

REFUGE RECOVERY PROCESS ADDICTION

From the book *Refuge Recovery*:

“Addiction is the repetitive process of habitually satisfying cravings to avoid, change or control the seemingly unbearable conditions of the present moment. This process of craving and indulgence provides short-term relief but causes long-term harm. It is almost always a source of suffering for both the addict and those who care about the addict.”

In short, a process addiction is any behavior that we engage in to avoid, change or control the seemingly unbearable conditions of the present moment.

We satisfy cravings in many ways. Although it may feel like substance abuse is the prevalent form of addiction in *Refuge Recovery* groups, many of us struggle with other addictions, including food, sex, technology, gambling, relationships, spending, codependency, etc. All are welcome in *Refuge Recovery*.

Refuge Recovery meetings are meant to be inclusive of all addictions. Particular meetings may, at times, seem substance-abuse oriented, but please, remember: all definitions of addiction are welcome in our program.

DEFINING RECOVERY

For those of us with process addictions, total abstinence from all associated behaviors may not be a sustainable goal. How we embark on the process of recovery will thus vary greatly for each of us, and we will certainly want some help along the way. Here are some ideas and guidelines that may be helpful:

Having a mentor or like-minded person you can talk to is key. It may be best to find another person who has had success dealing with the same addictive behaviors. If that is not possible, a therapist or counselor could be

a good option. Having a trusted guide who understands your specific addictive behaviors is invaluable.

Read the chapter on “Intention” in the *Refuge Recovery* book. This lays the foundation for your work on defining your recovery process. Wise intention has three components: non-harming, renunciation, and goodwill. Each of these components requires us to engage in particular tasks that will help us define what “recovery” will mean to us.

IDENTIFYING HARMFUL BEHAVIOR (NON-HARMING)



Make a list of all of your behaviors that are harmful. Take an honest look at the behaviors that cause harm to yourself and to others.



Once you have identified your harmful behaviors, the next step is to rank them on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being “extremely harmful.”



This is a very individual process; be honest with yourself about which behaviors are causing the most harm in your life.

RENUNCIATION

Now that you have your list of harmful behaviors ranked, make a plan with your mentor: which are you going to let go of first? Will you work with one behavior at a time? Or let go of them all? Consider complete renunciation if that is possible. Some people find it most useful to let go of the most harmful behaviors first; others, for whom that may not feel realistic, may choose to start with a less harmful behavior and work their way up. The specifics don’t matter; what matters is that you are letting go of harmful behaviors. We will want to identify what our “bottom-line” behaviors are and begin to abstain from them.

For behaviors like sex or technology addiction, a period of full renunciation may be wise. Remember that using our sexual energy is a choice; it is not necessary for our individual survival, and periods of abstinence may at times be helpful. If you are partnered and complete celibacy is not a realistic choice, it will be best to work with a mentor or trusted friend to come up with skillful solutions.

GOODWILL

You’ve let go of some harmful behaviors—great! But you may still encounter difficulties as you attempt to engage in balanced behavior around your eating, sexuality, spending, technology use, and interactions with loved ones. Learning to approach these difficulties with a wise and friendly attitude—with a spirit of goodwill, kindness, and compassion toward yourself and others—will be crucial. A daily practice of loving-kindness meditation will become your greatest ally in this endeavor. This practice is outlined in the back of the *Refuge Recovery* book.

How do we know when we're practicing recovery from our process behaviors? This is a very personal question. Many feel that their recovery process begins when they pick up the book and start working with a mentor. Others consider their recovery underway only once they've begun letting go of all their harmful behaviors. You must choose what feels most authentic to you.

With process addictions, the more we work with them, the more clearly we see the full extent our harmful behaviors, which often means finding more and more we need to let go of. Remember that this is a process; it is your responsibility to accept guidance, be honest with yourself, let go of your harmful behaviors, and meet the world from a place of kindness and goodwill.

Using the framework of the Four Truths and the inventory process, we engage in the following four tasks:

1. We recognize fully and honestly how our process addictions and associated behaviors have created difficulties in our lives.
2. We identify and thoroughly investigate the causes of our addictive behaviors, and move toward letting go of them.
3. We become hopeful and optimistic about our ability to find freedom from these behaviors.
4. We develop the skills necessary to free ourselves from our addictive behaviors through practicing ethical living, meditative training, and wise understanding.

WHAT IS BUDDHISM?

Buddhism is a practical and applicable humanist psychology that teaches us that we all have the power to relieve suffering through our own efforts. The core teachings of Buddhism are the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path, in which the practices of mindfulness and compassion play key roles.

WHAT IS MINDFULNESS?

Mindfulness is defined as present-time, nonjudgmental, investigative, kind and responsive awareness. To be mindful of the present-time experience of our thoughts, intentions, and actions, we must continually train and redirect our attention to the here and now. Mindfulness teaches us to see clearly and respond wisely.

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of body/breath
2. Mindfulness of feeling tone
3. Mindfulness of mind states
4. Mindfulness of mind objects/truth

WHAT IS COMPASSION?

Compassion is a quality of the heart that enables us to care about pain and suffering. As we train in compassion practices, we gain the ability to choose how we respond to pain. We aspire to meet all experience with a kind and friendly attitude. We learn to meet our pain and suffering with compassion and forgiveness. We begin to meet happiness and pleasure with non-attached appreciation. We come to hold all our experiences with equanimity, acknowledging that our happiness and freedom is dependent on our actions, not on our wishes.

FOUR HEART PRACTICES

1. Kindness
2. Compassion/Forgiveness
3. Appreciation
4. Equanimity

Refuge Recovery follows the traditional Buddhist model of the Four Noble Truths:

1. Addiction creates suffering

"We take stock of all the suffering we have experienced and caused as addicts"

2. The cause of addiction is repetitive craving

"We investigate the causes and conditions that lead to addiction and begin the process of letting go"

3. Recovery is possible

"We come to understand that recovery is possible and take refuge in the path that leads to the end of addiction"

4. The path to recovery is available

"We engage in the process of the Eightfold Path that leads to recovery"

The Eightfold Path

1. Wise Understanding
2. Wise Intention
3. Wise Communication / Community
4. Wise Action
5. Wise Livelihood / Service
6. Wise Effort
7. Wise Mindfulness
8. Wise Concentration

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