



# LIVING SOBER

## ✓ *Tips for Maintenance*



For a chemically dependent person, staying sober is a long-term process involving body, mind and spirit. It's important to repair as much as possible of the damage done by old habits, build new and healthier habits and use the time formerly taken by drinking or drug-taking for constructive ends.

If you or someone you know is recovering from a chemical habit, here are some suggestions that can help maintain sobriety.

### **Taking Good Care of Yourself**

First of all, do your best for your body. It probably suffered some setbacks during your drug-taking days. Get plenty of rest, eat a nutritious diet and exercise regularly. Rest, food and exercise all affect our moods, as well as our physical well-being.

The best diet is one that's high in fresh vegetables and whole grains and low in fats, sugar, additives, red meat and caffeine. Exercise can be of any type that appeals to the person who's doing it. It's safest to increase the amount of exercise gradually from a gentle beginning, rather than starting out with a strenuous regime.



### **Learning and Doing**

Chances are, your old way of life had many destructive aspects. The more you understand how old habits of thought and action contribute to dependency, the better chance you've got to change those habits. Perhaps you were always setting yourself up to fail by making your goals unreasonably high, or you didn't know how to have fun or relax, except by getting intoxicated. Maybe you had trouble being honest. Or your ways of communicating with others were ineffective.

The best way to start the process of change is by trying something new. Learning and doing are great ways to feel better about yourself and your life. Set yourself a goal you know you can reach, sign up for a class in something you've always wanted to learn, practice telling yourself the truth about how you feel or try meditation as a nonchemical way of managing stress. Find out about communication workshops, see a counselor or attend a meeting of Alcoholics or Narcotics Anonymous. Think about the person you'd like to be and the life you'd like to lead. Take one small step today.



### **Your Highest Priority**

Above all, make staying sober your highest priority. Think of the situations that result in your drinking or taking other drugs, and avoid those situations, as well as any "old friends" who don't support you in sobriety. Cultivate a spiritual life in whatever faith you choose. When faced with a decision, ask yourself which option will be most helpful in staying sober.

Attend 12-step program meetings regularly. You can get referrals to local groups from your employee assistance program or the telephone directory. In general, put your time and your strength into activities and relationships that help you stay sober. You, and everyone around you, will benefit in the form of happier and healthier lives.

