

Loss of Motivation in Recovery

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Motivation and Relapse

A common reason for why people return to addiction after a period of sobriety is that they just run out of steam. They lose their motivation to stay away from alcohol and drugs. It is not enough for the individual to just give up their addiction. They have to work at building a successful life in recovery. If people do not have the motivation to do this, then they are unlikely to find much happiness. This means that the idea of returning to their former addiction becomes increasingly attractive. The pull towards addiction is stronger than the pull towards recovery.

Motivation Defined

Motivation can be defined as a driving force that initiates, guides, and maintains goal orientated behavior. It is believed that motivation is a mechanism by which humans attempt to avoid pain and maximize pleasure. Motivation is not always rational. This is why people can become trapped in addiction. Their misdirected motivation compels them to keep on using the substance that is causing them so much pain. In order to build a good life away from addiction, the individual needs to develop enough motivation to make this aspiration a reality.

Reasons for Loss of Motivation in Recovery

These are some of the reasons people lose their motivation in recovery:

- When people give up the substance abuse their life can improve dramatically. They can forget the pain of addiction, which was the driver that motivated them to stop in the first place.
- There are many individuals who manage to get sober but still feel ambivalent about recovery. They like what sobriety has to offer, but also still believe that they can find happiness using alcohol and drugs.
- If people fail to develop sufficient coping mechanisms for life in recovery they can become overwhelmed by the challenges they face. Their determination to stay sober falters as a result.
- When things are going well people can become overly confident. They feel like their problems are over so no further work is required.
- Some individuals are extremely eager when they first become sober, but then later run out of steam. They may result from disillusionment when their high expectations are not met right away.
- Those individuals who give up their addiction to please other people will usually lose motivation in recovery. Once that they decide that it is safe for them to return to alcohol or drugs their reason to stay sober disappears.
- Anger and resentment can drain people of their motivation to stay on the path of sobriety. If people are full of these negative emotions they struggle to think clearly and make rational choices.
- Some people just lose their way in recovery. They make bad choices and the effects of this outweigh their motivation to stay sober.

- If the individual chooses a recovery program that does not suit their needs then this too could drain their motivation to stay sober.

How to Avoid Loss of Motivation in Recovery

Losing motivation in recovery can lead right back to addiction so it needs to be avoided at all costs. These are some tips to avoid losing the driving force for sobriety:

- Keeping a journal can be a great way to keep motivated in recovery. It allows the individual to see their progress and it reminds them of their reasons for staying away from alcohol or drugs.
- Maintaining a gratitude list can also keep people feeling enthusiastic about sobriety. This prevents people from forgetting why their recovery is so important to them.
- It is important that people have a clear conviction for their need to be on the recovery path. This will help them overcome any remaining ambivalence in regards to sobriety.
- Recovery should be all about experimenting and trying new things. This keeps things interesting and motivates the individual.
- If people feel themselves going through a particularly joyful period of sobriety they should enjoy this. They also need to keep in mind that life is full of ups and downs, and that this period of bliss is unlikely to last indefinitely.
- The individual needs to have realistic expectations of what is possible in recovery. Their life can improve greatly by quitting the addiction, but this is not the end of their journey.
- If people feel that they have stopped making progress in their recovery then they need to rectify this situation. Staying still is never a good idea in sobriety because it can drain motivation.
- The individual can actively take steps to keep motivated. This could involve regularly spending time with addiction recovery resources.
- Those individuals who belong to a support group may find that regular attendance keeps them motivated to stay sober.
- Spending time with motivated people can have the individual energize their own enthusiasm for sobriety. Likewise, spending too much time with those individuals who are cynical about recovery can drain enthusiasm.
- Helping other people can be a wonderful way to stay enthusiastic about sobriety. This is why service is such a key element of groups such as LifeRing, SMART Recovery, or Alcoholics Anonymous.