

# Co-Occurring Disorders Step One Worksheet

**By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.**

*Instructions: Use separate paper or a separate notebook so that you will have plenty of room to write all that comes up in your self-exploration. You may want to use this worksheet on several occasions throughout your recovery and compare your answers at different points of time and length of recovery. Please read and refer to "[Complications of Co-Occurring Disorders](#)" by Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.*

1. Write out a list of problems in your life that have come about because of drinking/using.
2. Write out examples of times when you have consumed more alcohol or other mood-altering drugs than you intended to.
3. Write out examples of when you have drank or used other drugs when you did not intend to or in circumstances where you intended not to drink or use.
4. Give other examples of how your drinking/using has been out of control at times.
5. List negative consequences that have occurred because of drinking/using.
6. List three symptoms that have convinced you that you have \_\_\_\_\_ (mental health problem/disorder).
7. Write out examples of how your mental health problems and your drinking/drugging have negatively affected these areas of your life:

- a. intellectual
  - b. social (friends, neighbors, etc.)
  - c. job/career
  - d. romantic relationships
  - e. family of origin relationships (parents, siblings, aunts/uncles, etc.)
  - f. relationships with your children
  - g. education
  - h. financial situation/goals
  - i. emotional life
8. Give examples of how your drug/alcohol use may have made your mental health problems worse.
9. Give examples of your mental health problems that may have made your alcohol/drug problems worse.
10. List any adverse consequences you may be concerned about if you continue to drink/use. How could drinking/using interfere with the treatment of your mental health problems?
11. Give two examples of ways that you tried to regain control over your alcohol/drug use without addressing your mental health issue.
12. Identify adverse outcomes from not properly addressing your mental health concerns (e.g., following prescribed medication, ensuring sufficient rest/sleep, etc.). Explain how neglecting your mental health may have contributed to increased challenges in managing your drug/alcohol use.

13. Describe how inadequate treatment of your substance use disorder may have contributed to difficulty with unmanaged mental health problems.

14. Describe any self-sabotaging behaviors that adversely affected your mental health symptoms or substance use disorder.

15. Describe any feedback from other people about treating both sides of your co-occurring disorders and why you believe you may have resisted following through with their advice or encouragement to do so.

16. Why are staying clean and sober and treating your mental health problems at the same time so important now?

17. Identify any of the following cognitive distortions or defense mechanisms that you have used to continue to drink/drug or to avoid treating your mental health problems appropriately:

- a. making excuses
- b. blaming
- c. lying
- d. justification/rationalization/intellectualization
- e. aggression/agitation/keeping others away/hostility
- f. making false assumptions about treatment or other people
- g. minimizing
- h. outright denial
- i. grandiosity, or an attitude of superiority
- j. exaggerating

k. refusing to discuss the problem

18. Identify how any of the above defenses/cognitive distortions may have kept you from identifying, accepting, and treating your mental health and substance abuse issues.

19. Identify instances where these defenses or distorted thought patterns may have allowed your mental health and substance use issues to alternate, taking center stage as “the problem.”

20. Give examples of how your life has improved since you stopped drinking/using.

21. Give examples of how your life has improved since appropriately treating your mental health problems.

22. Give examples of how your life has improved by treating both together.

23. Describe a realistic positive picture of your life in the future as you grow in your dual recovery.

**Note:** This article has been revised and edited from its original version, which was previously published in 2011]. The content has been updated for contemporary language and concepts, clarity and accuracy.