



RECOVERY BEHIND BARS

**A Resource Guide
for Inmates Seeking
Recovery from Addiction
(and their families)**

BY JOHN DAWE, MNA, CNP

Recovery Behind Bars

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By John W. Dawe, MNA, CNP

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Contents

Acknowledgments	iii
Foreword	iv
My Story	1
Rock Bottom	1
Taking First Steps in a Jail Cell.....	2
Furlough to Keystone	2
Back at the Prison	3
Founding Recovery Behind Bars.....	4
Further Notes	4
Anonymity	4
Whatever Works.....	5
Write to me.....	5
Twelve-Step Meetings	6
Important Safety Information.....	7
The Chaplain’s Office	8
Jobs Behind Bars	9
Creating a Communication Log.....	10
Budgeting for Recovery Behind Bars	11
Book Suggestions	13
Stages of Legal Consequences	15
Personal Crazyness Index	17
Building Your Sober Network.....	18
Steve’s Recovery Toolbox (by Steve D.).....	19
Writing Letters.....	20
Writing to an Inmate – Tips	20

Using an Electronic Messaging Service.....	20
Using a Third Party Service for Postal Mail	21
Appendix A: Twelve-Step Programs.....	22
Appendix B: Personal Crazyiness Index	24
Appendix C: Recovery Toolbox	30
Appendix D: Twelve-Steps of Recovery	31
Appendix E: The Serenity Prayer & Promises	32
Appendix F: Affirmations	33
Appendix G: Lines to Include in Letters	34
Featured Blog Posts.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Personal Stories.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

My Story

For nearly 20 years, I was a community leader and nonprofit executive. I served as Interim Chief Professional Officer for a large economic development organization, on boards and committees for a 30,000-member international association, and as chief lobbyist and interim CEO of a large statewide civil rights organization. But behind closed doors, I had a serious problem



Rock Bottom



On Thursday, April 8, 2021, I was awakened at 7 a.m. by a dozen police crashing into my bedroom. I had engaged in an illicit conversation with a police detective posing as a 15-year-old, and they were there with a search warrant to see if they could locate any illegal child sexual abuse materials (pornography). Although there was none, I knew in that instant that I

had hit a tipping point — I no longer wanted to lead a double life. By day, I was a successful executive. By night, I sought resources to fuel worsening pornography and sex addiction – keeping secrets about my activities.

As the detectives were interrogating me, I knew I had hit rock bottom and had nothing to lose, so I came clean about other destructive choices I made. I was arrested, jailed, and would spend the next thirteen months behind bars.

Like so many others who are arrested, I quickly convinced myself I didn't need to atone for my actions, I could outsmart them! I could find an expert witness, hire a top-notch attorney, and blame the COVID-19 pandemic. Whatever they could throw at me, I could manipulate the situation. We addicts are master manipulators!

Part of me also felt that what I had done was “normal”. I would later learn what Dr. Patrick Carnes, addiction and recovery expert said –

“Addicts truly believe their behaviors and actions are normal. They commune with other addictions to further normalize their behaviors.”

Taking First Steps in a Jail Cell

After a week in COVID-19 quarantine, I relocated to the sex offender block where I met my cellmate. Tom and I got along well enough for what I was still convinced would be a short stay – one week max. One week turned into two, and then a month.

As the months passed, we began to have conversations about what led us to this rock bottom point in our lives – except Tom was not at rock bottom. He was on a journey to rebuild his life, yet he had only been in jail a few weeks longer than I had, and I wondered how this was possible.

After his arrest, while out on bail, his attorney referred him to Keystone Center Extended Care Unit – a 16-bed residential inpatient treatment facility near Philadelphia for the treatment of compulsive sexual behaviors. He had begun his journey by facing his demons and learning to move forward one day at a time, living in recovery instead of isolation. I didn’t know how this was possible, but I knew I wanted the serenity that he had.

He helped me start my recovery journey in that jail cell. He helped me get in contact with the Keystone Center. I worked with my attorney to petition the courts to allow me to be allowed to attend the six-week program. The judge was familiar with the program and, although I’m told he rarely allowed such a furlough before, he decided to say yes. His compassion and belief in treatment programs allowed me to dig into recovery hardcore. (Thanks, Judge!)

Furlough to Keystone

My experience at Keystone was eye-opening and transformative. I was able to uncover and speak out loud, for the first time, decades of trauma and abuse that I experienced as early as age 12. The treatment professionals there taught me that those experiences created a cycle of abuse in which the victim became a perpetrator.

A big part of this journey was understanding that I had to forgive those who had caused me trauma. I learned that it is likely they also experienced something similar.

The experience also helped me come to terms with the fact that, although I was conditioned as a child for the offending and deviant things I did, I did them. I learned to accept full responsibility for the destructive decisions and poor choices I made. I have faced life and legal consequences as a result. I learned to be honest with myself and others about the past and in the present — no longer hiding in the shadows. Hundreds of hours of therapy, Twelve-Step meetings, and telling your story openly and honestly will do that for you.

I also learned that, while making amends with those I directly harmed is not possible (Step 9 of recovery states, "Make direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.") I can make indirect amends by living a life that puts other people's well-being first and giving back in service.

Perhaps the most important lesson I learned is about the importance of shame reduction. Shame tells us we are bad people, not just people who did bad things.

Bottom Line: We may have done bad things but we are NOT bad people. A big part of recovery is shame reduction. I regret what I did, but I can't go back and change the past — I can live one day at a time in recovery and work to never offend or hurt others again. That's what I set to do when I returned from Keystone to jail.

The serenity prayer teaches us there are things we cannot change and things we can. When I returned from Keystone to the jail, many people told me I had changed and was a different person — my family, other inmates... even the correctional officers. This brought me so much hope, and sometimes hope is the only thing that gets us through the day.

Back at the Prison

When I returned to jail from Keystone, I applied for and became an inmate trustee, working 40-50-hours each week on the sex offender block. I helped my fellow inmates navigate the prison's systems, ensure they were healthy, served as a bridge between them and the prison staff, and helped them move from coping to hoping.

I gave out stories from the recovery basic texts and talked to them about their journey. I taught myself limited Spanish to better communicate with the Hispanic/Latino inmates who spoke very little English.

I worked with a counselor I met at Keystone named Melissa Killeen, author of *Recovery Coaching: A Guide to Coaching People in Recovery from Addictions (Second Edition)* to refine my skills in coaching others through their recovery journey, as my cellmate had done for me.

Founding Recovery Behind Bars

I found that the restrictions of jail did not allow me to participate in Twelve-Step meetings, therapy, etc. so I took a variety of different approaches to maintaining my focus on recovery. This publication provides those techniques, ideas, and resources. It is my wish that my experiences will help you and your loved ones find a new sense of peace, grace, and hope.

Further Notes

My story involves primarily a process addiction and this site come from that perspective, but I have tried to ensure all areas of the site are transferrable to general recovery from alcohol, other drugs, process addictions, and/or trauma-recovery. I am personally involved in several twelve-step fellowships including Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous, Co-Dependents Anonymous, and Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families.

Anonymity

I cannot improve on the words my recovery coach Melissa Killeen, author of *Recovery Coaching: A Guide to Coaching People in Recovery from Addictions* writes, so I share them here:

“Many of my readers may be astonished or offended by my lack of anonymity about my Twelve-Step involvement, for that, I do not apologize. As the 2013 documentary, “The Anonymous People” states there are 23 million people in long-term recovery. I am one of them. I believe that my voice, as well as the voice of all the people in long-term recovery (more than four times the membership of the N.R.A. and almost as large as the AARP membership), should be heard. I believe if all of the Anonymous People join forces to lobby the Federal and State governments towards increasing the funding of addiction treatment programs, halfway houses, drug courts, programs for recovering mothers as well as training programs for recovery coaches we will be doing our 12th step service. My selection to not be anonymous is to join these voices calling for more adequate funding for recovery

resources. I am in recovery and I vote. We are 23-million strong and we vote.”

Whatever Works

The material found in this publication worked for me, but that doesn't mean it will work for you. I'm a firm believer in whatever works, so if you find tweaks to this information that should be included or develop or adapt your tools, please let me know so I can share them with others.

Write to me

If you are reading this material behind bars, I welcome your letters, questions, and advice.

Write to:

Recovery Behind Bars
PO Box 112
Lehman, PA 18627.

As you read the pages of this publication, know that you are not alone. During hundreds of twelve-step meetings at every hour of every single day people are praying for you, and so are we.

John D.
Founder, RecoveryBehindBars.com

Twelve-Step Meetings

“Simply put, the Twelve-Step process is indispensable for recovery. Being in a community of supportive people who are recovering addicts seem key to recovery.” – *Dr. Patrick Carnes*

Twelve-Step meetings are an important part of recovery because we often find it difficult to engage in therapy unless we are with an ongoing group of people who have had similar experiences.

According to *Self-Help & Support Groups* by Linda Kurtz, these “Mutual Aid Groups” are groups of individuals who share their experience, strength, and hope about recovery from addiction. Members have admitted that efforts at self-help have failed and that the help and support of others is needed.

Pioneered by Alcoholics Anonymous, the Twelve-Steps of Recovery have been used successfully by addicts across more than a dozen programs. From drug addicts to overeaters, gamblers to sex addicts, these programs greatly increase the likelihood of recovery success.

The inmate who wants to recover from their addiction, however, faces various challenges. You won’t be able to leave jail to go to a meeting, and not all jails have in-house Twelve-Step programs. If they do, they are most likely to be AA meetings. If you find ANY Twelve-Step meeting you can attend – Go. If stating your specific addiction seems inappropriate or dangerous, just introduce yourself as “an addict” (“Hi, I’m Fred and I’m an addict.”)

In the case you find a supportive employee (chaplain, counselor, or treatment coordinator) and you are in a block with other addicts, you can also request to start your own meeting. Write to program headquarters and ask them for guidance.

A list of Twelve-Step Meetings can be found in Appendix A.

Unfortunately, many of these programs have automated attendants, which do not allow for incoming calls to be properly processed from a correctional facility. Engage a supportive outsider for help or contact Recovery Behind Bars for assistance.

Important Safety Information

While alcohol and other drug addicts are typically cut off from their supply of addictive substances in jail, sex addicts are not. If you are housed on a block with others who may be sex offenders, you should stay quiet about your addiction until you can learn about the hierarchy and who can be (minimally) trusted. You may be at risk for prisoner sexual abuse or assault. If you are housed in a general population block, you are at even greater risk.

If you have the opportunity to make calls to sponsors, Twelve-Step fellows, etc., be sure to work out a safe word or phrase when you need to be discrete. That means the outside party should switch to “yes/no” questions so you’re not discussing risky concerns when other prisoners are eavesdropping. An example might be switching the conversation to your favorite sports team.

If you feel your cellmates are actively detrimental to your recovery program, do not discuss it with them if you feel they might harm or stir up trouble. Write to the jail’s chaplain, mental health department, or floor corporal with your concern and ask to relocate.

The Chaplain's Office

No matter your religion or faith background, consider writing to the prison's chaplain. Twelve-Step programs are rooted in the belief in a "Higher Power", which is self-defined by the individual. Whether you call it God, "The Universe" or simply "Higher Power", your prison chaplain will be familiar with the Twelve-Steps and working with those in recovery. The prison chaplain is also in the "forgiveness business" and, perhaps more than any other employee in the jail, can listen to your journey and help you navigate "the system". It is likely they can give you a Bible to read and a copy of daily affirmations.

The prison chaplain will likely work closely with the facility's treatment coordinator or addictions counselor.

You may feel that your past actions are horrible and unforgivable. The chaplain can help you realize that your acts may have been monstrous, but you are not a monster. They can help you find forgiveness and work with you to learn to forgive yourself and be at peace.

Many times you may be unable to attend or find a Twelve-Step meeting. Attending the prison's worship services, religious studies, and music programs can be a great resource for finding fellowship with others.

Jobs Behind Bars

Prisons frequently employ inmates in 'trustee' jobs for small stipends (or very low wages). Seeking a job may seem inconvenient or pointless, but there are benefits:

- A job provides some income to help with commissary, expenses, and phone call costs.
- A job provides something to do, keeping you active and from self-isolating.
- A job provides you, your supporters on the outside, and the courts a sense that you are taking responsibility for your own well-being by engaging in a responsible activity.
- A job can help you make connections, both with other inmates and the staff overseeing your work.
- A job can give you training for when you get out – such as learning to work in a kitchen environment, landscaping, etc.

When I worked as a trustee, I found that it provided me the ability to have conversations with, and become well known by correctional officers, floor corporals, medical staff, etc. This provided access to get help for myself and others not afforded to non-trustees.

Jobs you may be able to find include: block monitor, cleaner, laundry attendant, kitchen aide, mail clerk, library aide, chaplain's aide, landscaper, etc.

Creating a Communication Log

Prison can be a very lonely place, and it's easy to isolate. By keeping a communication log, you can make sure you are connecting with others on a regular basis. Creating the log is easy. On a blank sheet of paper, you want to track:

- The date and approximate time of the call (ex. Mon. 2/25 afternoon)
- Inbound or outbound (did you make the call? Did you get a letter from someone?)
- The type of communication: (Telephone, Email/Message, Letter, Visit)
- Who else was involved in the communication (First name, Last initial, OR nickname (ex. "Mom"))
- The topics discussed and any tasks you need to follow-up on

Here's an example:

Date/Time	Method / Direction	Who	Topics/Tasks
<i>12/25 - 3pm</i>	<i>Phone - Outbound</i>	<i>Mom</i>	<i>Merry Christmas!</i>
<i>2/6 - Early AM</i>	<i>Letter - Outbound</i>	<i>Prison Chaplain</i>	<i>Requested a Bible & Daily Meditations</i>
<i>3/13 - Late PM</i>	<i>Emessage - In</i>	<i>Mom</i>	<i>Received message mom put \$50 on my books NEED TO SEND HER A THANK YOU NOTE</i>
<i>3/22 - Noonish</i>	<i>Letter - Inbound</i>	<i>AA HQ</i>	<i>AA sent me articles and information</i>
<i>4/2 - 11 AM</i>	<i>Phone Call Out</i>	<i>Brian</i>	<i>Got current with my sponsor</i>

Budgeting for Recovery Behind Bars

Without the freedom to obtain recovery materials from the internet, attend live or online meetings, or freely use the telephone/text messaging, working your recovery program can be challenging but far from impossible!

You will want, at minimum, materials to send letters and possibly a copy of your Twelve-Step program's basic text/big book. Often times the AA & NA books are available from your facility's drug and alcohol treatment coordinator. If not, you will want to follow your institution's book request/purchase policy. (See also **Book Suggestions**)

- Before I continue, it is important to note that often times you may be transferred between facilities. For example, you might be sentenced first to your county jail before being transferred to state or federal prison. You will want to make sure any items you purchase will be able to go with you to your final facility (aka "Home Jail") **or** budget appropriately to repurchase those materials as you move through the system.
- You'll want to find out how you or others can put money on your books to purchase items from your facility's commissary. If you are not yet incarcerated but will be soon, it may be possible to walk in the door with cash to put on your books. Check with the facility to be sure. Typically cash will be transferred with you from facility to facility, although sometimes it will be issued to you in the form of a check or prepaid debit card.

Here is a list of items to help formulate your budget. If you can, research online or call the facilities you will be at to find out what fees and expenses are, if you don't already know.

You'll want to supply up on the materials that will help you achieve your Personal Crazy Index goals.

Avoiding Isolation by keeping in contact with your Sober Network and family.

- Telephone Calls & Headset/Earphones
- E-mail/Messaging
- Electronic Tablet (If the facility lets you purchase them)
- Mailing Supplies (Paper, Envelopes, Stamps, Pens)

Reflection

- Meditation Books
- Journaling Paper & Pens

Commissary Expenses

- Food & Drink (for when the provided food really sucks)
- Clothing (socks, sweatsuit, Shoes, Shorts, Underwear)
- Shower needs (Soap, Shampoo, Washcloth, Towel)

Keep in mind that often commissary prices can be equated to “convenience store” prices. A can of soup at a supermarket might be 75 cents, but at the corner convenience store, it’s \$1.35. For example, at my jail, a pack of ramen was 85 cents, and at Walmart, they are currently 3 for \$1.

Book Suggestions

Books are a great source of information for inmates **and their families/friends**.

Be sure to check with the correctional facility on how to send books! For example, where I was required each book to be submitted for approval, purchased from Barnes & Noble or Amazon, could not be delivered by a Prime driver (must be UPS/FedEx/USPS), and had to be paperback.

Book Choices

When incarcerated, I read books constantly. I always tried to have three books going at once. I would read a chapter or two in each and then rotate to the next book. The three books were (1) recovery-based, (2) non-fiction/learn something, and (3) fiction/fun. For the fiction/fun books I got into books that were a series. For example, I read Books 1-10 of the Wheel of Time series because it seemed like I read one huge book over the year I was in jail.

Here are some suggestions for both inmates and families.

If you order these books through Amazon and click on the links at <https://recoverybehindbars.com/book-suggestions>, we will receive a small commission on your purchase, which helps pay our web hosting and licensing fees.

Recovery Books:

- [Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book](#)
- [Narcotics Anonymous Basic Text](#)
- [Sex Addicts Anonymous Basic Text](#)
- [Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous Basic Text](#)
- [Touchstones: Daily Meditations for Men](#) (Hazelden)
- [Days of Healing, Days of Joy: Daily Meditations for Adult Children](#) (Larsen Hagerty)
- [Recovery Coaching: A Guide to Coaching People in Recovery from Addictions \(Second Edition\)](#) (Melissa Killeen)
- [Twelve Steps](#) (Patrick Carnes)
- [Voices of Recovery](#) (SAA ISO)

- [Healing the Shame that Binds You](#) (John Bradshaw)

Nonfiction Books

- [The Body Keeps the Score](#) (Bessel van der Kolk)
- [Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith](#) (Anne Lamott)
- [Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith](#) (Anne Lamott)
- [The Gifts of Imperfection](#) (Brene Brown)
- [The Power of Now](#) (Eckhart Tolle)
- [Easy Spanish Step by Step](#) (Barbara Bregstein)

Fiction/Fun Books

- [Wheel of Time Book 1: Eye of the World](#) (Robert Jordan) *and the rest of the series*
- [Stormdancer: The Lotus War Book One](#) (and books 2 & 3) (Jay Kristoff)
- [All the Light We Cannot See](#) (Anthony Doerr)

Stages of Legal Consequences

Typically, the journey through the criminal justice system has nine phases. They may be different from state to state, but generally, this is what you should expect:

Investigation – This is the formal examination and evaluation of all relevant evidence to determine if misconduct has occurred, and, if so, to determine the responsible person and the seriousness of the misconduct.

Charging & Arrest – To indict or formally accuse.

Initial Hearing/Preliminary Arraignment – Typically held within 1 to 72 hours of arrest, this first appearance in court is called an arraignment. The judge will read the charges against you, inform you of your right to have a lawyer, and then set (or deny) your bail.

Preliminary hearing – The prosecution must show enough evidence that a crime has been committed and the defendant is most likely the one who committed the crime. Many times a defendant who is planning on admitting guilt or negotiating a plea bargain will waive this hearing. In some cases, it is a

chance for the judge to reset or change bail conditions.

Discovery – This is the formal process of exchanging information between the parties about the witness and evidence they plan to present at trial. There is usually a set deadline for the presentation of the prosecution's discovery following arrest.

Plea bargaining – This is an out-of-court activity between the defendant or defendant's counsel and the prosecution in which defendants agree to plead guilty to some or all of the charges in exchange for concessions from the prosecutors. In many cases, the sentencing judge can accept or deny any sentencing considerations worked out. The judge can sentence as agreed during plea bargaining or decide on a different sentence altogether.

Pre-Trial Motions or Dispositional Hearing – The defendant will go before the court/judge and enter a plea of guilty or innocent. This motion can affect the trial, courtroom, defendants, evidence, or testimony. Only the judge can decide the outcome of the motion. If a plea agreement is at hand, the

judge will hear the agreement and approve or decline the modification of charges against the defendant. If a defendant is going to enter a declaration of innocence, the judge may set a trial date.

Trial – If no guilty plea agreement has been reached, a trial is held. A trial is a structured process where the facts of a case are presented to a jury (or judge in the case of a bench trial) and they decide if the defendant is guilty or not guilty of the charge offered. During the trial, the prosecutor uses witnesses and evidence to prove to the judge and jury that the defendant committed the crime.

Pre-Sentencing

Investigation (PSI) – Investigators will conduct a PSI which will include physical, mental, and emotional health considerations, psychological or psychiatric evaluations, etc. The PSI team will determine any sentencing recommendations or considerations for the judge.

Sentencing – If the defendant has been found guilty of any or all charges, they will appear in front of a sentencing judge who can impose fines, incarceration, community service, parole and probation conditions, etc.

Personal Crainess Index

Adapted from a tool used in group homes for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities to bring stability to their environment by Dr. Patrick Carnes, the Personal Crainess Index (PCI) is a tool to help the person in recovery detect escalating risk for slips or relapse.

“The Personal Crainess Index (PCI) is based on two assumptions:

1. Crainess first appears in routine, simple behaviors that support lifestyle balance.
2. Behavioral signs will occur in patterns involving different parts of our lives.

When craziness (or unmanageability) seeps into our lives, we may not notice that our checking account is overdrawn. If our checking account is overdrawn, we are probably out of socks because we have not done laundry. If this pattern is pervasive, there is a risk that our lives will become emotionally bankrupt.”

The idea of the PCI is to consider 12 dimensions and figure out your “Top 7” indicators for encroaching craziness. Then, take an inventory of your PCI each day, so you have an objective idea of where things are at for you in terms of your inner and outer environment. The twelve dimensions are:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Physical health | 8. Finances |
| 2. Transportation | 9. Spiritual life & reflection |
| 3. Environment | 10. Other compulsive & symptomatic disorders |
| 4. Work | 11. 12 step practice & self-care |
| 5. Interests | 12. Healthy relationships |
| 6. Social life | |
| 7. Family & significant others | |

The PCI is highly personal. For some people, skipping workouts may not be a big deal. But for you, it might be an indication that you are not taking care of yourself or finding the right balance in life. *Inmates don't usually have to worry about some categories, so double up on some other areas.*

A copy of the PCI exercise can be found in Appendix B.

Building Your Sober Network

Having a group of others working toward recovery is important, and should be in the same Twelve-Step program you are. This can be difficult if you have never been part of a program and now are locked up but it's very possible. Here are some tips for doing so:

Go to a meeting every day if you're not in jail, but anticipate that you will land up there. Get people's phone numbers. Once you find people you are comfortable with, explain you might end up in prison and ask if you may call and write them. Collect their contact information explaining to them that you will likely need their full name and mailing address. Prepare this list and give it to a trusted friend or family member. Once you can receive mail in jail, have them send a **photocopy** of your list to you. Have them keep a copy for their records. If you are ever transferred to another facility, you may need it to be sent again.

- Contact your local Twelve-Step intergroup and ask their advice. Do the same with your program's headquarters. Many programs have prison outreach programs, pen pal matching, and volunteer sponsors who will write to you in prison.
- Ask your therapist (and give your permission to share your information) with other potential sober network members. The therapist won't give you other patients' information but may be willing to give them yours.
- If you're already in jail, ask a trusted friend to make these calls.
- Talk to the prison's chaplain.
- Slowly and carefully, identify others in your block or facility who may be in recovery or interested in learning more.

Steve's Recovery Toolbox

(by Steve D.)

When I was in jail for actions and choices I made related to my addiction, I created the below toolbox to help him meet various objectives that would support recovery. When I was stressed or felt I needed to take care of myself, I'd take the objective I wanted to achieve and find an activity that would help to get there. You can adopt this toolbox or create your own using the template found in Appendix C.

MY RECOVERY TOOLBOX

Outcomes	Connect outside of myself	Connect with myself	Be in the present	Find a refuge / safe place	Have faith / hope	Be honest	Be humble	Find serenity / peace
Reflection								
Prayer	✓				✓		✓	✓
Meditation		✓		✓		✓		✓
Letter Writing	✓	✓				✓		
Journal Writing		✓	✓			✓		
Poetry Writing		✓				✓		✓
Talk								
Talk with Others	✓	✓	✓			✓		
Call a Friend	✓	✓	✓			✓		
Talk to a professional	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Listen								
Listen to others	✓		✓				✓	
Listen to music				✓				✓
Quick Fixes								
Have a cup of tea				✓				✓
Do laundry		✓		✓				
Close eyes for a minute		✓	✓	✓				✓
Walk/Exercise		✓	✓	✓				
Sing/Dance					✓	✓		
Reading								
Read a 12 step book		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Read book/newspaper	✓		✓		✓			
Read The Bible		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
Reread letters	✓		✓		✓			
Other								
Go to a 12 Step Meeting		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Postive Self-Talk/Affirmations		✓		✓				✓

Originally created by Steve D., printed with permission of the author.

Writing Letters

Regular, supportive contact with an inmate is a key recovery success factor. I remember getting letters from a penpal when I was in elementary school and how excited it would be. Now, imagine you are locked in a cell 20+ hours a day with only a handful of people to talk to for weeks or months on end. Talking to someone on the outside can certainly keep your hopes up.

Different facilities have different rules for writing a letter to an inmate/prisoner. These rules can range from the content allowed to the paper used. For example, a corrections facility may decide that letters are limited to five pages, must be single sided on 8.5 x 11 paper, and printed in black or blue ink or graphite pencil. Keep in mind the inmate will not receive the original letter but a photocopy. This is done because some senders may lace the paper with illegal substances.

Writing to an Inmate – Tips

1. Assume everything you write and that they might write back will be read and monitored by an experienced corrections officer. Don't try and pass any "secret coded" messages as the correction officer will be trained in identifying such content. Both the sender and the recipient will face consequences.
2. Don't send prohibited materials such as photos, drawings, or cards. If the content cannot fit through a scanner's automatic document feeder, it will likely be discarded.
3. Make a copy of everything you send in case it gets lost in the mail processing system. inmates are moved from location to location and their mail rarely catches up to them.

Using an Electronic Messaging Service

Many institutions have an electronic messaging service. This is **not e-mail** as it is a closed system. To send and receive messages, you will need to set up a **paid account** and log in regularly to check and send messages. Messages cannot be forwarded outside of the system. Frequently, inmates will need their own account and to have money placed on it to send messages in reply.

Using a Third Party Service for Postal Mail

In today's electronic world, it may be a while since you've had to send a letter through the mail. One of our readers (Jon L.) writes, "I have a friend that was serving state time and I wrote to him via Docupost.com. He had no problem receiving the letters I had written him through the online service."

As of July 1, 2022, the DocuPost service costs 75 cents for the postage and envelope and 30 cents for each page, so a 5-page letter costs \$2.25.

See Appendix G for suggested lines to include in letters.

Appendix A: Twelve-Step Programs

The following are listed with telephone numbers, however often times, they use an “automated attendant” which is incompatible with many prison telephone systems. You may wish to have an outside ally make contact for you. These are also the headquarter phone numbers for these organizations. You may have a local intergroup in your area that can also be helpful.

Substance Abuse

- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) 212-870-3400
- Cocaine Anonymous (CA) 310-559-5833
- Crystal Meth Anonymous (CMA) 855-638-4373
- Dual Recovery Anonymous 913-991-2703
- Marijuana Anonymous (MA) 800-766-6779
- Narcotics Anonymous (NA) 818-773-9999
- Nicotine Anonymous (NicA) 877-879-6422

Financial Issues

- Debtors Anonymous (DA) 800-421-2382 or 781-453-2743
- Gamblers Anonymous (GA) 626-960-3500

Eating Disorders

- Anorexia Nervosa & Associated Disorders (ANAD) 630-577-1330
- Overeaters Anonymous 505-891-2664

Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity

- Sex Addicts Anonymous (SAA) 800-477-8191
- Sex & Love Addicts Anonymous (SLAA) 210-828-7900
- Sexual Life & Legal Consequences (SLLC) 215-805-5240

Twelve-Step Programs for Your Family Members

Family Support

- Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA) 310-534-1815
- Al-Anon: 757-563-1600
- Alateen: 888-425-2666
- Nar-Anon Family Groups 800-477-6291 or 310-534-8188
- Co Dependents Anonymous (CODA) 888-444-2359 or 602-277-7991
- Co Dependents of Sex Addicts 763-537-6904

Appendix B: Personal Crazyiness Index

By Patrick Carnes, Ph.D. (from Facing the Shadow (2015 ed.), Gentle Path Press, Carefree, Az., p. 278-287.)

The process of creating your own PCI is designed to be as value-free as possible. Each person uses the index by setting their own criteria. In other words, discover the behavioral signs that in your experience indicate that you are “losing it”, “getting out of hand” or “feeling burnt out.” These are warnings that the boulder is ready to roll. Thus, it will be by your own standards that you will prepare yourself.

Following are twelve dimensions of your life in which you will identify danger signs that will indicate your life is getting crazy. Write two to four answers for each category on a separate sheet of paper.

- 1. Physical Health.** The ultimate insanity is to not take care of our body. When our physical health deteriorates, we have nothing. Yet, we seem to have little time for physical conditioning. Examples of “crazyiness” in this area of life include being over a certain weight, missing regular exercise for two days or more, smoking cigarettes, feeling exhausted from lack of sleep, skipping showers or meals, not taking medication as prescribed, etc.

How do you know that you are not taking care of your body?

- 2. Transportation.** How people get from place to place is often a statement about lifestyle. Take, for example, a car owner who seldom comes to a full stop, routinely exceeds the speed limit, runs out of gas, forgets to check the oil, puts off needed repairs, neglects to clean out the backseat, and averages three speeding tickets and ten parking tickets per year. Another example is the bus rider who routinely misses the bus, forgets to carry change or bus pass, or frequently leaves a smartphone or purse on the bus.

What are the transportation behaviors that indicate your life is getting out of control?

- 3. Environment.** To not have time to do your personal chores is a comment on the order of your life. Consider the home in which the plants usually go unwatered, fish are unfed, grocery supplies are depleted, laundry is not done or put away, cleaning is neglected, and dishes go unwashed.

What are ways in which you neglect your home or living space?

- 4. Work.** Chaos at work is risky for recovery. Signs of chaotic behavior are failing to return phone calls within 24 hours, showing up late for appointments, falling behind in promised work, having an unmanageable in-basket, and putting “too many irons in the fire.”

When your life is unmanageable at work, what are your behaviors?

- 5. Interests.** What are some positive interests, besides work, that give you perspective on the world? Music, reading, photography, fishing, cooking, gardening, are examples.

Note: This is the only category in which you list positive factors. If you use one of these for your PCI calculation (later in the exercise) phrase it in that space as “Lack of ____.”

What are you doing when you’re not overextended?

- 6. Social Life.** Think of friends in your social network (beyond a significant other or family members) who provide significant support for you.

What are signs that you’ve become isolated, alienated, or disconnected from this network?

- 7. Family and Significant Others.** Examples of craziness in this area of life are staying silent, becoming overtly hostile, or engaging in passive-aggressive behaviors.

What behaviors indicate that you are disconnected from those closest to you?

- 8. Finances.** We handle our financial resources much like our personal resources. Signs of financial overextension include an unbalanced checking account, overdue bills, a lack of ready cash, and spending more than you earn. These may have parallels in various forms of emotional overextension.

What signs indicate that you are financially overextended?

- 9. Spiritual Life and Personal Reflection.** Spirituality can be diverse and include such activities as meditation, yoga, and prayer. Personal reflection includes keeping a personal journal, completing daily readings, and pursuing therapy.

What sources of routine personal reflection do you neglect when you are overextended?

- 10. Other Compulsive or Symptomatic Behaviors.** Compulsive behaviors that have negative consequences indicate something about your general well-being and state of overall recovery. When you watch inordinate amounts of TV, overeat, bite your nails, or develop another compulsive behavior that erodes your self-esteem, these behaviors such as forgetfulness, slips of the tongue, or jealousy are further evidence of overextension.

What negative compulsive or symptomatic behaviors are present when you feel “on the edge”?

- 11. Twelve-Step Practice and Therapeutic Self-Care.** Living a Twelve-Step way of life involved many practices. Group attendance, Step work, sponsorship, service, and Twelve-Step phone calls to support group members become the foundation of a good recovery. For some partners attending therapy, their method of self-care may be being involved in a facilitated support group.

What recovery activities do you neglect first?

- 12. Healthy Relationships.** Engaging in exploitative, abusive, or otherwise unhealthy relationships is a sign that you are not well grounded in your recovery.

What are signs that a relationship of yours is unhealthy or becoming unhealthy? Are you lying to the other person in the relationship or leaving out important pieces of the truth? Are you afraid to say what is on your mind? Are your boundaries still firm, or are you doing things someone else wants you to do even when it's not right for you?

Record & Interpret Daily Examples of your PCI

Directions: The PCI is effective only when a careful record is maintained. Recording your daily process in conjunction with regular journal-keeping will help you stay focused on priorities that keep life manageable; work on program efforts a day at a time; expand your knowledge of your personal

patterns; and provide a warning of self-destructive cycles during periods of vulnerability.

From the thirty-six(ish) signs of personal craziness you recorded, chose the seven that are most critical for you and list them on a separate sheet of paper.

At the end of each day, review this list and assign **one point** to each behaviors that occurred during the day. Record your total points for each day in the space provided on the **Personal Craziness Chart** on the next page.

If you fail to record the number of points each day, that day receives an automatic score of seven. If you cannot even do a daily scoring, you are obviously out of balance.

At the end of the week total your seven daily scores for the week and make an X in the appropriate box in the **PCI Graph**. Chart your progress over a twelve-week period, and reflect on where you are in recovery.

Personal Craziness Chart

Day/Week	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sunday						
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						
Weekly Total						

PCI Graph

Week	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
41-49 Very High Risk							
31-40 High Risk							
21-30 Medium Risk							
11-20 Stable Solidity							
1-10 Optimal Health							

The PCI is especially useful early on as recovery habits are established. Also, the PCI becomes helpful during periods of stress and vulnerability. Many simply use it as a daily reminder of their progress. These users change the items as they move forward in their recovery.

Interpretation of the PCI

<p>41-49 Very High Risk</p>	<p>Usually pursuing self-destructive behavior; overzealous about one's special interests; blames others for failures; seldom produces on time; controversial in community; success vs. achievement-oriented.</p>
<p>31-40 High Risk</p>	<p>Living in extremes (overactive or inactive); relationships abbreviated; feels irresponsible and is; constantly has reasons for not following through; lives one way, talks another; works hard to catch up.</p>
<p>21-30 Medium Risk</p>	<p>Often rushed; can't get it all in; no emotional margin for crisis; vulnerable to slip into old patterns; typically lives as if he or she has inordinate influence over others and/or feels inadequate.</p>
<p>11-20 Stable Solidity</p>	<p>Resilient. Recognizes human limits; does not pretend to be more than they are; maintains most boundaries; well ordered; typically feels competent; feels supported; able to weather crisis.</p>
<p>1-10 Optimal Health</p>	<p>Very resilient. Knows limits; has clear priorities; congruent with values; rooted in diversity; supportive; has established a personal system; balanced, orderly, resolves crises quickly; capacity to sustain spontaneity; shows creative discipline.</p>

Appendix C: Recovery Toolbox

MY RECOVERY TOOLBOX

Outcomes	Connect outside of myself	Connect with myself	Be in the present	Find a refuge / safe place	Have faith / hope	Be honest	Be humble	Find serenity / peace
Reflection								
Talk								
Listen								
Quick Fixes								
Reading								
Other								

Originally created by Steve D., printed with permission of the author.

Appendix D: Twelve-Steps of Recovery

1. We admitted we were powerless over addiction*— that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all areas of our lives.

* - *In this publication, we have replaced the term “alcohol” with addiction as the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous have been adapted by countless other programs of recovery.*

© Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (1989). *Twelve-Steps and twelve traditions.* Alcoholics Anonymous World Services.

Appendix E: The Serenity Prayer & Promises

God, Grant me the serenity to
accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference.
(Thy will not mine be done.)

The Promises

If we are painstaking about this phase of our development we will be amazed before we are halfway through. We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word Serenity and we will know peace. No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others. That feeling of uselessness and self-pity will disappear. We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows. Self-seeking will slip away. Our whole attitude and outlook on life will change, fear of people and economic insecurity will leave us. We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us. We will suddenly realize that God is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. Are these unrealistic promises? We think not. They are being fulfilled among us sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. They will materialize if we work for them."

Appendix F: Affirmations

- There are people out here who love you.
- You have succeeded in the past. You can make it!
- Time heals all wounds, be patient.
- Every day above ground is a good day!
- Feel the strength from those praying for you.
- We go through storms in life to better appreciate the sun.
- Recovery is love.
- You are NOT alone.
- God can restore. Give it to God.
- You are stronger than your addiction.
- You don't need to be perfect, just do your best.
- Struggles + Honesty = Progress
- Progress, not perfection.
- You did the best you could with what you were given.
- ... and so did your parents/caregivers.
- It takes courage to explore our life and expose our demons.
- You can learn from the past and make better decisions.
- Listen with your ears, not your fears.
- If you work recovery, recovery will work.
- Do the simple things well, and the bigger things will take care of themselves.
- Things will get better.
- There are people you don't even know praying for you.

*“Rock bottom became the solid foundation
on which I rebuilt my life.”*

- J.K. Rowling -

Appendix G: Lines to Include in Letters

- Remember not to be overconfident.
- Nobody succeeds without help.
- Don't try and have all the answers.
- Letting go of control can sometimes help you find answers you are seeking.
- Control is the manipulation of people, places, and things. Trying to control everything comes from a position of fear, shame, and distrust. Think of areas of life you are trying to control but do not have the power to do so.
Remember the Serenity Prayer.
- We all have secrets, but secrets we are keeping because of shame must be aired. Prison isn't the safest place to do so... but think about confronting them and accepting their reality with your Higher Power.
- Try not to fear feeling. It's natural for you to be feeling things like guilt over what has happened, fear over the consequences, and the future. But you can't control the future.
- You may be feeling anger about the past and with yourself, and sadness for what you've lost. Feel those feelings and stop trying to avoid them, for while you're avoiding them, you are also not fully feeling joy, peace, gratitude, hope, and love.
- ___ asked how you were doing and wanted you to know they are thinking about you.
- I attended a support group meeting of (Al-Anon/S-Anon/etc.) because I know you would want me to take good care of myself. It also helps me understand your situation better.
- I heard from ___ and they said they would love to hear from you. Their contact information is ___.
- I'm taking time to relax with (a new book, tv show, hobby, project). What I'm enjoying most about it is ___.
- It was so wonderful to (visit with/talk to/get a letter from) you! I was especially glad to hear ___ and sorry you're going through ___. We are praying for you.
- I found some printable puzzles that I thought you would enjoy so I'm enclosing them with this letter.
- When you write back, tell us about your daily routine.

Special Thanks to the following Patreon supporters:

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- If you have found this publication helpful, please consider becoming a Patreon supporter at <https://patreon.com/recoverybehindbars>

For nearly 20 years, John Dawe was a community leader and nonprofit executive, serving as Interim Chief Professional Officer for a large economic development organization, on boards and committees for a 30,000-member international association, and as chief lobbyist and interim CEO of a large statewide civil rights organization. Behind closed doors, he was a very different person. In April 2021, he was arrested and went to jail for engaging in illegal compulsive sexual behaviors. John's story is similar to hundreds of thousands of offenders in the criminal justice system whose childhood trauma manifests itself in their lives as addiction, compulsive behaviors, and self-destructive choices. After two months in jail, John's life changed with a referral by a fellow inmate to a treatment center that was originally founded by legendary addictions expert Patrick Carnes, Ph.D. He attended hours of intensive therapy, spent many late nights with addictions counselors, did daily twelve-step work and attended meetings six nights a week. This helped John clearly see the destructive impact his actions had on others. Upon returning to jail, he created a program of recovery for all addicts - not just sexual compulsives, but substance misuse and other process addictions as well.

Recovery Behind Bars chronicles not only John's journey, but that of countless others in the criminal justice system. Inside you will find many tools for inmates (and their families) to use immediately. It is possible to find serenity without the use of substances, process addictions, and obsessive-compulsive behaviors, and this book is a resource to help along that path.

Regular updates to the material in this print edition are made at <https://RecoveryBehindBars.com>.



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