



## Lessons from rehab

**Many people who are admitted to rehab can, in a very short time, feel comfortable there. They do not find their mind wandering. They find that they can pay attention to what is required of them without cravings for drugs and alcohol making them feel uncomfortable. Yet, when those people leave the rehab they experience the usual severe cravings. If they don't know what to do with those then they**

**are at high risk of returning to using alcohol and other drugs. For those who are not fortunate enough to experience a good rehab center, noticing what is happening in rehab can help to formulate a plan of what to implement in daily life to support abstinence. If you are in rehab, then these are the things that you need to carry on doing when you leave.**

- No drugs available. Don't have it in the house. If you keep alcohol in the house, sooner or later, you will drink it.
- Safe environment, where I feel safe.
- Structure and routine. Planned, structured day. Fewer big decisions to be made. Less time for mind-wandering and ruminating, creating false realities. Reduces uncertainty and anxiety.
- Predictability. The day is planned out. We do not like uncertainty. Planning and minimising uncertainty and surprises can help to reduce anxiety.
- There are rules and boundaries, and there are consequences for transgressing those rules. I am accountable to the group to maintain those rules. Paradoxically, it is rules and

boundaries that make life safe and create the freedom for each individual to live their way. Without rules and boundaries there is no freedom.

- Making decisions in advance can make it easier and more likely that I will need to do what I have to do. When I pre-commit, I am more likely to do what I need to do.
- I am kept busy. I don't have time or opportunity to slip back into autopilot, mind wandering, and rumination.
- Learning skills how to take this into life when I leave.
- There are fewer triggers that remind my brain of drinking. When they do arise, there is no easy access to alcohol, and there are solutions immediately at hand.

This provides an opportunity to experience triggers and craving without the means to act on them. It builds resilience. I learn that, despite the discomfort, I will not die; I can manage.

- Doing small tasks and completing them (arises from structure and rules) gives me a sense of purpose for the day and accomplishment.
- I am looking after myself, washing, getting dressed, making my bed, eating properly. There is a sense of accomplishment in that.
- I contribute to the wellbeing of the group through the daily tasks I have to do. I make a difference. I have a purpose. I am wanted and I belong.
- I feel part of a group, because I participate – listen, relate, and speak in the group. In that sense, I make a difference to others and I am appreciated as an individual – for what I can offer.
- I am surrounded by people who understand me and share my affliction. I have face to face contact with others. I feel connected to them. I feel less alone. I am seldom alone. We share a common bond – we have experienced and suffered from addiction. Only another addict will understand an addict.
- I learn about my condition and begin to understand that I am not defective. I am

*suffering* from addiction, but I can overcome it and there is hope.

- Group therapy: We get to talk about ourselves and confront our condition. I become more self-aware. There is a sense of liberation. I can embrace authenticity. There is hope starting to emerge. Perhaps an air of excitement.
- I am sober (even if that is forced) and can see things with better clarity. I get to experience, even in this early stage, what a sober life might feel like.
- There are no distractions and pressures from electronic media and cell phones. I am away from negative media and comparisons with other people.
- I am away from negative and destructive relationships, and I can get some assistance with how to manage them when I return home.
- I learn solutions to some of the other problems that I am facing in life, and I am assisted in charting a way forward to manage them.
- I am provided with an exit plan. A written plan to assist with decision-making and daily tasks that might stimulate craving. New ways to approach everyday activities. Who and how to contact when it is required. I know how to carry this forward when I leave.

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