

12-Step Sayings

The 12 step recovery groups (AA, NA, etc.) have developed some short sayings that help people in their day-to-day efforts at staying sober. These concepts are often useful tools in learning how to establish sobriety.

One day at a time/ Just for today. This is a key concept in staying abstinent. Don't obsess about staying abstinent forever. Just focus on today.

Turn it over. Sometimes people with addictions jeopardize their recovery by tackling problems that cannot be solved. Finding a way to let go of issues so that you can focus on staying abstinent is a very important skill.

Keep it simple. Learning to stay abstinent can get complicated and seem overwhelming if you let it. In fact, there are some simple concepts involved. Don't make this process difficult: keep it simple.

Take what you need and leave the rest. Not everyone benefits from every part of 12-Step meetings. It is not a perfect program. However, if you focus on the parts you find useful, rather than the ones that bother you, the program has something for you.

Bring your body, the mind will follow. The most important aspect of 12-Step programs is attending the meetings. It takes a while to feel completely comfortable. Try different meetings, try to meet people, and read the materials. Just go and keep going.

HALT...Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired

This acronym is familiar to people in the 12-Step programs. It is a shorthand way of reminding people in recovery that they are especially vulnerable to relapse when they are too hungry, angry, lonely, or tired.

Hungry: When people are using, they often ignore their nutritional needs. People in recovery need to relearn the importance of eating regularly. Being hungry can cause changes in body chemistry that make people less able to control themselves or avoid cravings. Often the person feels anxious and upset but doesn't associate the feelings with hunger. Eating regularly increases emotional stability.

Angry: This emotional state is probably the most common cause of relapse to drug use. Learning to cope with anger in a healthy way is difficult for many people. It is not healthy to act in anger without thinking about the consequences. Nor is it healthy to hold anger in and try to pretend it doesn't exist. Talking about anger-producing situations and how to handle them is an important part of recovery.

Lonely: Recovery is often a lonely process. People lose relationships because of their substance use. As part of staying abstinent, people in recovery may have to give up friends who still use. The feelings of loneliness are real and painful. They make people more vulnerable to relapse.

Tired: Sleep disorders are often a part of early recovery. People in recovery frequently have to give up chemical aids to sleep that they used in the past. Being tired is often a trigger for relapse. Feeling exhausted and low on energy leaves people vulnerable and unable to function in a healthy way.