

# **Recovery Options**

## **Group Therapy Information and Guidelines**

### **Goals**

- To encourage and support your ability to establish and maintain abstinence from mood-altering substances and other addictive/compulsive behaviors
- To help you learn more effective coping skills including how to better manage your emotions, self-esteem, and relationships
- To help you identify and work through core emotional and psychological issues intertwined with your addictive behaviors
- To help you achieve greater life satisfaction and prevent relapse over the long term

### **Philosophy**

Treatment at Recovery Options is based in part on the “self-medication” model that views addiction as an unwanted byproduct of using brain-modifying chemicals repeatedly and persistently as emotional coping tools. Identifying the complex role that substance use plays in a person’s life is often hard to do while an individual is still actively using alcohol or other drugs. The self-medication model is supported by the observation that addiction rarely if ever develops during a time in a person’s life when he/she is reasonably satisfied and coping well with life problems (In other words, when people are reasonably content and doing well, they rarely if ever get addicted!). It is also consistent with the view that people end up getting addicted only to substances that actually work well for them in the early stages of use to enhance their mood and/or relieve uncomfortable feelings. With continued use, however, the positive benefits of alcohol/drug use progressively diminish and the negative effects intensify. By the time this occurs, a person’s brain chemistry has already been altered to the point where the alcohol/drug use is self-perpetuating and continues on “automatic pilot” even when it no longer provides any positive effects whatsoever. Total abstinence is needed to allow the brain to recover as much as possible from the negative impact of habitual alcohol/drug use and provide the opportunity for an individual to learn better ways to manage emotions, self-esteem, and relationships. In order to facilitate long-term recovery and reduce the likelihood of relapse, therapy at Recovery Options addresses not a person’s alcohol/drug use itself, but also underlying psychological and emotional issues intertwined with their use

### **Group Therapy and AA Meetings**

Group therapy and 12-step self-help meetings (i.e., AA, NA, etc) can work well together, but they are not good substitutes for one another. Ideally, participating in both types of activities can accelerate and enhance your recovery. Unlike self-help meetings, group sessions are led by a professional therapist and helpful interaction between group members is actively encouraged. Group sessions provide an opportunity to learn relapse prevention skills and address a wide range of psychological, emotional, and other recovery-related issues. In group therapy, clients have a unique opportunity to benefit from the professional guidance and feedback provided by a

an experienced addiction therapist. AA meetings have the distinct advantage of being cost free and widely available throughout the day and evening in many different locations. Studies show that success rates in addiction treatment are improved by ongoing participation in self-help programs.

### **How the Group Works**

Group sessions focus not only on addiction and recovery, but also on issues involving all relevant aspects of a person's life such as self-esteem, relationships, sexuality, traumas, etc. Group members are expected to come to sessions prepared to discuss meaningful life issues and not to merely report or recount the events of the week. They are also expected, where appropriate, to provide feedback (not advice) to other group members. The group is a safe place where members can learn how to live more comfortably without using alcohol/drugs and to gain a more useful perspective on their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. It is also a place to learn how to manage emotions, self-esteem, and relationships more effectively and make other positive life changes.

### **Group Size and Composition**

Groups held here typically consist of 8-10 members. Most members are high-functioning professionals or executives. Some groups are designed for clients in the early stages of recovery while others are for clients in the middle and later stages. Every effort is made to place clients in a group best suited to meet their individual needs.

### **Slips and Relapses**

Group members are expected to remain abstinent during their tenure in the group, regardless of their substance of choice. Members who do have a lapse or "slip" should raise this issue for discussion at the beginning of the next group session they attend. An important function of the group is to help prevent a member's slip from escalating into a full-blown relapse. Group members are not criticized, ostracized, or judged for having slips, but repeated episodes of alcohol/drug use will likely result in a temporary change from group to individual therapy to help the relapsing group member re-stabilize before returning to the group.

### **Attendance and Punctuality**

You are asked to attend the group reliably and arrive on time. It is important to arrange your schedule to make this possible. Group sessions reliably start and end on time. Sporadic attendance and repeated lateness diminishes the benefits of group therapy and disrupts the functioning of the group. Some absences are unavoidable, but please do your best to keep these to an absolute minimum.

### **Length of Participation**

New members are encouraged (not required) to stay in the group for at least one year. Participation is, of course, entirely voluntary and we do not try to coerce anyone into staying in a

group longer than they wish to. Making at least a one-year commitment helps to insure the stability of the group and provide you with the time needed to work through important issues and solidify your recovery. If at some point you feel that group therapy is not working well enough for you, it is important to bring this up for discussion in the group before your silent dissatisfaction build up to the point where you drop out of the group with little or no notice. It is quite common to feel ambivalent about group therapy in the beginning phases, but working through these issues can be extremely beneficial to you and other group members. Studies on the effectiveness of addiction treatment show consistently that premature dropout is associated with increased relapse rates.

**Payment for Missed Sessions**

You are responsible for paying the group fee when you miss a session, regardless of prior notice or your reasons for not attending. Essentially, the group fee is regarded as your “tuition” for being in the group. If a group session is canceled due to holiday, weather, or any other reason, you will not be charged for that session. At whatever point you discontinue your membership in the group and notify us accordingly, you will not be charged for any subsequent group sessions.

**Other Group Guidelines and Expectations**

1. You are expected to come to group sessions completely "straight," not under the influence of any psychoactive substances and not hung over or “crashing”.
2. You agree to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of all group members. You must not divulge the identity of any group member to anyone outside of the group, including to your spouse/mate. Whatever goes on in the group stays in the group, without exception.
3. You agree to refrain from becoming involved romantically, sexually, or financially with other group members during your tenure in the group. Group members are strictly prohibited from providing any professional (medical, legal, investment, real estate, etc.) or business services to one another, from loaning or gifting money to one another, from entering into any employer-employee relationships, and from entering into any formal or informal business partnerships and/or investment transactions with one another.
4. Physician group members must not prescribe medications or render medical services of any kind to other group members.
5. You agree to have your telephone number(s) added to the contact list distributed to all group members. You also agree to let the group leader inform other group members about how you are doing and why you are not in attendance if/when you are absent from the group or leave prematurely.
6. You agree to give a urine sample for drug testing or take an alcohol breath test whenever the group leader may request it.

SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_