

The LONG ROAD TO RECOVERY



KATHY KINGHORN
LCSW, CSAT

Author's Note

Committing to recovery is a commitment to discovering who you are and liking who you discover! Recovery allows you the freedom to wake up in the morning energized about your life and being able to go to sleep at night with the peace of mind that you strived to be your best self.

When you first enter recovery, your goal is simple: stop the behavior. As you keep going down the path of recovery, you realize that true recovery goes far beyond stopping the behavior. It involves learning how to get curious about your thoughts, acknowledging your feelings and understanding how to sit with the comfortable and uncomfortable ones, healing broken relationships, identifying what a healthy boundary is and so much more!

Recovery truly is the journey of a lifetime! Every good journey has a starting point, a destination and a plan on how to reach that destination. This E-book lays out the entire journey from the first few steps early in recovery to where true, long-lasting recovery will take you.

Safe travels,
Kathy Kinghorn, LCSW, CSAT-Supervisor



Let's get real about
the journey. Recovery
is hard, it takes a lot
of effort.





HOW THIS BOOK CAME TO BE

Several years ago, I thought it might be nice to drive to a conference in Phoenix from Salt Lake instead of taking a flight. I have family in Las Vegas, so an overnight stop there made the trip seem doable. The trip from Salt Lake went quite smoothly. It is beautiful country, and there are good roads and easy on-and-off gas stations and rest stops. So, as I started out for Phoenix, I felt optimistic and confident it would be a fun drive.

I wasn't too far into the drive when construction signs showed up. This caused the speed limit to drop, the traffic to back up and the highway to turn into a one-way road. The construction went on for miles and miles and miles. The landscape was desolate, the gas stations and rest stops were few and far between.

I became increasingly irritated. I was bugged by every driver in front of me. Even my playlist started to become annoying. Mile markers didn't help to show me the progress I had made, they just reminded me of how slow the journey was. I became physically tired and uncomfortable. It was becoming clear that my original plan of getting to my destination, in this manner, was a terrible idea.

As I turned another curve, a sign on the side of the road caught my attention. It was a simple message, "Passing lane ahead." I would be able to get out in front of the slower traffic and make some real progress! I instantly felt relief. In fact, the feeling of relief and calm was such a noticeable change that I began to ponder on whether the Department of Transportation had hired psychologists to create those signs!

It really struck me that simply knowing relief was up ahead, I felt calmer and more positive.

So, I began to think about the road of recovery that my clients were on. Were there signs along the way that gave them relief and helped them feel calmer about their journey? Had I given them the right tools to navigate the difficult curves, how to recharge, and skills to handle the specific challenges? As I considered the answers to those questions my attitude began to change. I began to appreciate the road I had chosen because it gave me an opportunity to truly ponder on those questions. Now as the miles slowly went by I used that time to chart out where recovery begins and where true long-lasting recovery will eventually lead to.

By the time I arrived in Phoenix, I knew I had to get my thoughts on paper. This E-book is the cleaned-up version of the notes I wrote that day in the hotel room. It is meant to be a guide to use on your road to recovery. Let's begin the journey!

Safe travels!



"There are far, far
better things ahead than
any we leave behind."
~ C. S. Lewis





THE TRANSFORMATION TO BEING

This is it I quit. That was the last time. I'm done." How many times have you made that statement or a similar one? Capturing the moment of conviction that you are done, you begin to **do** a lot of things. You may put a filter on your phone, begin to exercise, make a boundary that you won't be on the computer after 10 at night, etc.... By sheer willpower, you succeed and start to have small wins.

Over time though the thought starts to creep back into your mind that you can't **do** this forever. Eventually, you will relapse. Resentment kicks in. Discouragement starts to weigh on you and you find yourself returning to the thought, "I will never be free from this addiction." The longer that thought takes up space in your head, the more convinced you become that **doing** these things is not going to get you anywhere. And so you stop without understanding the value of **doing**.

The truth is that recovery starts with quite a bit of **doing**. These first steps onto the road of recovery lead you to the final steps of knowing who you are going to **be**. Once you understand who you are, you will also understand that independent of the situation you find yourself in, you will know who you will **be** in it.

For example, you might be asked to do a last-minute job task that requires you to work alone late into the night. This is a higher-risk scenario for you. Early in recovery, your anxiety may raise and you start thinking what am I going to **do**? You consider your options and realize that the best one is to reach out to a group member and let them know about the risk and that you will be calling them again when you leave the office. This “bookending” technique helps you feel accountable to someone else. It’s exactly the right thing to **do** for your safety.

Late in recovery, you recognize the same thing ~ this is a higher risk scenario for you. You can use the very same technique of “bookending”. However, at this point, it helps you feel connected to someone else because you have reached a point in recovery where you know you will **be** accountable to yourself. The road to recovery begins with a lot of “**doing**” until you can hold the belief that you are able to “**be**” who you truly want to be. By being who you were meant to be, you will gain true freedom.



Take a minute and look at the words in the left-hand column.

Early Recovery	Leads to	Long-Term Recovery
Protect	▶▶	Love
Honesty	▶▶	Integrity
Curiosity	▶▶	Empathy
Healthy Boundaries	▶▶	Self-Control
Staying in Reality	▶▶	Healthy Emotional Regulation
Safety	▶▶	Security

All of those words are about doing things. Now, take a look at the words in the right-hand column.

Early Recovery	Leads to	Long-Term Recovery
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Safety	▶▶	Security

All of those words are about who you can **be**.

Before you know who you can **be**, you have to **do**! Think about Michael Phelps, the Olympic Gold Medalist, who won multiple gold medals across the span of his Olympic career. He didn't know when he swam that first lap if he was going to **be** a gold medalist. He did know if he kept **doing** a lot of training and competitions over time he would put himself in the best position to become a world-renowned champion.

Protect ► Love

We don't protect what we don't love and we don't love what we don't protect. As your addiction begins to put bigger and bigger wedges in your relationship, you will find yourself moving from protecting your partner to protecting your addiction. You will give your addiction your time, your attention, be there for it when it calls you. Because you have moved to protect your addiction, you may enter recovery thinking, "I'm not sure I even love my partner anymore." Focus on protecting your partner and then you will be able to see if love is able to come back.

Consider how you protected your partner when you were dating. Did you put air in their tires when you saw they were low? Did you end the date early when they had to get up early? Were you aware of stressors in their life and able to listen and support them? Ask your partner what they can remember about how you used to protect them. Start finding small ways to begin protecting them again.

Pay attention as you do these small acts to the emotions and thoughts that come up. For example, early on you might find that you have a resentful feeling with the thought, "They didn't even notice that I worked an hour late and now I have to help carry in the groceries." As you begin to focus on your thoughts and feelings it is important to have a safe place to talk about what is coming up for you. Our LIFT groups are designed to give you that safe space to have support, accountability, and tools as you learn these skills.

 [Click here to learn more](#)

Write down three ways you can begin today to protect my partner.

1

2

3

Honesty ► Integrity

When you are actively in your addiction you will lie about anything and everything. A big part of recovery is learning how to be rigorously honest. This takes time. It won't feel good or safe to be rigorously honest, at first. It will take some time for your brain to default to honesty. At some undetermined point, you will find that, independent of the situation, you consistently show up honest. Your feelings about honesty will change and you will become impeccable with your word. This is when integrity returns.

When true recovery becomes your number one priority, you will strive to be honest in your thoughts, feelings and behaviors. This way of moving in the world is the surest way of living free from fear and allows your relationship to be built on truth.



A background image showing a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a grey plaid scarf and a light-colored sweater, smiling warmly at a woman whose profile is visible on the left side of the frame. They appear to be sitting at a table in a bright, indoor setting.

Curiosity ► Empathy

Another tragedy of addiction is that you have lost your ability to feel empathy toward your partner. Your partner can be crying because they have found a chat conversation on a shared iPad between you and someone else. Instead of considering how much pain this discovery has caused them, you defend yourself by rationalizing, “It’s not like I was ever going to meet up with her.” or minimizing, “I was just bored, it was no big deal.”

To regain feelings of empathy you will first need to get curious about your partner. Ask meaningful questions and listen to your partner’s answers. Ask questions like, “What was the best part of your day?,” “What made you laugh today?” or “Where would you go if money was no object?” Get curious about what their world looks like.

Healthy Boundaries ► Self-Control

As an addict, you will have incredibly poor boundaries. What is meant by that, is that your ability to not act on your impulses will be so low that even with a very tight budget, you will spend money on your addiction rather than on ensuring that the needs of your family are met. You may say inappropriate comments to coworkers. Instead of inattentive drivers being frustrating you may get into road rage situations.

Early in recovery, you will be learning quite a bit about what a healthy boundary is vs. control. How to hold a boundary. How to create your own boundaries. This is a significant part of the recovery journey. As you keep doing your work on respecting boundaries, your own and others, you will eventually find that your self-control has returned. For example, you may drive a different way to work because a particular billboard is triggering for you. You alone have recognized this trigger and you simply make an adjustment.

Write down things you can do right now in the categories listed below.

An example of a physical boundary might be, I will commit to taking a 15-minute walk outside every day.

PHYSICALLY I WILL:

An example of an emotional boundary is, I will share an unexpressed emotion I had each day with my partner.

EMOTIONALLY I WILL:

An example of a financial boundary is, I will review our monthly income and expenses and create a weekly budget.

FINANCIALLY I WILL:

Staying in Reality ➤ Emotional Regulation

Addicts live in fantasy. Not just sexual fantasy, it's any fantasy that pulls you out of reality. Here are a few examples of fantasy thinking:

- ◆ My behavior doesn't affect anyone else.
- ◆ My partner will see that I have had a hard day and not expect me to help around the house.
- ◆ The kids know I'm frustrated so they won't fight in the car while we run errands.
- ◆ My boss is going to see the effort I put in to this project and thank me for it.
- ◆ I had to lie because if I didn't my partner would be hurt.

Reality is tough, joyful, challenging, unpredictable and the foundation for learning about how to be healthy. The longer we stay in fantasy the less time we have to learn about how to regulate our emotions. When this happens we get stuck in resentment, fear, anger and unhealthy controlling behaviors. It also becomes increasingly more difficult to do the hard work it takes to build a healthy relationship with ourselves and others. The reality of who we can be, begins to slip away from us.

Take a minute to consider where non-sexual fantasies are showing up in your life. Write three of them down.

1

2

3

Now, take a minute and go back and cross out each fantasy and write your reality underneath it.

Take a minute and transfer those 3 realities to your phone. Each time your mind starts to go back to the fantasy, open your phone and read the reality statement you wrote.

Safety ► Security

Our brains search for safety first. Addiction confuses our brains about what is safe. It can feel absolutely safe to lie. It can feel safe to numb out with your addiction. It can feel safe to shut out others and isolate with your addiction. First step into recovery is understanding that true safety is found in honesty, connection and reality. Write down three ways your brain has been tricked by your addiction into believing you are safer with it than without it.

Example: It feels safe to have secrets.

1

2

3

Challenge those false beliefs and replace them with beliefs that provide true safety

Example: It feels safe to be in reality.

1

2

3

Creating your own safety plan, generally with the help of a **trained therapist** means changing the way you view the world. It's not the advertisers, your partner, your parent, your employer or anyone else's responsibility to keep you safe. You are responsible to learn how to safely move in relationships and the world. When you have a felt sense of peace and calm that you are able to navigate any situation that arises, that's when you have reached a level of security with yourself.

You have become secure in the knowledge that the situation won't choose who you will be, your internal compass that has been molded and defined by thousands of small acts of safety will determine who you will be.





TRAVELER TIPS

- 01 | Get on the road. Click this link (www.therapyutah.org/groups) and join our LIFT program today so you can have the tools and the support you need to travel down the road of recovery.
- 02 | Understand that the road is long. Don't expect these changes to occur quickly. However, do look for incremental progress. For example, as you practice being honest you will find yourself lying. Correct lies quickly, apologize and move forward.
- 03 | Don't get caught up with the wrong questions. "Why am I an addict?" is not a good early recovery question. Instead of focusing on the 'why' questions, focus on the 'how' and 'what' questions. To learn more about this go to:

CLICK HERE 
- 04 | Write about your journey. Talk about your journey. Draw about your journey. These activities will allow you to retrace your steps one day and see how far you have progressed.



"The only way out of an
addiction is ALL the way out!"
Kathy Kinghorn



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