



## FOUR STAGES OF ADDICTION & RECOVERY

By Charles N. Roper, PhD, LCDC

ACTIVE	ABSTINENCE	RECOVERY	RELAPSE
“Using”	“Dry & Clean”	“Sober & Straight”	“Dry Drunk”
<i>A process</i> Accomplished through self-will, self-determination, self-control	<i>An event</i> Accomplished through self-will, self-determination, self-control	<i>A process</i> Accomplished through surrender and accepting help in defiance of self-will, self-determination, self-control	<i>A process</i> Accomplished through a return to self-will, self-determination, self-control
Gradual deterioration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physically</li> <li>• Mentally</li> <li>• Emotionally</li> <li>• Spiritually</li> </ul>	Gradual improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physically</li> <li>• Mentally</li> </ul>	Gradual improvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physically</li> <li>• Mentally</li> <li>• Emotionally</li> <li>• Spiritually</li> </ul>	Gradual deterioration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physically</li> <li>• Mentally</li> <li>• Emotionally</li> <li>• Spiritually</li> </ul>
Focus & energy are on obtaining & using alcohol &/or other drugs	Focus & energy are on not using alcohol &/or other drugs	Focus & energy are on getting better	Focus & energy are on anything other than getting better
Typical characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Irrational</li> <li>• Self-centered</li> <li>• Distant</li> <li>• Disingenuous</li> </ul>	Typical characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denial</li> <li>• Self-centered</li> <li>• Distant</li> <li>• Irritable</li> </ul>	Typical characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open-minded</li> <li>• Humble</li> <li>• Genuine</li> <li>• Connected</li> </ul>	Typical characteristics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Denial</li> <li>• Self-centered</li> <li>• Restless, irritable, discontent</li> </ul>

# RECOVERY: FOUR DIMENSIONS

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It has been suggested that *chemical dependency is a four-fold disorder*—one that affects its victims physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. If that's true, then to be real and lasting, recovery must occur on all of these levels.

- *Physical recovery*: The least complex and the most immediate. The body has an amazing ability to repair itself, even when it has been badly neglected and abused.
- *Mental recovery*: More complex because it includes not only issues associated with brain functions and brain chemistry but also with attitudes, belief systems, and rational, abstract thought.
- *Emotional recovery*: More complex yet. It involves not only attitudes, belief systems, and rational thought, but also thought's first cousin—feelings. Emotional recovery involves learning to deal with feelings openly, honestly, and responsibly. It includes learning to express and resolve feelings in appropriate and effective ways. For most people, emotional recovery takes years.
- *Spiritual recovery*: The most complex of all because:
  - It incorporates aspects of the other three life areas.
  - It occurs on a deeper human level than the others.
  - It takes a lifetime and is never finished (progress, not perfection).
  - It is rather abstract and illusive in nature.

*Spiritual recovery* is a way of life—an attitude toward life that manifests through one's values, beliefs, and personal characteristics. Positive spiritual qualities include at least some of the following: Serenity, conscience, goodness, honesty, genuineness, integrity, humility, kindness, generosity, courage, faith, tolerance, and acceptance.

But spiritual qualities have negative counterparts; spirituality has a dark side as well as a bright one. Negative spiritual qualities include deceit, laziness, self-hatred, cowardice, selfishness, phoniness, bigotry, nihilism, etc. If spirituality is a way of life and an attitude toward life, then, negative spirituality might be exemplified by the attitude "Life's a bitch and then you die."

Spiritual qualities—both positive and negative—run very deep, to the essence or core of one's being. Personal spirituality resides, and therefore spiritual recovery occurs, at that very deep level—at the core—tapping, transforming, and strengthening positive spiritual qualities that had become hidden behind negative ones.

Deep and profound internal transformations might include: From fear to faith; from pride to humility; self-pity to gratitude; resentment to acceptance; dishonesty to honesty; cynicism to trust; isolation to connectedness; and reliance on self-will to reliance on God (or a power greater than oneself).

Profound internal changes such as these typically occur quite subtly over extended periods of time. That's the way recovery works.