Integrated treatment for co-occurring substance use and mental health disorders is particularly helpful in producing a sustained recovery. Longer and more intense treatment, ongoing abstinence monitoring, and increased recovery support services all work toward long-term success. Treatment works. It should not be avoided, but rather, seen as an avenue to keep what you have and reclaim what you lost. Don’t grow weary, and don’t give up. You can get your life back and be free from the destructive nature of chemical dependency. In this lesson, discover ten core principles of recovery and identify ways to strengthen your commitment to living in recovery.
THE TEN CORE PRINCIPLES OF RECOVERY

TREATMENT EXTENDS LIFE

Responding to a question about her primary reason for doing the hard work of treatment, one woman summed it up by simply replying: “I want to live.” Though only four words were spoken, no more were needed to communicate her goal, motivation, and reward. Regular monitoring, early intervention, and treatment provide a better quality of, and longer, life. Substance use treatment, and the abstinence that follows, reduce the risk of early death.

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MAKING A COMMITMENT

The following ten principles introduce some of the most important skills you can learn, develop, and practice. Like using a map, they help set good goals, sidestep mistakes, avoid unnecessary problems, and help you accomplish a specific, desired result. Although many people are willing to pursue long-term recovery, they lack the direction, guidance, and skill necessary to sustain it. What separates the successful from the unsuccessful? The successful purposely use the resources, wisdom, and support to plan their work and work their plan. Long-term recovery does not happen by chance; successful change requires intentional action.
THE TEN CORE PRINCIPLES OF RECOVERY

The following principles will help lay the course for your successful long-term recovery. Use them to develop a solid strategy to prevent relapse.

1. **Honestly acknowledge the severity of your mental health and substance use disorder.**
   
   The absolute starting point of any successful recovery is to accept the existence and the size of the problems you face. Take a fierce, straightforward inventory, recognizing how the substance use disorder has influenced, damaged, and worked its way into your life.

   How severe is your disorder? How has it influenced and damaged your life?

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2. **Take full, personal responsibility to live a life of recovery.**
   
   The work of recovery only happens through your efforts and by your actions. Recovery is yours alone. No one can make you do it; and no one can do it for you. What you decide and act on determines your level of success.

   What does the “hard work” of recovery mean to you? How do you feel about doing that work?

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3. **Actively challenge and change your thinking.**
   
   Successful recovery is possible. To keep past destructive patterns from continuing, you have to adjust the way you think. Identifying lies and altering what you tell yourself allows you to adjust your feelings and actions as you move forward. A strong recovery happens by changing the way you use or drink, as you change the way you believe and think.

   What is a lie you tell yourself about your use? How can you challenge that lie?

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4. **Develop positive life-changing character traits.**
   
   Lasting recovery does not happen by changing a few behaviors, but is possible by developing key qualities and characteristics in yourself. Growing your character does not happen instantly. Be willing to nurture positive, personal traits over time, and as you do, you will strengthen your resolve, establish new-found hope, and obtain the lasting recovery you desire.
List several positive character traits you would like to develop in yourself. How can you practice these traits?
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5 Repair damaged relationships.
Close, personal, and deeply connected relationships do the most to bring happiness and contentment in both your life and recovery program. The hurts caused by others are best addressed though the process of forgiveness, even when it is difficult. Moving forward with someone you have hurt is often only possible by rebuilding trust. Relationships can often be restored by demonstrating positive behavior changes over time. Both forgiveness and efforts to rebuild trust must be present to repair relational damage. Although difficult, establishing meaningful relationships is extremely valuable and worth the effort.

Do you need to forgive someone? With whom do you need to rebuild trust and repair the relationship?
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6 Intentionally manage your attitude and disposition.
Being intentional means to purposely focus on key areas of life. Make your actions and attitude purposeful and not random or haphazard. Be deliberate in what you do and how you live. Choose to control your mood and outlook. Use positive self-talk to challenge your old, pessimistic, and negative thinking. As you practice, you will become increasingly more upbeat, positive, and optimistic.
7 Establish constructive recovery connections.

People active in addiction often come from environments that allow, and even encourage, their addictive patterns. Long-term recovery requires good emotional, spiritual, and relational support. A strong, sober support network is built, rather than found. It is important to seek encouragement, develop positive friendships, accept correction, navigate conflicts, and listen to advice. Be willing to be held accountable. Your support network is built as you practice these skills.

How can you begin building your support network? Where will you begin looking for help and encouragement?

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8 Increase the quality of your emotional control.

Mental health and substance use disorders interact with each other and commonly increase the severity of both. Treatment must address both substance abuse and underlying mental health issues, so it is important to make a plan to manage each of these long-term. Interventions should be specifically designed to manage anxiety, regulate mood, increase overall emotional stability, and identify and reduce symptoms of depression. Medication and counseling help manage symptoms of co-occurring disorders better than either one alone, and often become key pieces of long-term recovery.

What steps can you take to improve and increase your emotional control?

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9 Plan and work your relapse prevention strategy.

Strong desires to use again are common in recovery. Relapse is the return to using drugs or alcohol after a period of being substance-free. Because substance abuse is both damaging and wearisome to clients and their families, temptations must be planned for and managed strategically. Understanding relapse triggers, using structure to reduce cravings, finding strong support, creating a positive living environment, consistently managing mental health issues, and changing the way you think, all become important prevention strategies.
How can you begin creating a positive living environment to support your recovery and prevent relapse?

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10 Cultivate a spirit of resilience.

Life-long recovery is seldom a straightforward process. Be quick to identify vulnerabilities, potential problems, temptations, and triggers for relapse. Being aware helps you to reach out for the support you need. Getting stronger and making progress does not mean being perfect. As your recovery plan is worked, you are developing the strength to withstand and defeat temptation. The more work you put into your recovery, the greater the benefits and rewards. Rather than hoping temptation never comes, diligently prepare yourself for when it does. You will grow in perseverance, diligence, and resilience as you continue your recovery plan.

What does recovery look like to you? How will you begin planning for temptation?

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MAKING A COMMITMENT

I, _________________________________, commit to diligently work through the challenges and do the required hard work of a successful recovery program. I am confident I will make progress, gain momentum, and enjoy the benefits of my recovery journey.

Signature: __________________________ Date: ___/___/_______

CONTINUING ON THE JOURNEY

Applying these ten core principles will help you establish strong and life-long changes. Developing these skills will help you navigate the rocky terrain of recovery and its hazards, pitfalls, and difficulties, greatly improving the likelihood of living a life-long recovery.

Rather than hoping temptation never comes, 
DILIGENTLY PREPARE yourself for when it does.
The Ten Core Principles of Recovery

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4. Develop positive life-changing character traits
5. Repair damaged relationships
6. Intentionally manage your attitude and disposition
7. Establish constructive recovery connections
8. Increase the quality of your emotional control
9. Plan and work your relapse prevention strategy
10. Cultivate a spirit of resilience

Dr. Hal Baumchen