

# **Addiction and Recovery: Don't Let Myths Keep You From Getting Sober**

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We have all heard myths about addiction and recovery. Many people who believe some of these may give up or use them as excuses to avoid taking action to make the changes needed in their lives. One myth that I hear daily is that you can't get sober for someone else; you have to want it for yourself, or your recovery efforts won't work. This statement is both true and false.

The idea that you can't get sober for someone else is entirely wrong. People do it every day. Many find their way into treatment centers, counselors' offices, and AA and NA rooms at the urging of someone else. Many people with substance use disorder are coerced into abstinence and early recovery. Spouses commonly lay down the bottom lines that they will divorce the spouse with a substance use disorder if they don't quit drinking or using drugs. And spouses are not the only ones coercing. Employers, parents, judges/court systems, and children have all influenced people with substance use disorders into doing something about their problems.

Initially, these sober individuals get that way doing it for someone else. They do whatever is necessary at that moment to keep from losing whatever they fear losing. Their early recovery efforts are "externally motivated."

Any number of events and circumstances of early abstinence can create the desire for sobriety. With abstinence from alcohol and other drugs, brains and bodies begin to detox. Taking it one day at a time, doing what is necessary not to drink or use drugs that day, the newly sober person's thinking begins to clear up. They begin to feel better. As they deal with

situations that they used to use drugs over, a self-efficacy about being able to get and stay sober begins to develop. The negative impacts of the illness and the positive benefits of sobriety become apparent. They can now conceive that they can change their life's course and recover to find happiness. They begin to see the benefits of sobriety.

The once reluctant sober person begins to believe it is possible to have a life without mood-altering chemicals and be happy doing it--something not conceivable before. If you can separate from the drug long enough, you can begin to believe that you can get sober. Newly sober people start to experience some of the benefits of abstinence early on. Hope happens.

As people with a substance use disorder in early recovery continue in their recovery efforts (e.g., 12-step meetings, counseling, sponsorship, self-care) and begin to identify the negative impact of the chemical use on various aspects of their lives, denial, and other defense mechanisms are neutralized. More reality is getting through. Motivation becomes intrinsic.

They will eventually be motivated to stay sober because they want positive outcomes. At this point, motivation has become intrinsic. They maintain their abstinence and continue in recovery for themselves. Someone else may have dragged them into abstinence kicking and screaming, but eventually, they continue to stay sober and grow in wellness because they want to. **Note: This article has been revised and edited from its original version, which was previously published in 2009 on this site. The content has been updated for contemporary language, clarity and accuracy.**

Thank you for letting us be a part of  
your recovery and evolution.

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