

Chapter 14 My Recovery Plan for My Life

In this chapter you can begin to map out a longer view of your recovery road. Remember, as always, that this is not about people in general; it's about who you are as an individual. All the work you have been doing in the earlier chapters has prepared you to understand better who exactly you are and what you need to do to lead your life in a clean and sober way.

It may be especially advisable to use a pencil in this chapter. Serious engineers, architects, programmers, business people -- any people who make plans for real life -- know that revisions and modifications are the rule, not the exception.

1 Overview of This Chapter

In writing out your life plan, you could start by reviewing the "My Plan for ..." sections of the earlier chapters and copying out or summarizing the most important points. The chapter begins with a worksheet for that purpose.

When you have the pieces all laid out, one possible next move is to look for connections between them -- overlapping fact patterns that show up in all or several chapters. The second section of the chapter discusses connections.

If there is more than one issue, it makes sense to prioritize them. That is the purpose of the section that follows.

With that done, the general concept for addressing each concern has to be translated into the gory details. There is a worksheet for that purpose.

Finally, you can summarize your life plan in your own words in a form that is suitable for sharing with others.

1 Decision
 2 Body
 3 Exposure
 4 Activities
 5 People
 6 Feelings
 7 Life Style
 8 History
 9 Culture
 10 Treatment
 11 Relapse
 12 Day Plan
 13 Week Plan
 14 Life Plan

Worksheet 14-1: Summing Up

SUMMING UP MY WORK FROM THE PREVIOUS CHAPTERS	
Chapter	My Main Issues
My Body (see Page 41)	
My Exposure (see Page 56)	
My Activities (see Page 76)	
My People (see Page 99)	
My Feelings (see Page 132)	
My Life Style (see Page 148)	
My History (see Page 190)	

SUMMING UP MY WORK FROM THE PREVIOUS CHAPTERS	
Chapter	My Main Issues
My Culture (see Page 213)	
My Treatment and Support Groups (see Page 242)	
My Relapse Prevention Plan (see Page 243)	
Other Concerns I want to build into my life plan:	

3 Lining Up Issues In Order

If you have identified only one set of facts that shows up as a concern for you in several different chapters, your starting point is obvious. But if you have identified several sets of facts that are of concern to you, it may be helpful for you to decide which of them is the most important to solve first.

For example, Sandy lives in a crack-infested run-down apartment building (heavy exposure, repeated triggers) and works in a bar (not a safe space and no social support for recovery) and has a partner who abuses prescription drugs (a close-range opponent of Sandy's recovery, heavy emotional triggers). Sandy realizes that this is a pattern in Sandy's life (unresolved emotional issue). Sandy by this point attends recovery support group meetings regularly and does a "Daily Do" every morning. What does Sandy do next?

Maybe the place to start is by moving to a better neighborhood. But if Sandy's partner is spending their moving money on drugs, then maybe the place to start is to end that relationship. Or maybe Sandy's partner would be willing and able to get into treatment? Or maybe Sandy can get active in a Residents' Association to drive out the dealers and force the landlord to fix up the place? Or should Sandy start by getting counseling to deal with Sandy's psychological pattern? Or should Sandy avoid real-life changes and concentrate on learning blissful acceptance of things as they are?

⇒ You may want to make several Sobriety Priority T-Charts (Chapter One) to get clarity if you have this kind of common multi-issue situation. Talking it out and getting feedback from your support group can be especially helpful here. Other people could help you "think outside of the box" and see solutions that didn't occur to you.

It's difficult enough to prioritize two or three issues. If your list has more than three issues, it might be helpful first to trim it down to the Big Three. A long list can loom so large that you could feel overwhelmed and get nothing done.

It might also be helpful to write the issues down on small pieces of paper and shuffle them around until you find an order that makes the most sense.

Sometimes it's necessary to break each issue down into its details before the best order of priorities emerges. Try skipping ahead to the "Gory Details" section and then come back here and finish prioritizing.

When prioritizing issues, it's often necessary to get more information about one of the options. For example, is there a treatment program that would accept Sandy's partner? Would Sandy's partner agree to go, if a program were available? Is there an apartment in a less drug-infested neighborhood that Sandy can afford? Would a move put Sandy closer to a good recovery meeting? Is a Residents' Association already in place or would Sandy have to start it up? Are there other jobs for someone with Sandy's qualifications? How much would a counselor charge? Use this space to begin a list of the questions you need answered in order to finish prioritizing your problems.

- 1 Decision
- 2 Body
- 3 Exposure
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- 14 Life Plan

⇒How can you tell whether you have prioritized your issues in the best way? The optimum order for attacking your problems is the one with good transitions. You have the best order when your solution to the first one puts you in a good position to solve the next one, and so down the line. Skilled pool players make this sort of analysis all the time. When the issues aren't lined up well, the opposite happens: after you solve the first one, the next one is more difficult than it was to begin with.

When you have the information you need in order to understand what your choices are, and have thought about all the different possible ways to tackle the issues, and have discussed it with as many other people as you can get to listen and give you feedback, then write your list into the next worksheet in the order in which you plan to proceed:

Worksheet 14-2: My Issues, Prioritized

MY RECOVERY ISSUES IN THE ORDER IN WHICH I PLAN TO WORK ON THEM	
<p>I plan to start with my first issue, which is:</p>	
<p>The solution to this issue will put me into a good position to tackle my second issue, which is:</p>	
<p>The solution to this issue will put me into a good position to tackle my third issue, which is:</p>	

In this case, Sandy decided to open a separate bank account and go to school part time. Sandy's partner couldn't pay the rent and when Sandy was absolutely firm about not financing the partner's drug trips, the partner moved out. Sandy got a clean and sober roommate, studied extra hard, and got over the heartbreak. In a few months Sandy had a certificate and got a better job, and with that money moved to a cleaner neighborhood and found a counselor to help work on some old issues to break Sandy's problem relationship pattern.

⇒ Sandy understood that staying clean and sober is the foundation for solving life problems. When people are clean and sober, they can develop the clarity of mind to see that the life they have slid into is a pit out of which they must climb, or drown. When people are clean and sober, they can make intelligent plans for the future, and even more important, they can make the difficult and sometimes

emotionally painful moves that have to be made to carry them out. With sobriety, a person can get to work on old issues and make inner advances to go with the external improvements.

Knowing that remaining clean and sober was the foundation of everything, Sandy took care to move forward mentally, socially and culturally in recovery throughout this period of life changes. In addition to Sandy's "Daily Do" affirmation, and regular participation in a meeting that discussed its members' current life issues, Sandy turned off the TV and bought a computer, got on the Internet, read for hours about recovery issues, and joined a sober chat and email list. Above all, Sandy used the Sobriety Priority as a tool for making decisions in life, and in every tight spot -- such as when the drug-using partner moved out -- Sandy remembered: Sobriety Is My Priority, I Don't Drink Or Use No Matter What.

4 The Gory Details

A recovery plan that only consists of good intentions is as effective as no recovery plan at all. As with anything else, "the devil is in the details." Use this section to take the general concepts from your previous worksheet (Worksheet 14-2: My Issues, Prioritized) and translate them into practical, working details. The key questions to answer are Who, What, When, Where, Why and How Much.

For example, when Sandy from the previous example decided to go to school part time, this general plan had to be broken down into numerous details before Sandy could make it work. What school? What courses? What times? Where were the classes? What about transportation? What certificate would the classes lead to? Could Sandy afford the tuition?

Use the next worksheet to break down your Issue No. 1 into its gory details. Make sure that you build your sobriety maintenance practices into your plan at the detail level. Make additional copies of the worksheet for additional issues you have identified.

After you have detailed all your issues, do your segues still work? Sometimes breaking down general concepts into their practical details reveals flaws in the order of priorities, and it's necessary to go back and revise the order of attack. It is common in all kinds of real world situations to cycle through this kind of process (from prioritization to working out the details) several times before it all clicks.

⇒ It's also helpful to make a backup plan, just in case you run into Murphy's Law. It's rare for everything to go according to plan. When you run into the inevitable snags and breakdowns, remember: **IDDUNMW -- I Don't Drink or Use No Matter What.**

Worksheet 14-3: Detailed Plan Execution

BREAKING MY RECOVERY PLAN DOWN INTO DETAILS: ISSUE NO. _____	
General statement of the objective (copied from Worksheet 14-2: My Issues, Prioritized)	
Who do I need to get involved in order to do this plan?	
What do I need to do in order to get ready and then to carry through to the finish?	
Where do I need to be? How will I get there?	
When is this going to happen, and how much time will it take? What conflicts will it raise?	
How does this project relate to my recovery? Will it interfere with my relapse prevention program?	
Where will I get the resources required to complete this plan?	
How will completion of this plan put me into a good position and give me momentum to tackle my next issue?	

5 Conclusion: Sharing My Plan With Others

You have probably done many hours of work getting to this point. It could be very helpful to other people if you were now to share your conclusions. What others would probably find most valuable is a summary in your own words. You could copy it and make it available. If you are working with a group, you could collect your and other people's condensed programs in a binder and make that available to newcomers. Writing a summary could also help you clarify and firm up your plan in your own mind.

In doing your summary, you may want to use the chapters of this book as rough scaffolding, or you could ignore all that and go directly to the heart of your concerns. It's your program -- write it your way.

One final suggestion: You might include in your summary a paragraph on how you have changed in the process of constructing this recovery program of yours. The carpenter not only builds the house; more importantly, the house builds the carpenter. The most important product of your sweat on this workbook is not the book; it is the clean and sober YOU.

