have their roots firmly placed in the concept of self-efficacy.

### Self-Efficacy

- Discipline
- Responsibility
- Fulfilling Work
- Activity

## SELF-EFFICACY IN RECOVERY

*Andrew Martin, MBA, CADCI*

### DISCIPLINE

Discipline carries with it a great deal of empowerment. If the recovering individual can exercise some control over their behaviors, then unhealthy and addictive behaviors can be reduced and/or eliminated altogether. If a particular behavior, such as cruising the boulevard, creates an expectation for using and acting out in the addict; then discipline will aid the recovering person in avoiding the behavior of cruising the boulevard.

If the recovering individual can exercise some control over their emotions, then exaggerated and disparate emotional responses to stress can be understood and tamed. Often those in recovery report emotions that are seemingly disconnected from the reality of a situation. For example, some may be smiling as they uncomfortably explain how they are feeling belittled by their loved one. Recognizing that the smiling behavioral response does not correlate with their emotional state is important for the recovering person to understand.

Recovery life is a constant work in progress, one is never complete; in fact the experience of the journey is a source of joy for the recovering individual. However, this is a radical departure from the belief in addiction that nothing changes and that everything will always be terrible. Discipline allows for the recovering person to develop skills and improve on skills already possessed. It also empowers the individual to design and carry out a training plan that provides tools necessary to cope with specific life circumstances that would otherwise prompt the use of drugs, alcohol or acting-out behaviors.

### RESPONSIBILITY

The addict is not used to be answerable for his or her own actions, but being responsible in recovery is a prerequisite for living a long-term quality of life. The recovering person must not only be accountable for his or her actions, but he or she must also be responsible for himself or herself. Human beings are social animals and operate within well defined social norms of interaction. These societal rules create an expectation of acceptable behavior from all those who wish to participate in society.

When active in addiction, the addict is only concerned with the gratification of their need to get high. This serves to turn all attention inward, and initially focus on societal rules only takes place in the context of manipulation of society to get the drugs and alcohol. Over time, any focus on societal rules is lost altogether.

In recovery, societal rules can be confusing, frustrating, and sometimes overwhelming. The recovering person often has a need to re-learn societal rules before being able to act responsibly toward one's self and toward others.



## SELF-EFFICACY IN RECOVERY

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### FULLFILLING WORK

Addiction so often brings tremendous shame and self-loathing. It is difficult work to release these two debilitating states of mind, and remnants of these destructive attitudes will follow the recovering person long after entering into recovery. It is important to combat feelings and beliefs of low self-confidence and inferiority in a proactive approach.

Finding work that is satisfying to one's healthy desires, expectations, needs and demands is invaluable for boosting a feeling of contentment. A grudge job will do nothing but reinforce the negative self-image of the addict. A fulfilling job can only support a positive self-image and attitude.

### ACTIVITY

Laziness is commonplace in the addict, unless activity is required to score the next high or maintain the lifestyle of using. In early recovery, the effects of the drugs and alcohol take their toll on the human body, causing fatigue and restlessness at the same time. It can be extremely difficult for someone in recovery to get motivated to take care of his or her body and mind. However, when the recovering person partakes in activity, energy flows.

Exercising the body stimulates serotonin, which makes people feel content and energized. Additionally, physical exercise increases blood flow, improves cardiovascular function, and delivers more oxygen to the vital organs of the body.

Exercising one's mind is equally important. Conversing with others and interesting topics, reading books, watching informative programs on television, and playing games are terrific ways to stimulate thought and interest.

The recovering person also needs to exercise his or her spirit. Interacting with peer groups and socializing with other human beings is vital to invigorating the soul.

In recovery, self-efficacy is the ability of the recovering person to produce the desired result. Because much of the life of the recovering person was spent in the pursuit of unhealthy purposes, when the recovering person finally chooses to invest in a lifestyle of recovery, there is often a disconnect between what is desired and what is real. With an attitude based in accurate thought, the recovering person can make plans for improvement in the quality of his or her life and carry out those plans.

Over time, because the recovery of quality of life does not happen quickly, the recovering person will discover a better quality of life than they ever imagined possible. **SS**

