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# Refuge Recovery Workbook

*by*  
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Riven Wood Books

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## *Table of Contents*

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Define the problem behavior                                | 1  |
| Problem behavior:  | 1  |
| My "First Drink"   | 2  |
| Slippery Slopes  | 2  |
| First truth: Addiction creates suffering                   | 3  |
| My Suffering   | 3  |
| The Suffering I Cause Others                               | 3  |
| Cost of the Behavior                                       | 4  |
| Second Truth: The cause of addiction is repetitive craving | 5  |
| Reasons I start on problem behavior                        | 5  |
| Abstinence means feeling                                   | 6  |
| Benefits of the Behavior                                   | 6  |
| Third truth: Recovery is possible                          | 7  |
| Challenges   | 7  |
| Resources  | 7  |
| Reasons to believe   | 7  |
| Doubts   | 8  |
| Sober Assessment of My Doubts                              | 8  |
| Fourth truth: The path to recovery                         | 9  |
| My Path to Recovery  | 9  |
| Emotions that push me around                               | 10 |
| Right Mindfulness/Meditations                              | 11 |
| Thought vs. Emotion  | 11 |
| Right Communication/Community                              | 13 |
| Addiction says   | 13 |
| Buddha says  | 13 |
| Wrong speech   | 13 |
| Right speech   | 13 |
| Right Understanding  | 15 |
| Right view   | 15 |
| Further exploration  | 15 |
| Wrong view   | 16 |
| Right Intention  | 17 |
| Ways to remind myself of my commitment                     | 17 |
| Red flags  | 17 |
| Keeping the slate clean                                    | 17 |
| Right Effort/Energy  | 19 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| What effort can you make to support right thinking and right action? | 19 |
| When do you need to make this effort?                                | 19 |
| Right Action/Engagement  | 21 |
| What actions are part of the problem?                                | 21 |
| What actions can you do instead?                                     | 21 |
| Discord  | 21 |
| Harmonizing behavior   | 21 |
| Right Livelihood/Service   | 23 |
| Work and addiction   | 23 |
| Right Concentration/Meditations                                      | 25 |
| Concentration practice   | 25 |
| Nightly review   | 25 |
| Journal  | 27 |

\* Blank pages can be inserted anywhere you need extra room in the workbook.

## DEFINE THE PROBLEM BEHAVIOR

Write down what behavior you want to stop.

The goal is to write it in such a way that you can read it and say, "Yes, that's something I never want to do again."

For example, it might be unrealistic to say, "I don't ever want to go out with an abusive man again," because you might not know in advance who is abusive. But you could say, "I don't ever again want to go out with someone who has made me feel ugly."

Similarly, getting a DUI or passing out might not be in your power to prevent but you could write, "I don't ever want to drink alcohol again."

Other examples might include:

- Eating doughnuts, cookies or cake
- Buying pornography
- Having sex on the first date
- Taking any mood-altering substance
- Giving money to someone you suspect is chemically addicted

If you cannot yet write the behavior in the form of something you never want to do again, write it however you think of it. You can change it as you go along.

### ***Problem behavior:***

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Below, list the behavior that starts you on the path to the problem you described above. For example, most of us have foods that we can't eat in small quantities; so eating the first of such a food should appear on one of the lists below.

These initial behaviors come in two kinds: behaviors that constitute a relapse, and those that are simply dangerous. Relapse behaviors I've called "the first drink." Dangerous behaviors go under "Slippery Slope," because they can lead to relapse.

***My "First Drink"***

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***Slippery Slopes***

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FIRST TRUTH: ADDICTION CREATES SUFFERING

List all the ways that you suffer.

*My Suffering*

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List all the ways you cause others suffering.

*The Suffering I Cause Others*

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From both lists, write into the list below the suffering that would stop if you stopped the problem behavior.



SECOND TRUTH: THE CAUSE OF ADDICTION IS REPETITIVE CRAVING

The nature of addiction is that indulging a little creates a desire for more. While the normal drinker becomes more and more inclined to stop the more they drink, the alcoholic feels compelled to continue. With addictions, the only hope of freedom is to never take the "first drink." List below reasons you have taken a "first drink."

*Reasons I start on problem behavior*

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When you start on the behavior, you might have positive intentions or hopes. For example, a parent might give their addicted teenager a second chance for all the right reasons and then discover that they inadvertently encouraged the addictive behavior. Add to the list above your positive intentions.

What happens when you abstain from the problem behavior? If you feel an urge to do indulge, give the urge your full attention. What does it say? What do you call it? What emotions do you feel? What makes it so compelling?



## THIRD TRUTH: RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE

What makes abstaining hard?

### *Challenges*

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What resources can you use to abstain and recover?

### *Resources*

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If you don't take the first drink, you won't get drunk.

And if you avoid everything on your list of slippery slopes, you're unlikely to take the first drink. So you now know behavior that will get you free from the problem. Do you believe you can do it?

List reasons to believe you can:

### *Reasons to believe*

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List doubts:

*Doubts*

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What do you imagine the Buddha would say about your doubts?

*Sober Assessment of My Doubts*

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## FOURTH TRUTH: THE PATH TO RECOVERY

Below, write the path to recovery as you currently understand it. Add to this description as you refine your understanding. For example, a compulsive gambler might write, "The path to recovery is to make no more bets and not entertain thoughts of quick winnings." Later, she might add, "embrace feelings of anxiety."

Include in your description the challenges you will face and the resources you will use to meet those challenges. For example, the gambler might write, "Join a book group held at the same time as the weekly poker game I need to stay away from."

***My Path to Recovery***


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Add to the above description any of the following that are not already there:

- What behavior needs to change in order for you to be recovered?
- What thinking needs to change in order for you to be recovered?

When your feelings are not appropriate for the situation, or when they are stronger than is warranted, some past memory is asking to be healed. It will keep asking until it's healed, so the sooner you do the work the less trouble. The work consists of

doing now what would have been appropriate then: debriefing, remembering, reliving with compassion, feeling the emotions again without acting on them--in short, integrating the experience. If your own store of compassion is not up to the challenge, get someone else to lend theirs. Healing is the birthplace of wisdom.

- Where will you do the work of healing emotional issues that currently push you around? Some people do this work in meditation, some in therapy, some with friends...

To rob emotions of the ability to make you relapse, you need tolerance for them. The work of healing builds tolerance while resolving the issues that generate inner non-peace.

What feelings do you need more tolerance for? That is, the ability to have compassion for yourself while feeling the emotion fully and not acting on it. Consult the list on page 6 to ensure that you get them all.

***Emotions that push me around***

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## RIGHT MINDFULNESS/MEDITATIONS

Use the blank pages at the end of this workbook as a journal of the thoughts, feelings and behavior when you're acting out--either a first drink or a slippery slope behavior. The healthy attitude here is to grab the opportunity to learn more about your process, rather than to condemn yourself. Keep the workbook handy. As you watch, your understanding of the process will change. Update the descriptions of the problem, its costs and its benefits as you gain new insight.

### *Thought vs. Emotion*

For each of the feelings listed on page 6, separate the idea involved from the plain emotion.

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Here are some examples of plain emotions:

|         |              |                |
|---------|--------------|----------------|
| fear    | joy          | disappointment |
| anger   | comfort      | shame          |
| boredom | regret       | gratitude      |
| grief   | indifference | ease           |
| hope    | overwhelm    | satisfaction   |
| shock   | revulsion    | enthusiasm     |

If you would like a more complete list, try [www.cnvc.org/Training/feelings-inventory](http://www.cnvc.org/Training/feelings-inventory).

Notice that none of these tell you why the feeling is there--that's the idea part. Plain feelings also don't imply that someone has done something to you. Even though we say, "I feel abandoned," the idea that someone has deserted us is an idea rather than a feeling. To separate the two, I might say, "I feel desolate because I think someone deserted me." Even though that sentence is awkward, it allows me to use different practices on the two components. I can set aside the idea and simply bring compassion to desolation. At another time, I can set aside desolation and consider whether someone really has deserted me, why that's devastating, and where in the past I developed this response.

When you have separated thoughts from emotions, add the thoughts to the list on page 10 and the feelings to the list on page 11.

If your path to recovery calls for using meditation to do emotional work, select one issue from the list on page 11 and work with it until you are satisfied with the result. Then choose another.

**RIGHT COMMUNICATION/COMMUNITY**

What do you say to yourself that leads to problem behavior?

***Addiction says***

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What would be the right things to say to yourself instead?

***Buddha says***

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What have you said to others in support of your addiction?

***Wrong speech***

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What can you say to others that will foster your recovery? An example might be telling a friend that you are an alcoholic and would like to spend sober time together instead of going for a drink.

***Right speech***

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## RIGHT UNDERSTANDING

Look at the list of benefits you get from the problem behavior. Below, write healthier ways to get these needs met.

### *Right view*

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Add anything other ideas that support your recovery.

The Buddha taught that unethical behavior leads to suffering. Do you have a clear idea of where a commitment to ethical behavior (for example, taking the precepts) fits with your recovery? If not, how could you explore this issue?

Buddhism is called "the middle way" between indulging one's desires and repressing them. Are you able to find this middle way when feelings try to govern your actions? Do you consider compassion for yourself important when strong feelings arise? If these issues are not clear, how might you develop your understanding of them?

### *Further exploration*

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To complete the description of the right view, it can be useful to write the wrong thinking that supports the problem behavior, and then the correction of that mistake. For example, if you are influenced by the idea that you're not good enough, write that below and then the correction above, such as "I deserve respect no matter what my foibles."

If permanent abstinence sounds more like deprivation than liberation to you, write about these feelings and the thoughts that go with them under wrong view.

***Wrong view***

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## RIGHT INTENTION

Once you have a right view, you can let it guide you all through each day. The trick is remembering to do so. How can you keep your commitment to recovery fresh in your mind? For example, some people might pray at set times every day.

### *Ways to remind myself of my commitment*

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How can you remember your commitment at crucial moments? For example, there might be a certain feeling that precedes acting out, and this feeling could become a red flag, reminding you to pay attention.

### *Red flags*

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Have you committed yourself to ethical behavior--to obeying your conscience when it conflicts with desire? If so, how can you remind yourself of this commitment? If not, write about your feelings on the question of conscience vs. desire.

### *Keeping the slate clean*

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## RIGHT EFFORT/ENERGY

*What effort can you make to support right thinking and right action?*

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*When do you need to make this effort?*

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## RIGHT ACTION/ENGAGEMENT

*What actions are part of the problem?*

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*What actions can you do instead?*

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List the areas of discord in your life, ie, things that bug you.

*Discord*

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What can you do differently to bring harmony to these areas? Include things you can do out in the world that will bring greater peace inside you (e.g. rectifying old wrongs).

*Harmonizing behavior*

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**RIGHT LIVELIHOOD/SERVICE**

Respond to each of the following questions in the space below:

- How does your daily work affect your problem behavior?
- How do you feel when you finish the day's work?
- Does work make you want something to "get you through"?
- Are there any changes you need to make?

***Work and addiction***

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## RIGHT CONCENTRATION/MEDITATIONS

Concentration meditations give you practice at breaking a habitual chain of thought-feeling-behavior. Each time you return attention to the object of meditation, you practice not-taking the next habitual step. This skills transfers into daily life as the ability to stop and think where before you reacted out of habit. How do you want to pursue this practice?

### *Concentration practice*

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What tasks do you want to track your progress on? List them below, then use this page and blank pages from the end of the workbook to review each day. Encourage wholesome states and discourage unwholesome ones, always practicing forgives and compassion for yourself.

### *Nightly review*

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